

Semi-Independent Living for Young People

Committee name	Families Health and Wellbeing Select Committee
Officer reporting	Alex Coman, Social Care and Health Directorate
Papers with report	Appendix 1 – Semi Independent Living for Young People Appendix 2 – Indicators for supported accommodation
Ward	All

HEADLINES

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee notes the report on Semi Independent Living set out in Appendix 1.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 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.
- All our children reside in fully accredited semi independent accommodation that meets their needs and support their transition into adulthood.
- The support offered is 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.
- Most other provisions are in large residential properties averaging between 5 and 7 beds.
- During the last financial year, extra support was provided to young people in semi independent accommodation to mitigate the impact of COVID and self isolation.
- Currently there are 198 young people who live in fully accredited and checked semi independent accommodation.
- Hillingdon are provided more resilient and flexible brokerage support and market engagement through the new Brokerage Service supporting Children and Adults.
- Hillingdon are part of the West London alliance and utilise both their expertise and the Dynamic Purchasing Vehicle to source fully accredited and best value semi independent accommodation for our young people.
- Appendix 1 provides an update for Members of the Committee, including performance data.

Classification: Public

Families, Health and Wellbeing Select Committee – 20 April 2022

PERFORMANCE DATA

A broad range of relevant performance data and benchmarking is set out in Appendix 1.

RESIDENT BENEFIT

Looked after children in our Borough can be assured that they will receive appropriate accommodation and support to meet their needs and support their transition to independence.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Utilisation of CarePlace enables us to obtain the best value placements for our young people, combining lower cost per unit with robust quality assurance and accreditation.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Care Standards Act 2000](#)

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Semi Independent Living for Young People

Appendix 2 – Indicators for supported accommodation

Appendix 1 :Semi-Independent Living for Young People

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

The support offered is 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. All young people in semi-independent accommodation also receive additional support of a social worker and/or a personal advisor.

The size and quality of the provision is varied, SIL provision is not yet regulated under the Care Standards Act 2000, and subsequently not inspected by Ofsted. The issue of unregulated accommodation for young people, particularly those aged 18 and under has been subject to debate across central government for the last couple of years. In September 2021, new legislation came into force making clear that no young person under 16 years of age can be placed in unregulated accommodation. Hillingdon as a local authority have never placed under 16-year-olds in unregulated provision, as such the change in legislation has had no impact on practice.

2. Current Position

The transition from Olympic House to smaller, better-quality provision concluded in 2020/21. The largest commissioned setting is YMCA accommodation for 23 young people. This setting provides direct support to young people with a pathway to move on to independence. Most other provisions are in large residential properties averaging between 5 and 7 beds.

Whilst the move to smaller self-contained accommodation was intended to improve the quality of life for our children and young people, an unintended consequence of the pandemic was that young people became more isolated.

As a result, we contracted P3 to provide floating support to young people, to ensure that they were offered an enhanced level of contact, in person and virtually. The service is currently using a blended approach to stay in contact with young people and allow more choice as to how they prefer to communicate. This provides bespoke support that is responsive to the needs of our young people.

The P3 Navigator Plus project has been designed to support young people across Hillingdon to thrive in their transition into adulthood. The project offers an early intervention and prevention approach to ensure young people can receive timely support and avoid the risks of long waiting times that could be experienced with more acute services. The model has been developed in response to the significant changes that all young people face on their transition through adolescence, as recognised by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Our Children's participation service continues to provide a fortnightly newsletter to keep our young people connected, engaged and informed.

Additional practical support in the form of increased financial support, care and food parcels have been provided throughout the pandemic.

A review of support vs care has been completed for all young people aged 16-17 in SIL, utilising the Ofsted framework 'indicators for supported accommodation', (Appendix A) to ensure that all young people who require regulated care receive it.

The pandemic did create some delay in young people transitioning to semi-independent accommodation from regulated accommodation, and from semi-independent accommodation to independent housing options. Children's social care and Housing have worked together to review housing and commissioning options for young people 18+ who are ready to move to independent accommodation.

