

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



Report subject	<b>Housing for Care Experienced Young People</b>
Meeting date	10 June 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>The Council provides and commissions a range of housing for Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) as part of their transition to independence. A range of social and private rented accommodation provision is offered depending on the assessed needs of the young person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported accommodation (onsite or visiting support)</li> <li>• Joint Living Properties (shared houses)</li> <li>• Self-contained accommodation (dispersed or clustered)</li> </ul> <p>The Council holds a number of powers which act as assurance that the quality of accommodation is of the required standard and has a number of additional measures in place to ensure accommodation quality is maintained alongside housing related support for each and every setting.</p> <p>A review of the housing needs of Care Experienced Young People has recently been considered within a wider review of specialist and supported housing needs. A housing strategy outlining the future commissioning intentions will be considered by Cabinet later in 2025/26.</p>
Recommendations	<p><b>It is RECOMMENDED that:</b></p> <p>Members are asked to note the content of the report.</p>
Reason for recommendations	<p>The Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested further information on the provision of accommodation, its quality and the housing options available for Care Experienced Young People. This report responds to that request.</p>

Portfolio Holder(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillor Kieron Wilson - Portfolio Holder for Homes &amp; Regulation</li> <li>• Councillor Richard Burton - Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People</li> </ul>
Service Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kelly Deane - Director of Housing and Communities</li> <li>• Juliette Blake - Director of Children's Social Care</li> <li>• Rachel Gravett - Director for Commissioning, Resources and Quality</li> </ul>
Report Authors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shan Searle - Head of Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People</li> <li>• Ben Tomlin - Head of Strategic Housing &amp; Partnerships</li> <li>• Sarah Langdale - Head of Children's Commissioning</li> </ul>
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For information.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 Children's Overview and Scrutiny requested further information on the provision of accommodation, its quality and the housing options available for Care Experienced Young People. This report responds to that request.
- 1.2 The Council both provides and commissions a range of housing for young people as part of their transition to independence. Accommodation is typically provided with either on-site or visiting support. Some accommodation is in shared houses, Joint Living Properties, some is self-contained dispersed housing, or clustered self-contained accommodation. Private and social rented housing are possible housing solutions depending on need.
- 1.3 The landlord of the accommodation may be the Council, Housing Association, or Specialist Independent Living or Supported Housing Provider. The oversight of compliance to housing standards will vary depending upon landlord and often configuration of accommodation.
- 1.4 This report provides an oversight of the powers of the Council in respect to compliance against said Housing Standards. For the purposes of the report, Housing Standards is recognised as compliance against Condition & Amenity requirements, Gas, Asbestos, Fire, Electrical, Water Hygiene, Lifts and Licensing.
- 1.5 Housing related support is provided to young people separately to the housing management and compliance requirements, this can be externally commissioned or delivered by in-house Council housing teams.

- 1.6 By way of background context, the table below illustrates the number of Care Experienced Young People 18-25 yrs currently accommodated in provision commissioned by Children's Social Care and Housing. There is a range of supported or independent accommodation provision which is pending move-on to greater independence.

Accommodation Type	Provider	CEYP Accommodated
Joint Living Properties (temporary accommodation)	BCP Council	0
Commissioned Supported Housing	Various Housing Association Providers	16
Joint Living Properties with support	Seascope Homes & Property	10
Independent Living (UAS CEYP) (HMO's or Joint Living Properties commissioned by CSC)	Various Private Sector Providers	56
Supported Accommodation Provision (UAS CEYP) Commissioned by CSC)	Various Private Sector Providers	21
Independent Living (CEYP) Commissioned by CSC)	BCP Council / Housing Association Provider	18
Supported Lodgings or Staying Put Arrangements (CEYP) Commissioned by CSC)	BCP Council and Private Sector	67
Independent Flats (commissioned Housing 1 <sup>st</sup> support)	BCP Homes & Seascope Homes & Property	10

## 2. Housing Options

- 2.1 A Joint housing protocol for Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People sets out how operational arrangements between Council departments work with young people to ensure their needs are assessed and accommodation options are matched and planned in a timely manner to avoid housing crisis.
- 2.2 Housing pathways are needs led and can include a number of planned housing settings on a pathway to independence. Recommended housing options may vary from house shares, private rented sector, social sector, supported or specialist housing. There is no current bespoke pathway to access (low cost) home ownership.
- 2.3 A range of support is provided by the Council or commissioned providers to enable the delivery of the desired housing option. This could be through accessing specific financial support, or navigator support to access accommodation.
- 2.4 As is the case with other housing needs groups, the supply of all housing types often does not meet demand, with affordability a particular challenge in identifying a home in the private sector. To ensure Care Experience Young People do have a reasonable prospect of accessing suitable housing, additional priority is awarded to this group when considering the allocation of social and supported housing. These market and

supply challenges mean that the private sector has critical role locally in meeting the housing needs of our Care Experience Young People.

