



Commissioning Services for Vulnerable Parents with Young Children – Homelessness Prevention services

You Said, We Did – Consultation Response

January 2018

Between 11th October and 6th December 2017, Bristol City Council consulted on its plans for Commissioning Services for Vulnerable Parents with Young Children.

The draft plan 'Commissioning Services for Vulnerable Parents with Young Children' set out proposals for commissioning a set of related services for parents with babies and young children. These services are:

Parent and child assessment placements – These are short-term placements, usually of about 12 weeks, for families where there are concerns about the parents' ability to safely parent their child(ren). Placements are often ordered by the court in child protection court proceedings to inform the court about whether or not the child(ren) should continue to live with their parent(s). These placements are either in residential centres or with foster carers.

Homelessness prevention services – These services are for vulnerable parents with babies and young children who are at risk of homelessness. They include floating support and short-term supported accommodation.

This "You said, We did" relates to the **Homelessness prevention services** proposals

During the 12 week consultation we held 1 event attended by service providers.

We gathered responses through an online survey, which could be completed anonymously if preferred.

This document describes the comments made during consultation and what has been done. Where a recommendation has changed as a result of feedback, this will be incorporated in the final commissioning plan. Where feedback has resulted in no changes, the reasons are described below.

Homelessness prevention services – summary of proposals:

We propose to have one contract to provide an integrated supported accommodation and floating support service for vulnerable parents with young children aged up to two years (with some flexibility around this upper age for part VII families). The service will be for parents of any age. The contract will be to provide:

- Support at the 36 units of accommodation used for the current specialist young parents homelessness prevention service. We will require a higher level of support at 15 units of accommodation, potentially with a 24 hour seven day a week staff presence. (We will be seeking views on the need for a 24 hour staff presence during the consultation.)
- Floating support that is linked to the supported accommodation units. This will be support to prevent homelessness, help vulnerable families settle into accommodation and link into support networks in their local community and will provide additional 'bolt-on' support to vulnerable families in lower support accommodation where needed.

We are proposing that the current level of funding for the floating support element of the integrated service be reduced to allow for additional funding to be provided to increase supported housing in the city for homeless families This aligns with the aims of the linked commissioning plan -

‘Preventing Homelessness Accommodation Pathways – families and adults (22+)’ - to increase the overall level of supported family accommodation in order to reduce the level of expenditure of more expensive spot purchased emergency temporary accommodation.¹

The proposed service will be for vulnerable parents (of any age) with babies (up to the age of 2 years with some flexibility around the upper age limit for Part VII families) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, as well as providing move-on accommodation and/or support to families moving on from parent and child assessment placements. In relation to the latter families, the support the service provides will be informed by any recommendations from the assessment placement and work in partnership with the family’s social worker and other practitioners working with the family.

The maximum budget envelope for the new integrated service will be £368,000 but we may seek to reduce this.

Procurement proposal

We propose to commission the integrated homelessness prevention service for vulnerable parents by negotiating with the current provider of the specialist young parents homelessness prevention service (BYPA). We are doing this as we think that there is a limited market of organisations that can bring suitable accommodation and skills to provide what we seek to procure.

In order to test this assumption, during the consultation for this commissioning plan we are seeking responses from organisations who are able and interested in providing 36 units of suitable accommodation, and who have the knowledge and skills to provide a medium/high support service to vulnerable families with young children. The accommodation will need to be suitable for the client group and provide a geographical spread across Bristol, with units in different areas of the city. We will also be issuing a PIN (Prior Information Notice) to determine if there are other providers with suitable accommodation and the ability to provide a quality support service to the client group.

If there is clear evidence that there is a wider market able to provide suitable accommodation and support, then we will pursue a competitive tender for these services.

The contract will be for five years with the option to extend for up to a further two periods of one year each.

