

Bristol City Council Commissioning Strategy

16+ Children in Care and Care Leavers

1 Increase UASC Provision

Develop shared houses for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, to create an additional 28 beds.

Develop a move on property for UASC who have turned 18 but not yet able to move on to HomeChoice Properties.



2 Develop Shared Properties for CiC & Care Leavers

Move away from single occupancy flats to create shared houses for 16/17 yr old children in care / care leavers who will then move on to HomeChoice. This will create an additional 14 beds, as an alternative to Hostels and ESAs.

3 Join South West Regional Framework

Join the South West Regional Framework for purchasing 16+ Supported Accommodation. Moving across the providers on our existing Bristol Dynamic Purchasing System and creating opportunities for block arrangements.



4 Strategic Partner

Procuring a strategic partner for the development of children's home provision in Bristol, with scope to grow and expand to include step down 16+ Accommodation for planned move ons.

5 In-House Services

We will work more closely with Housing to create improved flow through the system. This will include bringing one KBC Housing property and Branch Out out of the housing pathway and into children's services to increase the numbers of 16/17 year olds accommodated there.



Bristol City Council

16+ Commissioning Strategy

Children in Care and Care Leavers

2023

Introduction

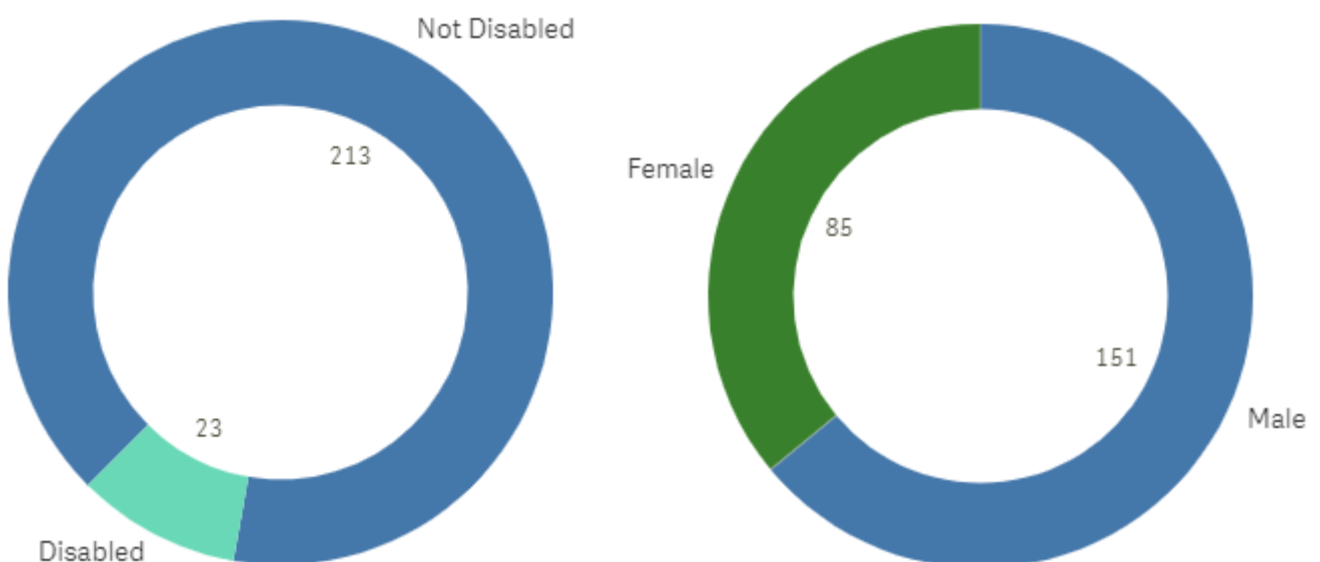
In Bristol the 16-19 population grew by more than 10% in the 5 years up to 2023. Population projections show that the 0-19 population is expected to grow by c.4%, by 2028 with the most significant segment within that being the 16-19 age group which is forecast to grow by 31%.

The 16+ age group represents our highest cohort of entrants to care. Given the high number of children already in care age 16+ due to become care leavers in the next few years, as well as the growing population projections, this age-group is a focus of our sufficiency planning where we are looking for quality and value for money as they approach adulthood. We will need a range of provision set at the right level of support within the City to prepare them for adult lives.