### **3. Council and BCP Homes**

- 3.1 The Council, either directly or via Seascope Homes & Property and BCP Homes provides housing for Care Experienced Young People in long term accommodation, temporary training flats and transitional accommodation as well as shared housing. Building safety compliance standards for social housing have been significantly strengthened in recent years to ensure the safety and well-being of tenants.
- a) Safety and Quality Standards: Social housing providers must ensure that homes are safe and of good quality. This includes regular inspections, risk assessments, and the implementation of safety measures such as fire safety systems.
  - b) Transparency and Accountability: Social Landlords are required to be transparent with tenants, treating them with fairness and respect. A new set of consumer standards for tenants has been established where the new standards are measured. The most recent published standards for BCP Homes can be found here. [BCP Homes performance | BCP \(bcpcouncil.gov.uk\)](https://www.bcp-council.gov.uk/bcp-homes-performance)
  - c) Regulatory Oversight: The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) actively inspects landlords to ensure compliance with the above standards. They scrutinise data on satisfaction, repairs performance and other issues and will soon programme a visit to BCP Homes for formal inspection. The Regulator will use enforcement powers when necessary.
  - d) Tenant Engagement: The standards emphasize the importance of engaging with tenants and considering their feedback in decision-making processes.
- 3.2 These measures aim to protect tenants and improve the overall quality of social housing. The BCP Homes Advisory Board provides oversight of the compliance these arrangements.
- 3.3 Young people can expect to be safe in their homes, and this can be demonstrated through annual gas safety tests where there is a gas supply, electrical safety testing every five years, fire risk assessments of any internal communal areas and management of any communal water supplies and asbestos.
- 3.4 Their home should be free from hazards, for example damp and mould, and all tenants have access to an effective and timely repairs service including planned improvements.
- 3.5 While these are required outcomes for all tenants, the council also aims to deliver fair and equitable outcomes for young people, ensuring that we understand and meet their diverse needs. Their views are considered, and they are supported to sustain their tenancies.
- 3.6 Young people have access to information regarding landlord services and opportunities to become involved in decision making. There is a fair and accessible complaints process for when things go wrong.

- 3.7 Where the Council needs to provide Temporary Accommodation to a Care Experienced Young Person, the condition of the accommodation is subject to the same Safety and Quality Standards as longer-term lettings. Additional regard is also given to the provision of soft furnishings and the internal environment to ensure the provision is as appropriate as possible when required as an emergency or crisis placement.

#### **4. Supported Housing**

- 4.1 Where the provision of Housing and Support for Young People is commissioned from a specialist third party provider, such as a Housing Association, the Council have contract monitoring arrangements in place with Providers to ensure adherence to contract specification within a planned cycle of inspections covering key areas of assurance including health and safety, risk management, safeguarding, and building compliance. There are currently 3 different commissioned Providers of Supported Housing for Young People operating in the BCP area, each providing a range of intensities of Housing Related Support for Young People between 16-21 years. Older Care Experienced Young People who require specialist supported housing as part of their pathway to independence can access provision for Adults, of which there is a range of provision.
- 4.2 Each service specification reflects expectations of housing standards, the quality of support provision, general housing management performance and personal outcomes tailored to individuals housing support needs. Insight gained from reporting provides a performance baseline on key aspects of delivery including individual support outcomes, complaints & compliments, void management, rent arrears and building compliance.
- 4.3 A Housing Compliance Health Check covers the 'big 6' areas of compliance (Gas, Asbestos, Fire, Electrical, Water Hygiene, and Lifts). Where Registered Social Housing Providers are commissioned, each is obliged to adhere to regulations set out by the Regulator or Social Housing (RSH) in the same way as described above for BCP Homes.
- 4.4 Services are visited for review by the Councils Contracts team on an annual basis and more frequently where compliance issues are identified. Quarterly contract review meetings are held, and monthly operations meetings ensure oversight of practice.
- 4.5 There have been no breaches in service quality or building compliance issues raised for Young Persons Supported Housing Services in the past 3 years.
- 4.6 There are currently 69 units of supported accommodation commissioned for young people, with a further 5 homes in the pipeline for delivery this financial year.
- 4.7 In October 2023, all providers in England offering housing and support (supported accommodation) to 16 and 17-year-old Children in Care (CiC) and Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) must now legally register with Ofsted. The change addresses long-standing concerns over the sector's lack of regulation, aiming to ensure the safety and well-being of vulnerable young people. The Council's Children's Commissioning Team has worked in partnership with local supported accommodation providers to ensure compliance to the Ofsted registration standards. There are currently 7 Providers offering a total of 55 beds. The process of registering an in-house

