

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

**DECISION TAKEN BY:**

Peter Oakford,  
Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services

**DECISION NO:**

16/00079

**For publication****Key decision**

Affects more than 2 Electoral Divisions and expenditure of more than £1m

**Subject: Single Source Action Proposal for the multiple supplier accommodation contracts for provision of shared accommodation for Children in Care Children and Care Leavers Aged 16-21.**

**Decision:** As Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services, I agree to

- a) **RE-AWARD** short-term interim contracts to deliver a Shared Accommodation Service for Children in Care and Care Leavers aged 16-21 from 1 March 2017 to 28 February 2018.
- b) **DELEGATE** authority to the Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, or other nominated office, to undertake the necessary actions to implement the decision.

**Reason(s) for decision:**

KCC currently purchase an Accommodation Service for Children in Care and Care Leavers Aged 16-21. The service is delivered by 3 organisations on behalf of KCC and is predominantly but not exclusively accessed by Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). The service is delivered through 2 block contract arrangements for the provision of 150 accommodation placements and a multiple supplier accommodation framework (call off) contract for provision of accommodation placements. The 3 year contracts started on the 1 March 2012, and a contract extension was agreed in 2015 and this ends on 28 February 2017.

The value of these contracts is £1.8 million; however, spend for 2015/16 was approximately £3m the majority of this expenditure is met from a Home Office grant. The contracts are due to end on the 28 February 2017.

The Council is currently in the process of preparing for the procurement of a new Accommodation service. It is anticipated that this contract will be awarded in April 2017.

The dramatic increase in the number of UASC entering Kent has resulted in an increase in demand for services. This service is the most affordable for this client group. There are approximately 600 service users and previous contract transition experience has shown that it could take up to one year to transition service users to a new service/ providers

The three current providers have been clear that they cannot continue to lease houses for use by KCC without a contract as providers must commit to a 6 month minimum lease on all properties.

Approving a Single Source Action allows sufficient time to align with the Procurement timetable, existing services to continue with minimal disruption to service users and support a gradual



transition to new service.

### **Legal Implications**

KCC has a statutory duty to provide suitable and safe accommodation that has the right level of support for Children in Care (including UASC). KCC must also accommodate 16 and 17 year old child in need (in accordance with Section 20 of the Children's Act 1989), a child / young person to whom Bail has been denied and children remanded to local authority accommodation (RLAA) and 16 and 17 year old Care Leavers.

KCC must provide Care Leavers (including former UASC) with support and financial support to assist in promoting their welfare, especially in relation to maintaining suitable accommodation and promoting education and training.

This activity is an element of the Facing the Challenge 0-25 transformation programme (16-25 Accommodation Programme).

### **Equality Implications**

An EQIA assessment has been undertaken and a low weighting has been determined. The EQIA supports the intention to diversify provision according to individual needs of service users

### **Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:**

This matter was discussed at the Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee on 10 November 2016. Ms K Sharp, Head of Public Health Commissioning and Ms K Mills, Commissioning Manager (Children's Centres), were in attendance for this item.

1. Ms Sharp and Ms Mills introduced the report, advising that the recommendation needed to be amended, extending the contract by 12 months to 28 February 2018, instead of 6 months, 31 August 2017. They responded to comments and questions from the Committee, as follows:

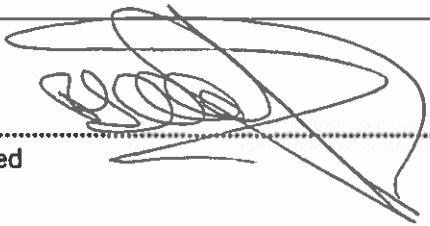
- (a) Accommodation providers worked closely with KCC's 18+ service. Consultation regarding location appropriateness was carried out with the Police and Districts. The properties tended to be two or three bedroom houses, providing accommodation for a small number of young people in each location.
- (b) They were working closely with the Property team, as they had a better understanding of the property available. The extension of existing contracts would allow more time to fully consider short and long term needs.
- (c) All care leavers received financial support and bursaries, but did not receive support with University course fees, and would be required to use student loans the same as other young people. The issue of supporting vulnerable people's ambitions was something for the Corporate Parenting Panel to consider.
- (d) This time next year, there would be over 1,000 care leavers, but the Property Team had assured that there were enough properties available to fulfil needs. KCC had a responsibility to ensure all children were placed.
- (e) Each child in care had a care plan which was reviewed regularly. A pathway plan was then devised when the child was approaching 16, taking into consideration education or employment needs and family connections. KCC had a duty to ensure care was focused on individual needs.
- (f) There were a high number of care leavers across the county, which would bring issues, no matter how effective the service was.

2. **RESOLVED** that the decision proposed to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services to re-award short-term interim contracts to deliver a Shared Accommodation Service for Children in Care and Care Leaves aged 16-21 from 1 March 2017 to 28 February 2018, and to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, or other nominated officer to implement the decision, be endorsed.

**Any alternatives considered:**

Consideration has been given to doing nothing. Contracts expire on the 28th February 2017, if new interim contracts are not in place a large number of UASC and Former UASC currently accessing the services may lose their accommodation and become homeless. KCC will be required to provide the majority of existing service users with alternative accommodation which is likely to be unaffordable through the Home Office grant.

**Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer: None**



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signed

23 Nov. 2016.

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date