We know that the level of demand for 16+ accommodation has grown beyond our sufficiency planning, and this has caused a blockage in all types of accommodation, and a use of all available options, whether these were ideally suited to need, correctly priced or not. If we can get our 16+ offer right, this will filter through down the system, allowing us to place all children more appropriately to their need.

Needs data:

As of April 2023, there are 236 children in care aged 16+, representing 32% of all our children in care.



As children move through to Care Leaver status, while many will be able to 'stay put' within their fostering provision, some may go home and a few may re-locate or find private accommodation, others will need housing provision through a pipeline into the Housing Support Register. Numbers leaving care are projected as per the table below with a significant number requiring move-on through the Housing Support Register. Projections of numbers coming through are shown below:

Current	Feb-24	Feb-25	Feb-26	Feb-27	Feb-28
291	340	359	410	468	510

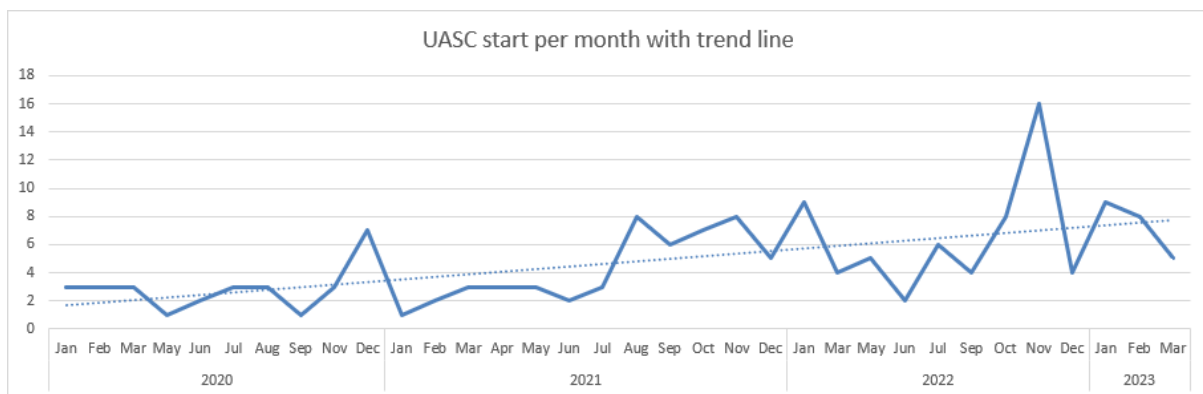
We have two significant cohorts of children in our 16+ care population:

- Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers
- 16+ Children in Care and Care Leavers – both those moving through care and late entrants to care, with a growing cohort of these coming in through the Homelessness route.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

As of June 2023, Bristol has 93 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children in care, equal to 0.1% of our population of children as required by the National Transfer Scheme. This cohort represents 13% of all children in care. Of these, 100% are male, 82 are aged 16+ and 23 will be turning 18 in the next 6 months.

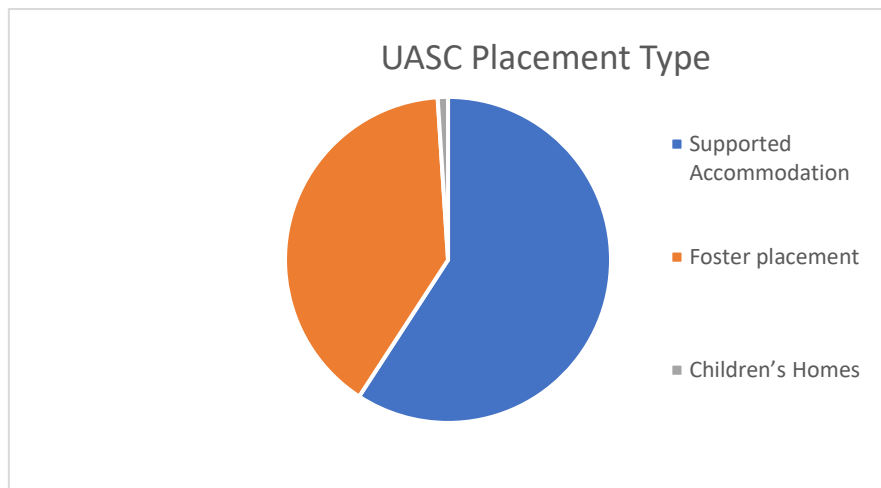
There has been a significant increase in numbers of UASC in our care over the past two years, both through the national transfer scheme and spontaneous arrivals, with the vast majority of our UASC coming from Afghanistan.