Supported Lodgings Provision via Children's Services in-house Fostering Service to improve sufficiency of registered provision.

- 4.8 Children and Young People are visited regularly, once every 8 weeks between the agreed ages of 18-21 and up to the age of 25 years by a named professional such as a Social Worker or Personal Advisor. These regular visits further support the quality assurance of the properties our young people reside in.

## **5. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Care Experienced Young People Housing**

- 5.1 Children's Social Care (CSC) commission 38 units of independent living units specifically for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Care Experienced Young People, regardless of their legal status. This accommodation is provided by private local landlords; Children's Social Care hold the tenancies and fund the accommodation. The majority of the accommodation offered is in Joint Living Properties or single occupancy independent accommodation. The quality of this accommodation is subject to compliance standards.
- 5.2 When Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Care Experienced Young People receive leave to remain in the UK, their housing pathways are considered in the same way as any other young person, via joint housing assessment needs assessment. This group are eligible to access the housing option that best meets their needs.

## **6. Private Sector Housing Standards & Enforcement**

- 6.1 The Council has several statutory powers to maintain housing conditions and standards in the private rented sector; these powers are also applicable to homes provided by Registered Housing Providers or other Charities operating companies which deliver housing for vulnerable Adults and Young People.
- 6.2 Notably landlords are obliged by the Homes Act 2018 and Housing Act 2004 to ensure their properties are fit for human habitation at the start and throughout a tenancy. Councils have various enforcement powers, including improvement notices, prohibition orders and emergency remedial action to address hazardous conditions in rented homes.
- 6.3 These powers enable councils to ensure that rented properties meet safety and habitability standards, protecting tenants and promoting a fair rental market.
- 6.4 The Council holds a statutory responsibility for licensing some Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). This allows the council to ensure that the licence holder is a fit and proper person, requires the property to meet prescribed fire and safety requirements. Amenity Standards and management regulations define the requirements for the minimum standards in HMO's. The BCP amenity standards can be found here; <https://www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/documents/business/Amenity-Standards.pdf>. Every effort is made to ensure that our young people are not placed in to HMO accommodation, however there may be circumstances where this is a suitable option.
- 6.5 Any property condition complaints are inspected by our trained housing standards team. They will ensure a property complies with relevant standards and the management regulations and enforce accordingly if they do not.

- 6.6 The housing condition standards described remain applicable for all accommodation commissioned by the Council for Care Experienced Young People. There have been no significant housing standard complaints recorded for these properties in recent years.

## **7. Young People's Views**

- 7.1 The Children's Rights and Engagement team ran a project to record the experience of care experienced young people from BCP council and their experience of housing when moving into independence. Their findings can be found at Appendix X.

## **8. Youth Homelessness Board**

- 8.1 In recognition of the housing challenges facing young people in BCP and in response to rising rates of youth homelessness it is acknowledged that more needs to be done to support young people struggling with housing and any related issues. To develop a coordinated response, funding was secured through HRH Prince of Wales Homewards programme to engage Every Youth to support the re-development of a Youth Homelessness Board that will have strategic oversight of activities that aim to prevent, and respond to, the challenges young people are experiencing in the BCP area.
- 8.2 A working group of senior officers are currently working together to define the composition, scope and priorities of the board. To further inform the Board's development the lived experiences of young people are being sought.
- 8.3 The new board is expected to launch in September 2025, with additional strategic oversight of housing needs and experiences of care experienced young people which shall ensure that a Specialist and Supported Housing Strategy delivers a longer term aspirations to meet local housing needs. A new strategy is expected to be considered by Cabinet later in the 2025/26 year.
- 8.2 The board shall ensure the needs of Care Experienced Young People and young people who maybe at risk of housing insecurity receive appropriate advice, support, care and guidance to improve opportunities for sustainable independent living.