3. Hillingdon's Quality Assurance Team

Following agreement in December 2019 for the integration of the brokerage and Direct Payments function across Adult Social Care, CWD, SEND and Health, a consultation with the existing team and the Access to Resources Placement Team commenced in August 2020. The proposal was agreed, and the process began to fully integrate the service in November 2020. . As part of this process the Quality Monitoring function and resource for children and adults were joined into the established Adult Quality Monitoring Team, thus extending the remit of this team to both Adults and Children and increasing resilience and capacity in ensuring that young people are living in a safe, clean environment and have appropriate support to meet their needs and prepare for adulthood.

Through this move, the aim was to refocus the monitoring role to one of improvement, working with providers in line with a set of Semi -Independent Living Standards to develop their service and stabilise placements. This will in turn, reduce the number of placement moves for our young people. To support extending the remit of this function, an additional post has been created and is funded through the BCF funding. This post is currently being recruited to. Children's Social Workers will continue to fulfil their statutory responsibility to monitor placements enabling the Quality Monitoring Team to focus on service improvement and reducing placement breakdown.

4. Provider Development

Services for 16+ young people remain statutory unregulated, though in Hillingdon we are committed to providing the best possible services to our young people. To achieve this, we are fully signed up to the West London Alliance (WLA) commissioning and accreditation arrangements. There is a small number of services still waiting to go through the accreditation process, due to COVID related delays. However, the vast majority of the placements used have been inspected and validated through the WLA and in the event that we need a placement that hasn't yet been accredited, we adopt the same criteria as WLA and carry out a quality assurance visit prior to a young person moving into that accommodation.

In February 2021 we integrated children's placements team and Adults Brokerage team into one Brokerage Service. The new service model has strengthened our market management through the centralised oversight and engagement of providers, this has also allowed a better understanding of gaps in the marketplace and in turn inform commissioning activity.

As we exit the pandemic during this year, we will resume our ambition to actively engage our 'Young Inspectors' in the QA process and accreditation of providers and we aim to achieve this by the end of this financial year

5. Semi Independent (SIL) Improvement Project

The Commissioning Alliance (CA) has an accreditation scheme for the Semi-Independent Care Leavers market. This accreditation looks at the people running the services (stage 1), the organisations policies and procedures (stage 2) and inspections at the property level (stage 3).

During the early part of 2022/23 the CA will be developing the Quality Assurance portal which will house an updated accreditation scheme.

This scheme builds on the strengths of the current WLA accreditation model and aims to incorporate an even more robust and consistent approach across the accreditation scheme. The revised scheme will be looking more in depth to areas such as: Health and Safety, Information Governance, Safeguarding and People e.g. safer recruitment, etc. The new scheme will have Accreditation Officers trained in all these areas, as well as the level 3 safeguarding qualification.

At property level inspection (stage 3) the Commissioning Alliance will be using Environmental Housing Officers to carry out the inspections which will be in line with the Temporary Accommodation inspection service being operated across London by the CA. This will align the accreditation scheme with the 2004 Housing Act. The stage 3 inspections will grade properties A-E, which in turn will allow us greater understanding of cost vs quality in the market.

6. Quality Assurance Portal Development

The Quality Assurance portal will not only house the accreditation scheme but will also be a central point for information to be collected and displayed to placing authorities. This will include recent contract management reviews and any appropriate information to help local authorities share intelligence between themselves on providers. Areas of concerns for example LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) investigations are taking place will be highlighted and displayed in the CarePlace Dynamic Purchasing Vehicle System so Brokerage teams know if there are any concerns about providers before placing children or young people in that provision.

In the future it is intended that the Quality Assurance portal will also capture young people's feedback on services and will support out of borough notifications when a young person is placed in a different local authority.

7. Next Steps

Building on the work conducted with local providers, YMCA & P3 and the Commissioning Alliance with regard to 16+ service provision, providers will be targeted to develop further services including shared accommodation, shared lives/supported lodgings.