Bristol is a City of Sanctuary offering a strongly diverse population and the availability of cultural connectedness for those seeking a new life alongside familiar socio-cultural activity. Young arrivals prefer to live within the city centre because of access to these cultural links and services, and community of other young people from their cultural background. Sufficiency of homes within the city centre is limited due to the high costs of rents and limited housing stock, and it has been difficult to commission in this area at the pace needed for the constant new flow of young people.

For those under 16, most young people have been found homes through in-house provision or independent fostering, but the majority (88%) of our unaccompanied arrivals are over 16.

For those over 16, most are now placed in External Supported Accommodation (ESA), usually in shared provision and with a range of support hours available, often shared between all young people. We have utilised our residential provision for a small number with significant trauma.



50% of our young people in ESA provision are UASC, and 20% are over 18 and unable to step down into the housing pathway. For UASC reaching 18, most do not yet have leave to remain and are therefore not eligible to move on to Home Choice accommodation. This delay in leave to remain then causes blockages in the system and financial pressure to children's services. Young people are ready to move on, but there is nowhere for them to move on to, meaning properties we brought online for children and young people, become filled with young adults.

Children in Care / Care Leavers

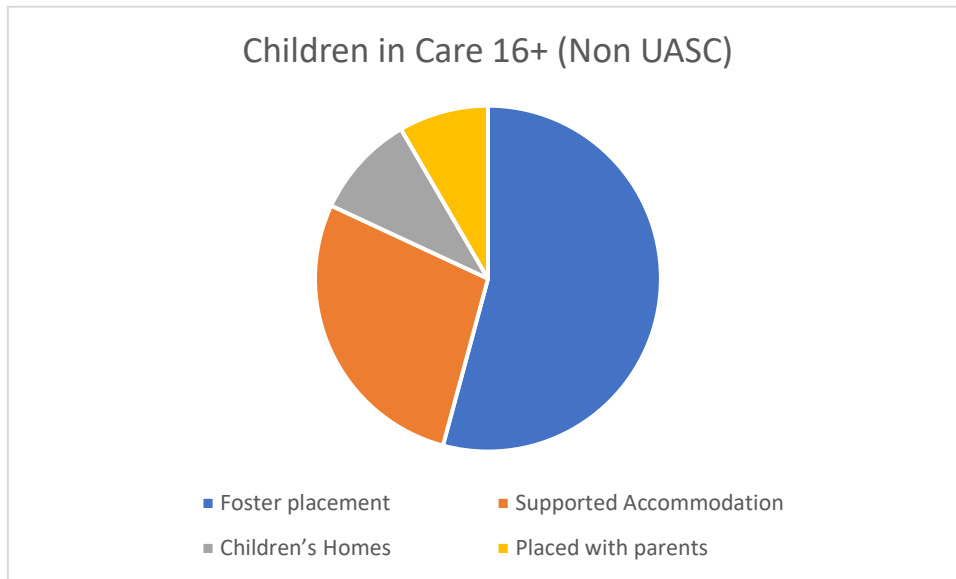
The most recent 2022 ILACS inspection of children in care found that the experience of 16/17 year old children was inconsistent, stating that:

- Some children are not helped into safe and secure accommodation at the earliest opportunity.
- Some children are not afforded an assessment of their immediate vulnerability.
- Those children who can remain at home safely are helped to do so.
- Children are not benefiting from joint housing assessments.

In 22/23, there were 68 entrants to care aged 16+. Of these, 31 were UASC and 15 came in due to family dysfunction/safeguarding concerns. 87 individual children presented as homeless, with 25 going on to be judged to be homeless. Of these children, 22 came into care through section 20. Just 1 was offered accommodation under Part 7 of the homelessness legislation. No joint assessment was undertaken because there was no crash pad or assessment provision available. Care was sometimes preferred by the young person, but even where they clearly requested homelessness support, this was not available.