## **9. Current Issues/Challenges and Opportunities**

- 9.1 There are currently 59 Care Experienced Young People (most of which are former unaccompanied asylum seeking children with leave to remain in the UK) who have reached the age of 18 and who require move-on accommodation from their commissioned accommodation settings. This presents a challenge in establishing suitable move on requirements and represents a backlog which has increased more significantly over the course of the past year. Robust plans are in place to ensure that all young people receive assessments including housing plans and that resources are targeted at securing move-on accommodation with support. Given the high demand for suitable and affordable accommodation within BCP, it is anticipated that working through the backlog of move on will take up to 12 months. This is a priority programme of work for the housing and childrens services teams.

10. The number of Care Experienced Young People facing homelessness increased in the past year to 58. At time of writing one young person was staying with a family in temporary accommodation awaiting a move. The increase in homelessness has also been attributed to issues regarding the timeliness of joint assessments and specifically in insufficient time to plan for suitable housing to be available at 18 years.
11. Housing & Children's services have undertaken to carry out a review of the joint working protocols and provide training refreshers to staff teams which will ensure the quality and timeliness of assessments carried out with young people is improved. As part of this process, the review will use insight from care experienced young people's recent experiences of their housing journeys to inform practice. Oversight and assurance of the review, including the monitoring of progress to address the issues identified, will be overseen at Children's Services Quality Board. It is expected the Youth Homelessness Board will consider the wider systemic local issues which present risks of homelessness for BCP young people. The aim of this work will be to prevent occurrences and ensure support is accessible when and where a young person requires it.
12. To ensure sufficiency of the accommodation offers available to young people when they turn 18, a specialist and supported housing strategy is in final development following a specialist housing needs assessment exercise which has identified requirements for future housing for this group over the next 10 years. Further engagement of the strategy and future accommodation commissioning plans is scheduled for later this year, with updated governance in place via the Housing Strategy Delivery Board.

### **13. Summary of financial implications**

- 13.1 Due to the variety of arrangements by which accommodation for Care Experienced Young People is provided, the housing quality assurance standards described are delivered in accordance the legislative framework and associated contractual requirements.
- 13.2 The quality assurance standards are not impacted by the financial resources available to procure the accommodation. The Council ensures it has sufficient resources to discharge its statutory powers with the Housing & Communities service directorate.

### **14. Summary of legal implications**

- 14.1 The Council has powers under a range of different housing related legislation to ensure the quality of accommodation provided to Care Experienced Young People is good. There is little evidence to suggest the quality of accommodation provided is not of an acceptable standard requiring enforcement.
- 14.2 Teams are trained to identify and respond to any complaints relating to housing quality.

### **15. Summary of human resources implications**

Not applicable



## **16. Summary of environmental impact**

- 16.1 Poor quality housing can lead to increased energy consumption due to inadequate heating or insulation. It also often results in impacts on someone's mental and or physical health and safety.

## **17. Summary of public health implications**

- 17.1 Research reveals that care-experienced young people encounter higher rates of mental health issues and poorer overall health outcomes compared to their peers. This encompasses elevated risks of mental health disorders, substandard physical health, and greater involvement in crime and unemployment. While many challenges may arise from the circumstances leading to their becoming looked after or during their time in care, the transition to independent living is identified as a critical juncture with significant implications for their overall well-being. Many care-experienced young people lack robust personal support networks, resulting in feelings of isolation and loneliness. Consequently, securing and maintaining stable accommodation can be more challenging due to limited financial or social support. Homelessness or residing in unsuitable accommodations poses a risk to mental health and elevates the likelihood of poor health outcomes.

## **18. Summary of equality implications**

- 18.1 Care Experienced Young People are more likely to face significant equality implications if accommodated in poor quality housing. Specifically experiencing health inequalities, including mental health or chronic illness if standards are not adequate. Poor housing will exacerbate feelings of instability and stress, making it harder to achieve educational and or employment success.

## **19. Summary of risk assessment**

- 19.1 The environmental, health and equality implications discussed above require specific mitigation for care experienced young people when in resettling into accommodation. The provision of housing related support to manage the risks and help navigate and access bespoke support available for people is embedded within joint working housing plans agreed with a young person at the joint housing assessment.