

## REPORT

By: Caroline Highwood - Director of Business Support, Kent Adult Social Services

To: Supporting People in Kent Commissioning Body

2 July 2009

**Subject: Youth Offending Services housing related support requirements**

**Classification: Unrestricted**

### For Decision

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**Summary.** This paper provides an overview of current plans and activity in relation to housing/housing related support for young people known to the Youth Offending Service. It seeks support for a growth bid to be made to the Commissioning Body, at the appropriate time. Children Families and Education are fully involved in this work.

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### 1. Introduction

1.1 The report from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation following the Inspection of the Youth Offending Service in January 2008 highlighted concerns regarding the ability of the Youth Offending Service to access suitable accommodation in the county, particularly for those leaving custody.

1.2 A Youth Justice Board and Local Area Agreement performance measure (National Indicator 46) for the Service requires the Youth Offending Service to ensure that young people are suitably accommodated. During the first three Quarters of 2008/2009 there have been the following numbers of young offenders recorded aged 16 / 17 years, recorded as not being in suitable accommodation of whom;

Quarter One 37 (5 of whom were leaving custody).

Quarter Two 37 (3 of whom were leaving custody).

Quarter Three 54 (6 of whom were leaving custody).

1.3 There is a strong correlation inevitably for a young person between being either homeless or unsuitably accommodated and involvement in offending behaviour. A key objective for the Youth Offending Service is the prevention of re-offending.

1.4 The Youth Offending Service also has a statutory duty (Children Act 2004) to promote the welfare of those known to the Service and clearly when a young person is without suitable accommodation their vulnerability is significantly enhanced and they are more at risk of harm.

## **2. Current Activity**

2.1 The current activities which the Youth Offending Service is undertaking to improve performance include:

(1) strengthening working relationships with each of the twelve Districts to ensure;

- the accommodation needs of young people known to the Service are recognised in their respective strategic plans
- there is a shared approach to the establishing of local accommodation developments
- the joint business processes work effectively when a young person presents as homeless
- informed representation by the Youth Offending Service on the Joint Policy and Planning Board (Housing)

(2) collaboration with Supporting People that is reflected in:

- representation from the Head of Supporting People on the management body for the Youth Offending Service
- the representation of YOS, via the Director for Youth Services & Kent Drug and Alcohol Action Team, on the Commissioning Body for Supporting People
- the promotion of Floating Support opportunities amongst the management and practitioner groups within the Service
- joint planning for a Deposit and Rent Guarantee Scheme – the intention is to present a proposal for funding of the Scheme to the Commissioning Body for Supporting People when it is agreed that growth bids can be submitted
- a shared understanding of the accommodation needs of the young people known to the Youth Offending Service with the objective being to minimise the need for them being placed in Bed & Breakfast
- ensuring that representation from Supporting People is integral to the development of a revised resettlement strategy for young people known to Youth Offending Service leaving custody
- the strengthening of the roles of the Accommodation Officer within Youth Offending Service, a post with countywide responsibilities and the establishing of an Accommodation Lead within each of the six current locality Teams:
- the Accommodation Officer represents the Service on the Joint Planning and Policy Board Housing (JPPB (H)) and provides professional support to the Accommodation Leads

- the Leads are taking responsibility for liaison with Housing staff for the Districts their respective Teams cover and for ensuring data quality so that the monitoring of need is accurate
- via the support of the Policy Officer of the Joint Policy and Planning Board (Housing) (JPPB (H)) developing the competencies relating to housing and support of the Accommodation Leads

(3) shared work with Children's Social Services for the delivery of services to those young people known to the Youth Offending Service who have been assessed as "children in need":

- a protocol is in place which is proving effective
- the priority group are those 16 & 17 year olds who are being resettled in the community following a custodial sentence. They are particularly vulnerable when suitable accommodation and sufficient levels of support are not available
- the Howard League, an organisation campaigning for penal reform, are monitoring the performance of Local Authorities with respect to meeting their statutory duties under the Children Act 1989 to provide accommodation for 16 & 17 year olds. In those cases where in their view the duties are not being fulfilled they seek judicial reviews in the High Court in order to ensure the needs of the young people are responded to

- 2.2 Work recently agreed with Supporting People includes, firstly, the preparation of a needs analysis with the Probation Service, secondly the development of an alliance with the National Landlords Association and finally determining how the Service can contribute effectively to the strategy of the Kent Partnership, via the Safer and Stronger Communities Board, to the protection of vulnerable people.
- 2.3 It is intended that these three areas of work will inform the paper planned for the Commissioning Body for Supporting People. This will present a business case for the funding of a Youth Offending Service administered Deposit and Rent Guarantee scheme for the youth offending population.
- 2.4 Youth Offending Service is concluding a review of its structure and the arrangements for the delivery of youth justice services. Preparation is underway for the implementation of new approach, designed at the national level, to the identification and management of those children and young people assessed as either presenting a risk of serious harm to others or a high level risk of re-offending or both. For a significant percentage of those meeting these classifications accessing suitable accommodation and sufficient support will be pivotal to the achievement of positive outcomes. Currently the Youth Offending Service is concerned by the high re-offending rates of this population, particularly amongst those leaving custody.

### **3. Recommendations**

3.1 Members are asked to:

- (i) NOTE and COMMENT on the contents of this report.
- (ii) support in principle the presentation of a business case from the Youth Offending Service to the Commissioning Body for Supporting People under the auspices of a new growth bid process for a Deposit and Rent Guarantee Scheme which the Service would be responsible for administering.

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