There is an even split of genders in our non-UASC cohort of the 16+ care population. Unlike our UASCs the majority of our young people in care remain in foster care post 16. These numbers are

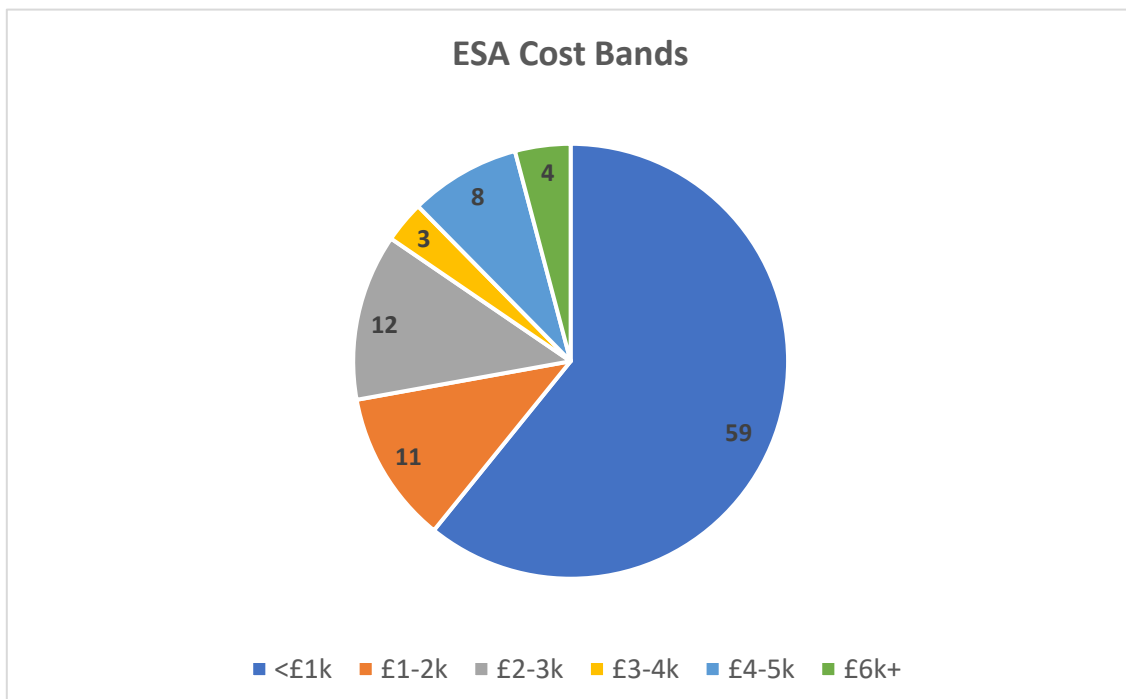
constantly changing due to children reaching 18 and/or new entrants to care, but are accurate as of April 2023.



For our young people, there are gaps in available support / provision for high support needs around mental health or translation needs; which are not commissioned by colleagues in Housing and Landlord Services.

Current Placement Needs and Costs

The graph below shows all children placed in External Supported Accommodation (April 2023), split into cost bands. Our young people placed in provision with costs are above £4,000 per week require a very high level of support, more similar to care, and this is lacking within our current commissioning. Children with costs under £1,000 per week are receiving low to medium levels of support but at high market rates at the top end. For the 26 young people with cost bands between







£1,000-4,000 per week, analysis shows us that only 4 are in the ideal provision with the right support and, again, this group have medium to high levels of support need that is not available to us currently.

Challenges:

Throughout Covid there have been significant difficulties helping children and young people exit care meaning there are increased figures of those looking for supported accommodation with the move on pathways blocked. In January 2023, 190 young people were on the waiting list for Housing through the Housing Support Register.

