



Review of Lancashire Supported Lodgings Schemes

Summary Report

24th July 2014

Introduction

Lancashire County Council is required to save £300 million by 2017/18, consequently Cabinet has decided to reduce the Supporting People budget by £4 million from 1st April 2015. This document outlines

- the proposed reduction in the budget allocated to supported lodgings and
- the proposed future commissioning arrangement for supported lodgings

This document will be shared with support providers and stakeholders and feedback will be sought over the coming months.

Background

Supported lodgings services provide a young person with a room of their own in a private home where they are a member of the household, but are not expected to become a member of the family. The householder, or host, provides a safe and supportive environment, working alongside professional services to help and support the young person in gaining skills for independent life.

Supported lodgings are predominantly accepted by, and beneficial to, younger young people. Supported lodgings can accommodate young people with all types of need, but they are not suited for all young people, for example those who have few boundaries to their behaviour or who want the freedom and anonymity of other settings.

Supported lodgings offer young people a non-institutionalised environment and someone being there for them.

Supported lodgings schemes offer an effective early intervention provision and can prevent longer term homelessness. They can offer young people some breathing space and the opportunity to focus on educational or work experiences.

There are two broad types of supported lodgings service, those which offer:

- A response to a crisis in the home life of the young person by housing them for a short time (usually between one night and a specified time frame), referred to as emergency provision
- A lodging for up to 2 years for a young person while they develop skills and confidence and prepare for independent living

Both types of service are organised in similar ways, but there are different funding arrangements and different expectations of the host and outcomes for young people.

Aim of the Review

Supported lodgings services have formed part of Lancashire's supported housing provision within the supporting people programme.

The aim of the review is to inform and support the planning and commissioning arrangements for supported lodging services within a context of reducing funding. The need for services to deliver effective and efficient provision whilst offering value for money has always been central to the commissioning process. However, within the

current financial climate there needs to be an even greater emphasis on identifying a service model and procurement process which deliver good quality services and value for money.

Consequently, the review focussed on:

- mapping the current arrangements;
- fully understanding the performance and the impact of supported lodgings services in Lancashire;
- considering options for future delivery
- recommending an option which will be subject to consultation

Methodology

Information was gathered from the supported lodgings service providers in the form of a questionnaire and an impact statement which was designed to inform greater understanding of the current provision.

Feedback was sought from the commissioners regarding their views of the current service provision across the 12 districts.

Information was also sought from allied services: Children and Young People, Lancashire Youth Offending Team and the Probation Service regarding their views of the current service provision arrangements.

Performance data which is collected by the supporting people team on an ongoing basis has been collated and analysed.

Discussion were held with the Supporting People Commissioning Board regarding a range of options

Current Supported Lodgings Provision

In Lancashire Supported lodgings are being delivered by 4 service providers:

- **Preston Nightstop** who deliver a generic service supporting the North & South localities [12 units]
- **SLEAP** who deliver a generic service supporting the South locality [7 units]
- **Rosendale M3** who deliver a generic and emergency service supporting the East localities [12 + 4 emergency units]
- **Child Action North West** who deliver a Lancashire Wide offender service [9 units]

The recruitment and training arrangements for host families is determined by the individual service providers. Supporting People has worked within national best practice guidelines for Supported Lodgings, and pays a fixed sum per unit to providers, but there are differences in approaches and in overall payment levels. This is likely to be as a result of varying housing benefit payments.

The information which was captured for the review outlined the current service provision which is being provided by Lancashire's supported lodgings providers in relation to:

- Geographical location of host families
- Supported lodgings provision
- Emergency provision
- Out of hours arrangements
- Nomination arrangements,
- Arrangements with Children and Young People Services and the Youth Offending Teams

Overview of Findings from Desktop Analysis

- The access data confirms that there is a level of demand for supported lodgings provision, but a considerable number of applicants will not be offered the service. Many of these will withdraw their application or identify alternative support or accommodation. There are differences around the approach taken to the management of needs and risk, but none of the providers operate a blanket ban in their approach to risk. The collective figures indicate that 17 applicants were refused access to the services based on their level of risk being assessed as too high and 7 were refused due to their level of need being assessed as too high. These figures suggest that risk factors are more of a barrier to supported lodgings services than high levels of need.
- The client record data confirms that supported lodgings are predominantly accessed by younger young people, a high percentage of those accessing supported lodgings provision are 18 years of age or under (78% in 2012/13 and 55% in 2013/14)
- The utilisation of supported lodgings provision is lower than that of accommodation based services. Some of this may be attributed to the challenges in retaining an adequate number of host providers in each local area in order to meet demand and the expressed preferences of young people, but it is considered that the current utilisation levels (38.5% to 79.40%) indicate the need for a more radical change in both structure and funding. There are further concerns that the number of referrals is reducing.
- Underutilisation can be exacerbated by factors such as lack of understanding around referral pathways from referral agencies
- Outcome data shows evidence of success for young people in participation in training and education. In 2012-13 supported lodgings services in Lancashire, when compared with North West supported lodgings services, achieved a higher percentage of outcomes relating to participation in training. 78% of the clients in the supported lodgings services in Lancashire had this support need met, whilst the figure for supported lodgings services in the North West was 77%. The performance in relation to achieving independence is mixed as the data indicates that services are achieving between 50% and 100%. The small

number of people moving on does have a significant impact on the percentages

Overview of Findings from Service Providers

All the service providers identified key referring agencies who they liaise with regarding referrals.