Do you agree that we should commission an integrated accommodation and floating support service for this client group (rather than separate accommodation and floating support services)?

| You said | We did |
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| <p>9 of 11 responses (82%) agreed that we should commission an integrated service. 2 people disagreed and 2 did not respond.</p> <p>Generally respondents felt that having an integrated support service would lead to a more efficient and joined up approach to supporting families. There was also support for the current</p> | <p>Agreed. This will be reflected in the final commissioning plan.</p> |

¹ https://www.bristol.gov.uk/en_US/housing/commissioning-homelessness-prevention-services

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| service which is an integrated service. The only concern was around a possible conflict of interest, although this was not described in detail. | |
| Responses from consultation event – generally positive but included: | |
| Should have higher support accommodation and then move people into lower support in a 'pathway'. | This is something we will look into to see whether the accommodation sites have the capacity for this to be achieved. |
| Restricts the market. | Noted but as market is limited anyway in terms of providers with specialist skills – we do not feel this outweighs the positives. |

Do you agree with the proposal to change the client group from young parents aged 16-24, to vulnerable parents of all ages who have young children?

| You said | We did |
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| <p>On the online questionnaire, 10 respondents (77%) agreed with this proposal against 3 who disagreed. Respondents largely felt that access to the specialist service should be based on presenting need rather than on age.</p> <p>Objections to the proposal, including one emailed response, were around three key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The issues faced by young parents are distinctive and not the same as those faced by older parents, as described in the LGA report <i>A framework for supporting teenage mothers and young fathers</i>. This report recommends that there should be 'specialist staff with skills to tailor behaviour change interventions to support young people'. The disproportionate effect on young parents (including care leavers) because increasing the age range without increasing the number of units effectively restricts young parents' access to the service. <p>And.....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It fails to take into account the specific needs of younger parents. BCC have acknowledged the importance of specialist services for younger people elsewhere in their preventing | <p>The phrase in the LGA report suggests having "Staff with skills to tailor behavioural change interventions to support young parents". We believe that this will be possible within the proposal either as a requirement across the service and accommodation sites or for some of the staff and accommodation sites. The service will also link into specialist young peoples' staff in health services.</p> <p>There has been a marked decrease in teenage pregnancies in the city, reflecting the national trend. We acknowledge there is a need for continued provision for this age group within the proposed service.</p> <p>We acknowledge that this is reducing the number of units for young parents within this project but by also making the resource available to older vulnerable parents who may be disabled we feel it is also being opened up to a</p> |

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| <p>homelessness commissioning. In the commissioning of homelessness pathways, BCC have placed an exceedingly high value on the recognition of protected characteristics of the eligible client group. Why should these considerations not apply to young parents? Have BCC consulted or assessed their specific needs in relation to this matter?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixing young parents who may be vulnerable as a result of age and lack of support with older parents whose needs may be more complex could be problematic. <p>And...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since its inception BYPA has consistently delivered a high performing service. This is in part because it is a service tailored to the specific needs of the client group with which we are working. Working with adolescents (typically <25 yrs) involves using different challenges and interventions. The circumstances surrounding a pregnancy for our current client group and an older cohort are likely to be very different. <p>Additionally: “We have to consider our corporate parenting role as Children in Care are 3 times as likely to be a parent before they are 18 and 50% of young women leaving care are pregnant within 18-24 months².” – Councillor</p> | <p>client group with a different protected characteristic. We must also acknowledge the reduction in the BCC budget and the proposal will also help to achieve this reduction by accommodating families sooner rather than keeping them in expensive Parent and Child Assessment placements.</p> <p>We acknowledge that this is a potential issue but will seek to mitigate this through ensuring that within the various accommodation sites there is specific provision for young vulnerable parents and specific provision for older vulnerable parents whose needs may be more complex and problematic.</p> <p>We acknowledge our corporate parenting role and are seeking to continue to provide accommodation to young women who become pregnant shortly after leaving care.</p> <p>Summary: Agreed, the proposal will be amended to reflect that we will be mindful of competing demands, the need to have staff with skills to work with young parents and our corporate parenting role. We also recognise the need to have separate provision within the different sites for vulnerable young parents and older vulnerable parents whose needs may be more complex and</p> |
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² ‘A framework for supporting teenage mothers and young fathers’ Public Health England & LGA