Local demand projections based on current usage and the analysis of local impact of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) demand, will support the continuing development of the commissioning strategy and market position statement and continue to engage the market in an effective and efficient way.

Regular review of quality of provision and outcomes for our young people are scrutinised regularly by the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Performance Data

Data used to monitor performance is provided by the Commissioning Alliance. The most recent being **Hillingdon's Performance Report (June 2021-Feb 2022)**.

Hillingdon have consistently used Care Place and sourced 100 Semi-independent placements through the system, all of them with accredited providers.

Service Type	Service Level	Awaiting Responses	Awaiting Decision	Expired	Unsuccessful	Not Assigned (offer rejected by LA)	Complete	Documents Issued	Documents In Progress	Documents Signed	Documents Complete	Total Packages	Pending	No Provider Found / Offer Rejected	Awarded
16+ Accommodation & Support	Level 2 - Accommodation with Support	1	35	2	1	34	34	8	1	1	56	173	36	37	100
Fostering Agency	Core: Ages 0-15	3	31	0	65	31	11	15	1	1	4	162	34	96	32
	Core: Ages 16-17	0	1	1	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	7	1	4	2
	Parent & Child	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0
	Specialist	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	0
Registered Children's Home	Core (Organisation)	8	16	2	53	16	2	2	0	0	1	100	24	71	5
Local Authority Total / Average		12	85	5	125	81	47	27	2	2	61	447	97	211	139
/ Average		12	85	5	125	81	47	27	2	2	61	447	97	211	139

Alongside this data, the Children's Social Care database and financial systems are reviewed regularly to understand demand, need and future planning.

At the end of February 2022 Hillingdon was corporate parent for 463 children and 530 Care leavers. 198 of all these young people were living in SIL. The breakdown by age of the cohort of young people living in SILs is as follows:

Age	Number
16	39
17	120
18	23
19	10
20	4
21	1
22	1

This age distribution is in line with what we would expect to see, the highest age band being 17 in preparation for independence. Young people in the older age bands who are still living in a SIL have exceptional circumstances and identified additional needs.

Appendix 2

Indicators for supported accommodation

This table sets out whether your service falls into the category of a children's home or 'supported accommodation'. If your service is the latter, you do not need to register. If your service provides care, it will meet the definition of a children's home and you will usually need to register, as explained earlier in this guide. These questions are indicative and not exhaustive. If you are unclear, you should seek advice.

The table may be particularly useful if you provide accommodation to young people over the age of 16.

Indicators	Yes	No
Can young people go out of the establishment without staff's permission?	Supported accommodation	Care
Do young people have full control of their own finances?	Supported accommodation	Care
Do young people have control over what they wear and the resources to buy clothes?	Supported accommodation	Care
Are young people in charge of meeting all of their health needs, including such things as arranging GP or specialist health care appointments? Are young people in full control of their medication?	Supported accommodation (note that young people may ask for advice and help on their health, but if decisions rest with the young person, the establishment is not providing care)	Care
Do staff have any access to any medical records?	Care	Supported accommodation
Can young people choose to stay away overnight?	Supported accommodation (note that being expected to tell someone if they are going to be away overnight does not indicate providing care, but needing to ask someone's permission does)	Care

Is there a sanctions policy that goes beyond house rules and legal sanctions that would be imposed on any adult?	Care	Supported accommodation
If the establishment accommodates both adults and young people, do those under 18 have any different supervision, support, facilities or restrictions?	Care	Supported accommodation
Are there regularly significant periods of time when young people are on the premises with no direct staff supervision?	Supported accommodation	Care
Do staff have any responsibility for aftercare once a young person has left?	Care (note that some supported accommodation services will offer some support to help young people get established in their next accommodation – this is not care)	Supported accommodation
Does the establishment's literature promise the provision of care or relate to specific care support provided to all residents?	Care	Supported accommodation
Does the establishment provide or commission a specialist support service, which forms part of the main function of the establishment?	Care	Supported accommodation