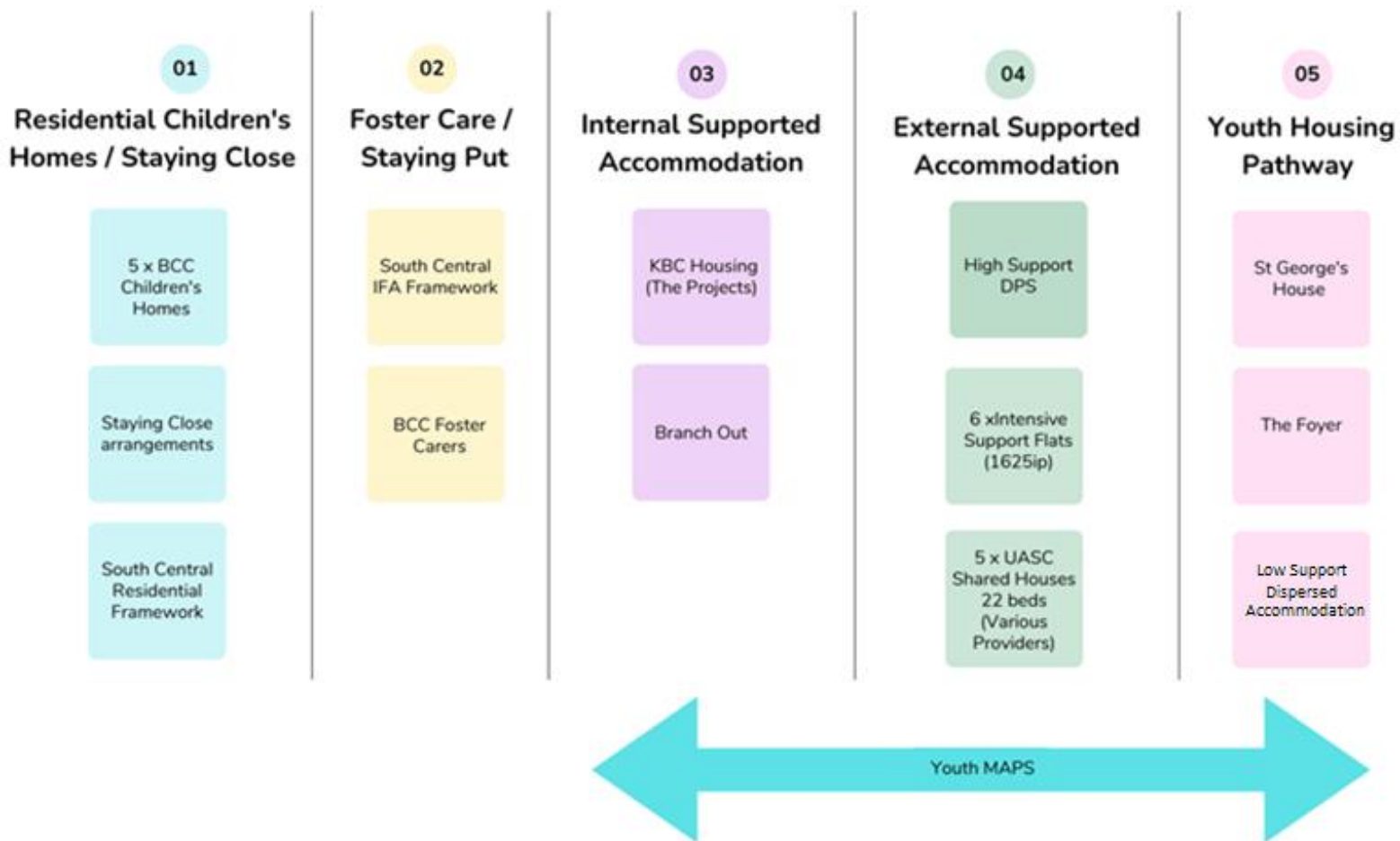
Our key challenges are:

-  The time it can take for UASC young people to be granted leave to remain – the funding we receive reduces when these children are 18, but we must hold them within children’s provision until they have status granted. Most unaccompanied children arrive aged between 16-18 with many of them already 17. They attain 18 quickly giving little time for status, and leading to a new child coming down the track that we need to take to meet our 0.1% quota.
-  There is a general lack of move-on accommodation for care leavers and has been nothing specifically commissioned for adult asylum seekers, causing a blockage in the pipeline of services and leaving our commissioned 16+ accommodation 50% occupied by young adults who are unable to move on.
-  Care leavers with generally higher levels of support need are not catered for within current HSR commissioned provision.
-  Delays in care act assessments for those young people moving into adult services, can result in 18-year-olds residing in children’s services accommodation until this has been complete.

