

This Report will be made public on 15 April 2024.

Report Number **OS/23/14**

To: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 23 April 2024
Status: Non-Key Decision
Responsible Officer: Gill Butler, Chief Officer – Housing
Adrian Hammond, Lead Specialist - Strategic Housing
Cabinet Member: Councillor Rebecca Shoob, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness

SUBJECT: Kent County Council Accommodation Services for Care Leavers on reaching the age of 19 years

SUMMARY:

This report considers the potential impacts for the district, of Kent County Council's decision to end its accommodation and support provision for care leavers once they reach the age of 19.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report OS/23/14.
2. To comment on the points set out in the report.

1. COUNCIL MOTION

1.1 At its meeting on 29th November 2023, the Council resolved to:

- Ask the Leader of the Council to write to KCC asking for an immediate suspension of Decision 23-00083.
- Ask the Cabinet to consider how we can support and protect care leavers and unaccompanied asylum seekers in the event that this change is made.

1.2 As requested, the Leader of the Council wrote to KCC in January 2024 and requested a meeting to discuss the implications of the policy change. Officers understand that no response was received.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 At the end of 2023, Kent County Council (KCC) announced that it would be ending its accommodation and support services for care leavers over the age of 19, from April 2024. Previously, KCC has provided specialist supported accommodation for care leavers aged 16-21.

2.2 Care leavers already over the age of 19 will not be affected by KCC's decision, all children currently in care, aged under 19, will be impacted.

2.3 Information provided by KCC shows that there are approximately 39 care leavers aged 16-21 and 95 care leavers aged 16-25, who are either based in the Folkestone and Hythe District or who are believed to have a link with this district.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR FOLKESTONE & HYTHE

3.1 At this time, it is difficult to fully assess the impact that this policy change will have on this district. The young people impacted, will be able to approach any of the local authorities in Kent for accommodation assistance. We are unable to predict when the individuals may approach the Council.

3.2 The key concerns for the Council are as follows:

- There is a very limited supply of suitable accommodation in the district that is likely to be suitable for this client group.
- The cost of shared accommodation in the district is currently approximately £650 per month, whilst the local housing allowance is set at approximately £282 per month.
- There will be no onsite support for the young people in this accommodation, which could place some individuals at risk.
- The Council is likely to face direct costs of at least approximately £200K per year, to support all the young people to cover their accommodation costs. The full financial impact will be determined by the number of young people who approach the Council for accommodation assistance.
- Some young people may have more complex needs, which will be more difficult for the Council to meet.

- 3.3 Officers will continue to monitor the impacts of KCC’s policy decision and will update members as any further issues arise. The Council will also work to identify suitable accommodation for young people approaching the accommodation for assistance. At this time, the Council has been approached by one young person aged 19 and they are currently in accommodation provided by the Council.
- 3.4 The Housing Options Team fully recognise that the policy will cause concern to the young people impacted. We will work with all local partners to explore all possible accommodation solutions to best meet the accommodation needs of this client group going forward.
- 3.5 The team will also signpost the young people affected to other agencies, to enable them to receive support wherever possible.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 A summary of the perceived risks are as follows:

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
Increased homeless presentations to the Council.	High	Medium	Increased homelessness presentations (and resulting cost to the Council) over the coming months and years, have been listed in the Council’s Risk Log. The Council’s Housing Options Team will continue its ongoing work to identify suitable accommodation for any young people impacted.
Budgetary impacts	High	Medium	Officers will closely monitor the impact of this KCC policy change and report any further impacts to members as they are identified.
Increased risk of vulnerable young people not receiving the specialist	High	Medium	F&HDC officers will work closely with partner agencies to ensure that the

support that they need.			appropriate support is provided.
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5. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

5.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. There is no statutory duty for KCC to provide accommodation to care leavers over the age of 18.

5.2 Finance Officer's Comments (RH)

There could be significant financial implications if a number of care leavers contact the Council for Housing placements. As stated in the report it is unclear what additional pressure there may be, therefore, at the present time, this situation will be closely monitored by Housing Options and Finance colleagues.

5.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (AH)

The policy decision made by KCC, will directly impact on young people once they reach the age of 19, including those with more complex needs.

5.4 Climate Change Implications (AH)

No direct climate change implications to this report.

6. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting

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The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report: None.