

Semi Independent Living Policy and Overview Committee Information Report

Committee name	Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee
Officer reporting	Sandra Taylor, Director of Provider Services and Commissioned Care
Papers with report	None.
Ward	All

HEADLINES

This report provides an overview of Semi Independent Living arrangements for young people aged 16 - 25 years, commissioned by The London Borough of Hillingdon, Children & Young People's Social Care.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Committee notes the report on Semi Independent Living.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. Introduction

Semi Independent Living [SIL] are services that provide accommodation and support to young people aged 16-18 or up to the age of 21, or 25 for care leavers who remain in education or training.

Accommodation usually comprises single rooms of a bedsit type with other shared communal space. Properties can range in size from large domestic properties to large scale providers of schemes such as the YMCA or St. Mungos, where there can be bed numbers of 70 plus.

The support should be targeted to promote preparation for adulthood, including attendance and engagement with education and employment, teaching of life skills such as budgeting, tenancy management, keeping safe, managing health and relationships and often support with English as a second language.

The SIL services currently commissioned by the Council both within Hillingdon and around the country are providing support to 156 [Dec.19] young people. The size and quality of the provision is varied and SIL services are not regulated under the Care Standards Act 2000 and subsequently not inspected by Ofsted.

All local authorities commission semi independent living in England and currently there is a push

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to review how the quality of this is monitored and questions from senior government officials about whether or not these services should be regulated. Hillingdon took the decision in early 2019 to review how SIL services in the borough operate and the quality of accommodation, support and outcomes for young people.

Placements are primarily funded by the Council's base budget for Children's Social Care, with UASC placements funded by the Asylum grant. Placement costs fund accommodation, subsistence, clothing costs as well as Social Worker hours.

The average cost of a placement can vary from £136.00 per week to £500 per week depending on the needs of the young person, however, in some specialist placements and in particular, those out of borough the costs can increase to £1,000 per week. These costs in comparison to regulated residential care are significantly lower and reflect the level of support both needed and given.

All young people living in SIL services have retained contact with their Social Worker and or PA [Personal Assistant] and continue to have a pathway plan for support.

2. Current position

The review of all SIL services in Hillingdon identified that the quality of support and accommodation varied and that the supply available to CYPS for placement relied on availability as opposed to purposeful choice. Risk matching, providers with a specialist focus on individuals' needs and good quality accommodation was not as robust as we would expect.

Providers lacked impetus to move young people on as part of their journey as they were concerned about vacancies affecting their business, but there were significant voids across the suppliers in the borough. The Council is signed up to and part of the West London Alliance [WLA] in relation to the sourcing of young people's placements, however, although an automated system of searching, it is not responsive to the immediate needs for a placement that often occur, especially when searching for a placement for an unaccompanied young person.

The review identified that the accommodation at Olympic House is not of a standard we would expect, with long term outstanding repairs not carried out by the Landlord and the size of the building is not conducive to developing a shared house/family type of support to the young men living there. Following agreement from the The Leader of the Council, the contract for this service was formally ended with the notice period concluding on 31st March 2020.

Alongside the decision on Olympic House, a review of all of the 'block' provided services by YMCA and P3 took place and with the exception of the Supported accommodation at Ventura House [60] rooms, all other accommodation was confirmed as suitable for ongoing use. YMCA has chosen to offer a different business model and increase the number of rooms available at Ventura House for young people to 100. This will be for young people over the age of 18 who will receive housing related support only.

There are a range of providers, who the Council contracts with for places on an individual basis [spot purchasing] for specialist places, to enable risk matching or to manage demand. These providers are both within the borough or nationally. It is not anticipated that there will be a lack

of choice or demand on placements despite the changes to the commissioning of Olympic House and Ventura. Developmental work with providers and the WLA on accreditation is already giving wider options.

3. Provider development

As an unregulated service area, there has been national questions from sector leaders about the reasons for not registering these services with Ofsted, currently there is a more persuasive argument for accreditation as opposed to regulation. The way in which young people are supported does not fit into any of the current regulatory standards within the Care Standards Act and there are cross cutting age limits in relation to Ofsted and CQC. Potentially a positive approach is to adopt similar standards to those of the Domiciliary Care supported living regulations, whereby the care and not the accommodation are inspected, but this does not fit holistically.

We have taken the decision in Hillingdon to develop and adopt a set of practice standards that we expect of our providers of SIL services as well as to join accreditation scheme developments with the WLA. The standards will include:

- The Provider will have a named 'Responsible Individual' within their organisation
- The Council will only contract with compliant providers
- The Provider will have a Quality Assurance auditing framework on which they will report on outcomes of care monthly
- The Provider will have standards of safer recruitment procedures in place, with records available for auditing. Staff training and supervision will be evidenced and the number of staff on duty to provide support will be at an appropriate level
- The provider will ensure that housing related matters are addressed and that the relevant health and safety home checks are carried out and recorded
- The provider will have appropriate policies and procedures in place to manage the support of young people with a range of complexities and that their risk management strategies are appropriate and evidenced
- Escalation and de-escalation strategies for concerns or incidents will be in place
- All providers used by the Council will be registered with WLA, who aims to have all providers accredited in the future.

The quality inspection framework will be built into the contract monitoring process and will involve a range of technical and compliance quality assurance checks that aim to ensure that young people are living in a safe, clean environment and have appropriate support to meet their needs. When considering placing a young person in a semi-independent provision, all relevant parties will discuss safeguarding and information about other young people already placed to ensure appropriate matching.

The introduction of 'Young Inspectors' involvement in the QA process will provide experts with experience evidence to strengthen the work with providers to achieve excellence.

A draft set of standards will be completed by 31st March, 2020 for consultation across relevant social care teams and including the Children in Care Council, Corporate Parenting Panel and the Cabinet Member for Education, Children & Youth Services.

Implications on related Council policies

A central role of the Policy Overview Committees is to monitor council services and make recommendations on changes and improvements to the Cabinet who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

None at this stage, pending any findings approved by Cabinet.

Financial Implications

None at this stage.

Legal Implications

None at this stage.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.