



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

13th SEPTEMBER 2021

LOCAL AUTHORITY'S OFFER OF ACCOMMODATION AND HOUSING SUPPORT TO CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Corporate Parenting Board members with information about how 16+ looked after young people and care leavers are provided with move on accommodation and support.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the information contained within the report.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 This is an information report.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Section 78 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 imposes a duty upon a local authority to safeguard and promote the well-being of each child it looks after. Under sections 104 – 118, a local authority has similar duties to promote the well-being of care leavers.
- 4.2 The role of a corporate parent is to seek for children in public care the outcomes every good parent would want for their own children. Local authorities in Wales have a legal and moral duty to provide such support to the children it looks after. Elected Members have a responsibility to ensure that children looked after by a local authority are able to thrive, are nurtured, supported, educated, and prepared for adult life in the way any parent would want for their own children.
- 4.3 Section 1.34 of the Welsh Government's Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness Guidance (March 2016) confirms Local Authorities

have a range of duties to care leavers who represent a particularly vulnerable group and require Children's Services and Housing to work together to work together to meet the needs of young people in care as they move to independent living.

- 4.4 This report sets out the process for identifying suitable accommodations and support for Care Leavers.

5. The Housing Options that are presently available, and the impact of the Pandemic.

Mercury Project.

In response to the recommendations of the Mercury Group a housing officer has been identified to provide a single point of contact for care leavers. The role will work closely with the 16+ Team and young people leaving care at an early stage to help identify all available housing options in consideration of their housing and support needs. This will include supported accommodation, Housing First and general needs accommodation in both the social and private rented sector. It is recognised that needs of young people will change throughout their journey of leaving care and the housing officer will offer person centred support to the young person to review their housing options in consideration of their needs.

Social Housing

The Community Housing Department manages the gateway to social housing in RCT in partnership with six social housing landlords. Care leavers can apply directly for social housing with applications considered by the Move On Panel, who determine if the young person is ready to live independently. If approved care leavers are placed in Band A which is the highest priority band and are then able to bid for 1 bedroom accommodation in the areas of their choice. It must be noted that the demand for one bedroom accommodation is very high and outstrips supply particularly in the south of the borough.

20 care leavers were approved by the Move On panel in 2020/21 and assisted to access social housing in RCT.

Private Rented Accommodation

The availability and affordability of private rented single person accommodation in the private rented sector remains an ongoing challenge in the borough. The Council has received Welsh Government funding to set up a Social Housing Letting Agency (SLA) in Rhondda Cynon Taff. This is a pilot scheme which aims to improve access and support private landlords to

offer long term affordable and good quality accommodation with support in the private rented sector. The scheme is in the early stages of development, but it is hoped going forward it will increase the supply of affordable single person accommodation to offer real housing options.

Supported Accommodation

The Housing Support Grant currently commissions units of emergency and supported accommodation for young people as illustrated in the table below. However, in recognition that young people are one of the highest needs in the Housing Support Grant Local Commissioning Plan additional units of supported accommodation are currently being explored.

Existing HSG People funded Young People Projects

Project Name	Area	Support Provider	Service Model	No. of units
The Grange	Taff	Pobl	Emergency Accommodation	10xself contained units.
Queen Street	Taff	Llamau	Emergency Accommodation Shared	5 Units Shared property
Old Bakery Aberdare	Cynon	Pobl	24/7 Supported Accommodation young people aged 16 -24	5 self-contained units
Supported Lodgings	RCT	RCT Council	Supported Lodgings	13 units currently but will increase to 26 by 2024.
Ty Rhondda	Rhondda	Llamau	24/7 Supported accommodation. Young People aged 16 -24.	3 plus emergency room
Dunraven Street.	Rhondda	Llamau	Step down Project	3 units of shared housing
Bridgit Young Woman's	Taff Ely	Hafan Cymru	24/7Supported Accommodation. Young females aged 16 -24.	3 units of Shared housing
Boys Shared House Penycraig	Rhondda	Hafan Cymru	24/7 Supported Accommodation.	3 units of shared

			Young males aged 16 -24.	housing
Martins Close	Cynon	Pobl	24/7self contained Supported accommodation for male and females 18+	13 self-contained units
Semi independent accommodation. (Low Level)		Hafan Cymru	Young People aged 16 -24	6 units

Floating Support

The RCT Locality based Floating Support project provides person centred support to young people who already have their own accommodation or who are in the process of moving into a property from a permanent full time care setting.