The information from providers in the questionnaires highlighted their responsibility to manage needs and risks, and how this is dependent upon them being given the necessary information at the point when they receive a referral. The providers identified their need to manage the duty they have towards both the host families and the young people when accepting referrals and placing young people.

The providers highlighted that their ability to move young people on can be compromised by lack of available accommodation. They also acknowledged that many young people may not be ready for independent living following their stay in the supported lodgings, and are therefore more likely to move on to further supported living in accommodation based services.

The information specified that the focus for the 3 generic schemes is ensuring that young people are productive and using their time well whilst living with host families. They have programmes of support that young people are encouraged to use with the host family. There have been successes with young people accessing further education. The offender service explained that some of the young people they support present greater challenges in maintaining employment or training opportunities.

All the providers highlighted the way in which supported lodgings can offer young people the space and support to engage with training, education or employment, and the way that host families can play an important role in supporting and encouraging the young people to pursue opportunities.

The responses confirmed that not all young people are suited to a supported lodgings placement and it should be a resource offered to young people who understand that they will be living in the home of another adult/s and there will be expectations around boundaries and respect.

Updated information from the providers which was obtained more recently detailed that 2 of the services have noticed a drop in the number of referrals being made. It is not clear at this stage what the reason for this is, but their explanations include the welfare reforms and the reduced availability of information and young people's services.

Overview of findings from commissioners

The feedback from the districts confirmed the strategic importance of supported lodgings in preventing homelessness, especially for young people, but it also reflected the lack of consistency across the County. Whilst some districts reported high levels of satisfaction with their provision, others expressed the view that they are getting very little value from the services.

The need for district housing teams to have access to information about vacancies, to have more host families and also to have emergency supported lodgings provision was a theme that emerged across a number of districts.

There was a lack of clarity and understanding around referral pathways into the offender service. In the districts being served by more than one service provider there was also less clarity about which schemes they could access.

Strong partnership working, good communication, attendance at, contributions to, homeless forums and ease of access are described as the key features of a successful service from a commissioner perspective. Some of the good outcomes that have been achieved by young people in supported lodgings were also acknowledged by commissioners. Having access to information about supported lodgings vacancies was identified as an important factor in effective utilisation of the service provision.

The involvement of the supported lodgings providers in other projects and also being part of wider organisations was emphasised as adding significant value to the contracts.

Recommendations from the Review

The findings from the review indicated that there are potential opportunities for supporting people to improve the delivery of supported lodgings provision across Lancashire.

The feedback from the majority of the commissioners confirmed that the supported lodgings service is an important part of their housing strategy and they do not wish to lose the service.

The current position of having a range of providers offering different service provision is not meeting the needs of all the districts, with duplication of services in some districts and other districts having little or no supported lodgings provision.

It was concluded that the supported lodgings provision across Lancashire is not being offered on a consistent basis and improvements could be made to the model of service delivery which would also achieve efficiency savings.

Given, the reduction in the Supporting People budget, it is proposed that the funding available for supported lodgings is reduced by in the region of £100k from £462k to around £362k

It was acknowledged that any re-shaping of services is likely to cause some disruption to the current arrangements in the short term given the nature of the service and in a context of host families having good relationships with their current service provider.

Options

A range of options were given consideration at the start of the review, but were not taken forward for procurement or service delivery reasons. Consequently the only options being put forward are:

Option 1:

Tender the supported lodgings provision in the form of 3 lots (based on the 3 localities) with providers having the option to bid for all 3 lots or for individual lots.

Option 2

Tender for a County wide supported lodgings service delivered by 1 provider.

Specification

Irrespective of the option chosen, tendering services would involve the following

- Undertaking a mini competition from the Supporting People Framework
- Further developing the service specification to ensure an agreed model of delivery across the County which is available to all young people on a generic basis including targeting the service at those aged 16-21 years.
- Reviewing payment arrangements to take into account fluctuations in utilisation
- Introducing additional reporting requirements in relation to the host family activity such as recruitment, supervision and location on a half yearly basis to ensure that needs across all districts are being met.
- Introducing a requirement for vacancy information to be shared with housing option teams

Recommendation

Option 1 is recommended as it maximises the flexibility in terms of the following:

- Testing costs based on different geographical footprints
- Maximising the opportunity for organisations with expertise to bid
- Enabling specifications to provide both consistency and some local variation if there is a strategic reason for doing so.

Next Steps

- Seek Cabinet Member approval to consult
- Undertake consultation with providers, stakeholders and citizens by end of September 2014
- Finalise future model of service delivery
- Seek Cabinet Member approval to final recommendation following receipt of consultation feedback
- Tender services from the Autumn through a mini competition from the Supporting People Framework Agreement
- It is anticipated that the new contracts will take effect from April 2015 or July 2015 at the latest

The Supporting People Team will work with the current providers during this process to minimise the risk of potential disruption to existing placements as much as possible.