We are working closely with colleagues in housing to review our accommodation offer for young people aged 16+, with a view to recommission the entire youth pathway for 2024. Moving young people on from provision has been a challenge due to a lack of affordable housing stock in the city, Housing now have a Move-On Coordinator in post to address this.

In October 2023 Ofsted regulation will become mandatory for 16+ supported accommodation. The regulation of this provision will mean that, for the first time, all provision offering care and support for looked after children and care leavers aged 16 and 17 will be registered and inspected by Ofsted, and national standards introduced. This provision will be formally called “supported accommodation for young people”. Whilst the regulations are welcome to drive up quality, there is a risk that this could lead to providers exiting the market and a loss of sufficiency. If providers have not submitted full applications to become registered by 28th October, it will become illegal to place looked after children and care leavers aged 16-17 with them. Work is being undertaken with providers to get them ready for regulation, including the introduction of 16+ provider forums with guest speakers and 1-1 consultation sessions to support the process.

Overview of Existing Services Available to Young People 16+



Children's Services Provision

Children's Homes:

Bristol City Council currently has five operational in-house children's homes with capacity for up to 15 children up to the age of 18. There are currently 8 young people in our children's homes aged 16+. There is a Children's Homes Re-profiling programme in place which plans for steady growth and changes from larger children's homes to smaller two-bedroom homes and increasing our capacity up to 24.

There is one privately run children's homes within Bristol City Council boundaries. We are a member of the South-Central Residential framework but is increasingly reliant on spot-purchasing provision as many providers choose not to join, or to withdraw from, the framework. Currently 7 young people aged 16+ are placed in private children's homes.

Foster Care:

In house - Bristol City Council offers 272 mainstream fostering households for our children in care. Bristol is also a member of the South-Central fostering framework for purchasing Independent Foster Agency (IFA) placements, but we continue to require a level spot-purchasing provision as many providers choose not to join the framework. Currently 112 young people aged 16+ are in foster care.

Since 2013, our foster carers and young people have embraced the “Staying Put” arrangements available to them. Staying Put supports a young person to remain living with their foster family beyond the age of 18. This gives our young people time to prepare for adulthood, experience a similar transition to their peers and avoids social exclusion.

Supported Accommodation:

The majority of our supported accommodation for those aged 16 + is delivered via a dynamic purchasing system. The DPS currently has 26 providers on - there are 5 providers with properties in Bristol, with most of the accommodation in nearby Gloucestershire and Somerset. Providers have reported it is easier to secure accommodation in neighbouring authorities due to lower house prices and rents.

In addition to the DPS we have block arrangements within Bristol for 6 independence flats and arrangements for 5 shared properties (22 beds) for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC).

Bristol City Council Housing Pathway

Bristol MAPS:

Housing and Children’s Social Care work in partnership with 1625 Independent People to provide a child-centred response to young people aged 16-24 experiencing homelessness through advice, support, and joint assessment (for 16-17 year olds) relating to their housing needs at Bristol Youth MAPS. The Bristol Youth MAPS service, (known as MAPS), is proactive in preventing young people experiencing homelessness through the provision of advice and assistance. The overall aim of MAPS is to enable young people to remain with their families/network, provided it is safe to do so, through advice, support, and mediation as it is generally considered that it is in the best interests of most young people to live within their family network. However, when homelessness cannot be prevented, a young person may be provided with appropriate accommodation by Bristol City Council.

KBC Housing (The Projects):

KBC Housing (formerly The Youth Projects) consists of three houses owned and managed by Bristol City Council. Each provides bedrooms in a shared house with shared bathrooms and kitchens and young people living here currently receive 1 hour of support a week from peripatetic council-employed support workers.

Branch Out Supported Lodgings

Supported Lodgings (Branch Out) is accommodation young people who will benefit from lodging with a host in the host’s home. Hosts are vetted, trained and supported by the BCC Branch Out team. Hosts are generally available in the evenings and often work so are not available for daytime support. This means that for young people aged 16-17 this is suitable only for those accommodated via S.20.