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| | problematic. |
| <p>Additional feedback from the current provider not addressed above: `We cannot support this proposal as it stands for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both Places for People and Elim provide accommodation-based services to families outside of this commissioning plan and in the clients we are working with and those on the waiting list, we are still seeing demand exceed supply for the 16-25 client group. <p>This point was also put forward in the consultation event</p> | <p>We acknowledge that demand exceeds supply, this is the case for all client groups that we are commissioning supported housing services for as we are facing an unprecedented increase in homelessness in the city. We have however increased provision for young parents with in the Young people’s accommodation pathway in response to this.</p> |
| Responses from consultation event: | |
| <p>Some older people can have a beneficial effect when in the same accommodation with young parents, although older people with entrenched behaviour can have a detrimental impact on young parents</p> | <p>Agreed, we acknowledge the potential benefits and that this is a potential issue but will seek to mitigate this through ensuring that within the various accommodation sites there is specific provision for young vulnerable parents and specific provision for older vulnerable parents whose needs may be more complex and problematic</p> |
| <p>Support needs depend on the individual rather than age, however, under 25’s have support needs around relationships, budgeting and mental health</p> | <p>We will be seeking to ensure that this accommodation is used for vulnerable parents with support needs of all ages</p> |
| <p>Robust risk assessments need to be in place to avoid potential impact on young parents of wider client group</p> | <p>Agreed</p> |
| <p>This change would further reduce support services for young parents (eg closure of Meriton)</p> | <p>We will be seeking to ensure that within the various accommodation sites there is specific provision for young vulnerable parents.</p> |

Do you think that there is a need to have a 24/7 staff presence at some of the accommodation units?

| You said | We did |
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| <p>8 respondents (61%) thought that there is a need to have 24/7 staffing at some of the accommodation. Only 1 respondent (8%) disagreed, with 4 respondents (31%) saying that</p> | |

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| <p>there is 'maybe' a need. There was very little agreement on the numbers of families who would need 24/7 supported accommodation, with numbers fairly evenly spread over all the options from 1-2 to 15+ at any one time.</p> | |
| <p>Responses from consultation event:</p> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24/7 staffing could be achieved by CCTV • Could look at a system supported by our current out of hours arrangements • Could have long day hours but no sleep in • Yes, based on current provision for young people at Priory Court • Needed as a point of contact in emergency (often incidents with fathers causing disruption or trying to get in) as may mums are placed there if the baby is on the child protection register and there is a need to be away from the father of the child • Wider benefit in that Lanercost and Wigton can access the 24 hour support if they lose their keys to be given the door code or can receive advice over the phone if needed. • Sleep in is sufficient, no need for waking care (there can be a tendency to over-compensate and smother some young parents who have come through the care system and exacerbate the need for dependency rather than promoting independence. • Links to P&C assessments • Is there a need for more supported accommodation in the city if demand exceeds supply? • Cost – concern moving forward that 24/7 will take up a larger chunk of the funding. | <p>Summary: There is a mixed response to this from both the online consultation and from the consultation event with regard to 24 hour cover. Further follow up with social workers has not come back with support for the need to have 24 hour cover. As it is proposed to have a higher support scheme within the overall service, it does make sense to have longer staff hours extending into the evening. In the absence of a strong response justifying a 24 hour staffing need, we are proposing to utilise CCTV cameras, and to have an out of hours response where there is an incident and to adopt a similar response to Lanercost and Wigton where a client loses their keys.</p> |

Finance

| You said | We did |
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| <p>There is a significant reduction in the budget available for these services and the draft plan indicates that the funding available may reduce further from the mooted £368k. We believe that any reduction in funding fails to recognise the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased costs in delivery of the service. | |

