

# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

**DECISION TAKEN BY:**

**Sue Chandler,  
Cabinet Member for Children’s integrated Services**

**DECISION NO:**

**20/00022**

Unrestricted

Key decision: **YES**

**Subject: The provision of Supported Lodgings and Staying Put accommodation for Children and Young People aged 16-21 years (or up to 25 if in further education)**

**Proposed Decision:**

As Cabinet Member for Integrated Children’s Services, I agree to:

- a) the continuation of Supported Lodgings and Staying Put accommodation for Children and Young People aged 16-21 years (or up to 25 if in further education) through a change of delivery from contracted provision to being managed in-house.
- b) a short extension of no more than nine months to the current contracted arrangements, currently due to expire on 31 May 2020, to enable the changes to take place.
- c) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children’s Services, to take relevant actions, including but not limited to establishing the new in-house service, as necessary to implement this decision.

**Reason(s) for decision:**

- 1.1 Kent County Council (KCC) currently has a two-year contract with Catch 22 for the provision of Supported Accommodation in a Family Environment (Supported Lodgings) which commenced on 1 June 2016 with a two-year extension. The contract’s extension has been utilised and is due to expire on 31 May 2020.
- 1.2 The service is for the provision of accommodation and support to children in care and young people who are care leavers aged 16-21 years old (or up to 25 if in further education.) The young people in this service are living with a family (hosts) in their home, with their own bedroom, and receive support delivered by the hosts to develop practical skills and emotional stability, with the aim to achieve living independently.
- 1.3 The annual contract value for this service is £335,976 for management costs and approximately £1.9 million for support costs/rent, which varies each year as this figure is based on demand.
- 1.4 Over the last year, in preparation for the contract ending, a full analysis has been undertaken reviewing how effective the current service is based on contract data, benchmarking of other local authorities, market factors and provider, host and young people’s feedback. Four options have been considered and following full analysis the recommended option is to bring both Supported Lodgings placements and Staying Put placements in-house.

**Financial Implications**

- 2.1 The proposed service will be funded by using existing monies for the service, being £336k for management fees and £1.9m for placement fees. The cost for the 9-month extension to this contract will be £1,425,000.
- 2.2 The contract was structured to separate the support and rent payments (placement fees) from the management fee. The placement fees paid to the hosts would continue with some recognition to bring in-line annual increases with in-house Foster Carers going forward. The management fee of £336k would be utilised to enhance and improve all accommodation-based support services in KCC and could make a difference to all young people aged 16+.
- 2.3 Supported Lodgings is dependent on the ability to recruit “hosts” and the same issues faced by Foster

Carer recruitment is also experienced in Supported Lodgings. It is KCC's aim to reduce its use of spot-purchased semi-independent accommodation and expand Supported Lodgings. The proposal for managing Supported Lodgings in-house is part of a wider plan to reduce the use of semi-independent provision by improving the support offer to young people and the service providers.

### **Legal Implications**

- 3.1 Given the nature of the current contract, TUPE may apply in its broadest sense, however, as job descriptions are developed and will encompass tasks currently undertaken by existing KCC staff, TUPE may not apply. This will be kept continually under review and discussions will continue through the development of the in-house service under the extended contractual arrangements.
- 3.2 KCC has a statutory duty to provide suitable and safe accommodation that has the right level of support for Children in Care up to the age of 18 years in accordance with the Children's Act 1989. The 2010 (revised January 2015) regulations set out under Volume 3 of the Children Act 1989 (Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers) have strengthened an emphasis on leaving care as being a transitional period rather than something that occurs at a particular point in time. Care leavers are expected to receive support from their responsible authority (the Local Authority that last looked after them) up to their 25th birthday if they so wish and are eligible. The aim of such continuing support is to ensure that young people who are care leavers are provided with comprehensive personal support so that they achieve their potential as they make the transition to adulthood.
- 3.3 Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers (February 2018): This guidance is for local authorities and their 'relevant partners' (as defined in section 10 of the Children Act 2004) and others who contribute to services provided to looked-after children and care leavers. It promotes young people being safe and having stability which includes the need to maintain, as far as possible, consistency in the home environment, relationships with carers and professionals and school placement. For some care leavers, it may involve supporting a Staying Put arrangement where care leavers and their former foster carers wish to remain living together after the young person reaches the age of 18. It may also mean wider support to help care leavers navigate the inevitable challenges of moving to independence through early preparation, good planning, securing a range of housing options and maintaining relationships with those whose continued support they might want or need during their transition to adulthood.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 4.1 The people most likely to be impacted by changes to this service are the recipients of the current service and their host families. However, the young people themselves are unlikely to experience a change in host family, unless the host family does not want to work to KCC, and the decision may be that the young person needs to move. The consultation with hosts has evidenced that there is a positive response to host providers transferring to be supported by KCC. Overall the positive impact is likely to outweigh the negative as the service will be more integrated with the KCC offer for smoother transition through other services into independence.

A link to the full assessment can be found on Kent.gov.uk on this decision's webpage.:

**Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:** At its meeting on 11 March 2020, the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee considered this proposal and recommended the following alteration to the decision was made and the Minute extract is as follows:

Cabinet Committee resolved to recommend the following changes to the proposed decision:

- Limit the extension of the current arrangements to 6 months
- Require explicit reference to officer consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member in relation to delegated decision-making.

### Proposed decision as recommended by Cabinet Committee:

As Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, I propose to;

- A) Agree to the continuation of Supported Lodgings and Staying Put accommodation for Children and Young People aged 16-21 years (or up to 25 if in further education) through a change of delivery from contracted provision to being managed in-house
- B) Agree to a short extension of 6 months to the current contract that expires on 31 May 2020 to enable the changes to take place; and
- C) Delegate decisions about the establishment of the new service to the Corporate Director of

Children, Young People and Education, or other Officer as instructed by the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services.

**Cabinet Member response:**

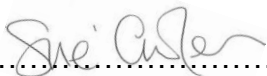
While the intention to deliver the changes within six months remains, I am satisfied that it remains appropriate to allow additional contingency time to ensure the transition from contracted arrangements to in-house service delivery can be implemented in the best way possible. In particular, I am mindful of the impact the COV-19 epidemic may have on a range of services, organisations and individuals. In reaching this view, I have considered the formal comments of the Cabinet Committee and the response of the Corporate Director, which is detailed in the decision report.

**Any alternatives considered and rejected:**

There are currently a number of risks and challenges relating to commissioning a service with the independent sector. Historically there has been a limited market to externally manage this service. If a different provider is awarded the contract, there is a risk that all Hosts (SAiFE/Supported Lodgings & Staying Put) may not transfer. This would also be a risk if the service was to be brought in-house and as such, we have completed a consultation with the Hosts to ask them their views; all of the responses received were positive in transferring to a new arrangement. Staying Put transition and referral issues have been highlighted over the term of the current contract due to the Foster Carer transferring from KCC to the provider, which has also impacted negatively on the number of Foster Carers available to KCC due to them moving across to become Hosts.

The number and range of opportunities to bring the management of the service in-house far out-weigh the risks and therefore Integrated Children's Services favour this approach.

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



.....  
signed

1 April 2020

.....  
date