St George's House and The Foyer

St George's House and The Foyer are housing services' high and medium support hostels, catering for homeless young people predominantly aged 16-21 (but will accommodate young people aged 22-24 if the young person is particularly vulnerable). The two services provide 53 bed spaces combined, and provide on average approximately 2 hours support per week (flexible dependent on needs of the young people) with a 24-hour staff presence and managed front door.

Commissioning Intentions for 16+ Accommodation Services

Our key aim is to develop provision that will prepare our children and care and care leavers for adulthood, and support them through to becoming tenancy ready.

UASC Shared Houses:

Work has already begun on developing our offer to UASC, commissioning various block arrangements in the past year and growing our provision from 9 to 22 beds. We are looking to expand this offer, developing additional shared houses to create an additional 28 beds, and are in discussions with our framework providers to scale up provision in the City in response to our increased number of young people taken through the national transfer scheme. In particular, we want to develop provision in areas of the city with good cultural links and existing communities. This will take our UASC bed numbers from 22 up to 50.

In addition to this, we are looking to commission a shared house for UASCs who have reached 18 and can claim housing benefit, but have been unable to move on due to a lack of provision within housing services. This will enable a move-on pathway and free up the provision intended for our 16/17 year olds, with the intention they will move into the housing pathway or private rented sector as soon as LTR is granted.

Shared Houses for 16/17 year old Children in Care / Care Leavers

There is currently a lack of shared housing for our non-UASC young people. We want to move away from self-contained single occupancy accommodation, which is not the norm for most young people living independently at 16-17. We will develop a number of shared houses, to create 14 additional beds as an alternative to hostels or ESAs for our young people who will then move to Home Choice properties or the private rented accommodation. We are looking to increase our provision for non-UASC young people from 6 beds, up to 40 which will include both internally and externally run provision.

16+ In House Services

We are looking to bring one of the KBC Housing (formerly known as The Projects) properties and the Branch Out service out of the housing pathway and into children's services for April 2024.

Currently the majority of young people entering KBC Housing are 18+, bringing one of the houses into Children's Services will expand the offer to more 16/17 year olds. This will increase the range of support offered to our care leavers and young people in care aged 16+ accommodated under section 20, or for our asylum seekers who have reached 18 but remain in our commissioned children's accommodation due delays in leave to remain being granted.

There is a need for homely and family-based accommodation, such as Branch Out, for young people aged 16+ for whom larger units/environments or sharing with other young people is not appropriate. The majority (but not all) of young people referred in are Care leavers, again by bringing this into children’s services it will give more control over placements and relieve pressure on other commissioned services.

Regional DPS:

The current High Support Contract runs to September 2024. It is our intention to join a South West Regional framework going forward which will allow greater join up with local authority partners around quality control and value for money. The contract will include accommodation only, accommodation with support, floating support, group supported accommodation and regulated care and accommodation. As part of this there will be opportunities to block purchase accommodation.

Strategic Partner Development

As part of the DfE Capital Children’s home project, we are redeveloping of a decommissioned children’s home, into a home for adolescent males aged 15+ and who need care rather than support until they are 18. As part of this we will build two pods in the grounds of one of the homes to enable move on for the young people when they reach 16/17 and are ready for more independence. We are commissioning a strategic partner to deliver this project, there is scope for them to further grow 16+ provision for step down and a clear move on pathway from the homes.

Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) SHAP is a national £200 million fund to deliver up to 2400 homes and support services for people sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough. SHAP will provide supported housing, Housing First and housing-led accommodation for two target groups: adults experiencing multiple disadvantage who may have a history of rough sleeping and require high levels of support, and young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping. A bid is being considered which may include five properties for young people.

Summary Plans

Action	Date to be completed
Work with market around Ofsted Regulation	October 2023
New 16+ Framework Operational	April 2024
One KBC Housing property and Branch Out move to Children’s Services	April 2024
UASC Shared Houses Scale Up	July 2024
Children in Care / Care Leaver Shared Houses Scale Up	July 2024
Strategic Partner Accommodation Development	April 2025