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| <p>In particular the costs of providing 24/7 cover at one site have been significantly impacted by changes to the minimum wage and new case law in relation to working time directives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The preventative nature of the service. We have consistently tried to demonstrate that improved access to the waiting list for accommodation based services would enable us to support a greater number of people in their current accommodation, reducing costs to BCC elsewhere. We have not been given the opportunity to demonstrate this. <p>The plan also specifies that the reduction in funding should come from the floating support arm of the service. We believe that an outcomes focussed approach to finance would be more effective. Allow the providers to determine how best to allocate resources in order to achieve the targets specified in the contract.</p> | <p>We are proposing to remove the requirement for 24 hour staffing (see above).</p> <p>This has now been actioned so that support and homelessness prevention work can now be done on the people on the waiting list for the accommodation service.</p> <p>The preventing homelessness commissioning is an outcome based approach however we have acknowledged that we need the accommodation with support so we must prioritise funding for adequate support linked to the accommodation.</p> |
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Service Improvements (related to Preventing Homelessness services)

| You said | We did |
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| <p><i>“Accessible Roof Over my Head courses that offer crèche facilities as many clients have nobody to ask to care for their children while attending these well evaluated courses.” – Senior Nurse</i></p> | <p>All Roof Over My Head courses have crèche facilities other than courses that are provided specifically for single homeless people.</p> |
| <p><i>“A more effective response to the homelessness issue would be to improve the initial assessment process and the knowledge of the different sorts of provision amongst Housing staff, providing training for housing providers on vulnerabilities and safeguarding risks for young parents and their children, and reviewing the Home Choice process to enable them to move on faster to free up spaces for those on the waiting list.” - Councillor</i></p> | <p>We have recently commissioned the Youth Maps service for young people that opened in October 2017. The Preventing Homelessness Team has been restructured to respond to the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act. We are also putting in an additional resource to ensure that households support needs are matched to the right type of supported accommodation for their needs and are focussing on faster move-on through the homelessness accommodation pathways.</p> |
| <p>g. How can we make the proposed service improvements effective?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covering voids would really help. Would enable planning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unfortunately there is no additional budget to cover rents to cover the void period to match a move-on client to a vacancy. |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better liaison between services • Involve support providers in the assessment process • Improve info/better understanding of what the supported Housing offer is and training for children’s services on how to refer onto the HSR • Quality of the info shared is important to improve the support offer at an early stage – tighten up existing processes and make sure they work (particularly with floating support there to do this) <p>h. What other improvements should be made to improve the whole system for vulnerable parents with young children to achieve the commissioning objectives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a clear framework / pathway for vulnerable parents. Every social worker is likely to be doing these placements for the first time. They need to know what they should consider, who they should talk to, etc. Could build consideration of HSR referral into LCS as part of process mapping • Create a plan right at the beginning of an assessment placement (e.g. if the family has no accommodation to move on to, this is what will need to happen) • BYPA to have more control or influence over their waiting list. We could then decide who would be best placed where. It would enable us to plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral early is good to provide a reality check on the availability of social accom – need to do this early • Youth Maps not seeing parents aged 18 plus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gap – young parents aged 16-25 have specific support needs and there is a need for a specialist service. • Need clarity on the message for under 25’s e.g. differences in benefits etc and links to specialist services for young parents. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on this is underway following a workshop • This has been agreed as above <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will be made clear in the specification and through providers • As above, work on this is underway following a workshop <p>We anticipate this will come out of the improved assessment and support working arising from the workshop</p> <p>As above. We also plan to ensure that leaflet/information about the HSR process is made available and promoted through the social workers practitioner forums</p> <p>There needs to be an overview of demand for both young parents with support needs and older parents with support needs held within the BCC accommodation team. Information on demand will be shared.</p> <p>Agreed, this will be an expectation in the specification</p> <p>Parents aged 18 plus are seen by BCC’s Preventing Homelessness service. The effectiveness of this will be reviewed</p> <p>We believe that this has been achieved through the commissioning of Youth Maps</p> |
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