This service supports young people to further develop their independent living skills and help them to sustain their tenancies

Housing First Project

The Housing First Project in RCT is partnership between RCTCBC and Llamau and provides a rights-based intervention for young people who have high support needs and who will find living in supported accommodation and general needs accommodation without support a challenge.

The project is designed to address the needs of young adults by providing them with immediate access to housing that is safe, affordable, and appropriate, and the necessary and age-appropriate support that focus on health, wellbeing, life skills, engagement in education and employment, and social inclusion. The project is currently supporting 9 young people which includes 4 care leavers in their own accommodation

Supported Lodgings

13 units of supported accommodation are currently commissioned by the Council to provide young people with a safe home and to offer practical advice and help to manage their lifestyle and become independent. During 2020/21 19 people were offered a supported lodgings placement.

Get Ready and Move On Project (GRAMO)

Early intervention and prevention are viewed as a fundamental and a common theme which connects directly to the Housing Act Wales, Social Services and Wellbeing Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

The GRAMO project provides an early intervention pre-tenancy learning environment for all individuals to develop and evidence the skills to manage a tenancy. The learning is tailored to the client attending each session. Areas covered in each session include money management, understanding a Tenancy Agreement, Life skills, managing a home and digital inclusion.

Sessions for care leavers are held on a 121 basis to help support their learning and understanding of living independently prior to leaving care.

During the financial year 2020/21, 10 care leavers were referred to the GRAMO Project with 6 completing the course. As from April 2021, 7 referrals have been received with 3 care leavers completing the course to-date

The Pandemic

The Impact of the Pandemic has not significantly impacted on the housing options available to young people with many of the Housing Support Grant funded projects operating as normal and receiving referrals. However as mentioned above, the availability of single person accommodation in both the social housing and private sector remains an on-going challenge, which has been made worse by the pandemic in limiting even further the options available to young people.

6. The Housing Options in Development for Care Leavers and Young People.

Investment of **£140,00** of Housing Support Grant (HSG) has been awarded to Children Services in 2021/ 22 to extend Supported Lodgings by 13 units to bring the project up to 26 units. The project is still under development and will be reviewed by the HSG Contract Monitoring Team.

Additional HSG funding of **£161,000** has also enabled the new development of a new 24/7 project for young people aged 16 -24 in the Penygraig area offering 4 x4 bedroom self- contained flats. The project will be managed by Hafan Cymru and will be an extension to their existing young person's project in Penygraig which offers supported accommodation to young males aged 16 -24.

In addition to the above projects **£68,000** of HSG has been available in 2021/22 to provide 2 mentoring posts to support care leavers on their journey from leaving care to independent living.

The Housing Support Grant Local Commissioning Plan has identified the high demand for young person's accommodation in RCT. The HSG Team and Housing Strategy Team are currently discussing a new build project in the Taff area which if successful will provide an additional 4-5 bedspaces of supported accommodation.

7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 This is an information report.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 This is an information report.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

9.1 There are no direct financial implications aligned to this report.

10 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

10.1 The report was brought before Scrutiny as part of the governance arrangements outlined in Regulation 22 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007 and section 15(c) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Regulations) (Wales) Directions 2015.

11 LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ FUTURE GENERATIONS – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

11.1 The business covered in this report contributes to the following well-being goals:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales.
- A healthier Wales.
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A globally responsible Wales

12 CONCLUSIONS.

- 12.1 key policy changes such as raising the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and the provision of Welsh Government funding to increase the supply of both temporary and permanent accommodation have helped. Despite this progress, the pandemic has further exposed the severe shortage of single person accommodation.

Whilst a considerable amount of work has been undertaken to address the immediate housing and support needs of young people leaving care. Further work is needed to reduce young people being placed in bed and breakfast accommodation and to explore more sustainable long-term support and accommodation options.

It is also vital we work in partnership with health and our third sector partners to ensure appropriate support services are in place to address complex needs such as substance misuse and mental health.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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