

# SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 16+

Strategic Commissioning



## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Plymouth City Council has a statutory duty under Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 to ensure there are sufficient placements in the local area to meet the needs of children and young people in care. These placements need to cover a broad range of provision, including children's homes, residential special schools and foster care. This also includes supported accommodation for young people aged 16 and 17, and some young people as they leave care and step into independent living.

In October 2020 permission was sought from Plymouth City Council Cabinet for a procurement of a contract for supported accommodation for young people in care aged 16 and 17 and care leavers, and for the contract award decision to be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Families. The contract was awarded in March 2021 for a period of 4 years.

The current contract expires on 31 March 2025 and it is proposed to modify the contract through variation for a period of 2 years to the incumbent providers.

## 2. BACKGROUND

Supported accommodation offers young people in care and care experienced the opportunity to live in a more 'independent' home, usually a shared house with their own bedroom and communal use of bathrooms, the kitchen and living rooms. Recognising the challenges our young people face, staff are usually available 24 hours a day to offer support. Houses are usually able to support 4-5 young people, but for those who need more support there can be flats which only accommodate one young person at a time with staff. Young people in care can live there from the age of 16, but the services can also support those who are 18+ while future plans for their living arrangements are made.

Since the current contract started in 2021 new regulations have been introduced which require providers of these type of placements to register with Ofsted and to meet a set of prescribed quality standards. The Supported Accommodation (England) Regulations 2023 relate to any provider of supported accommodation for looked after children and care leavers aged 16 and 17. All the incumbent providers have successfully progressed through the Ofsted registration process to date.

The current contract is split into three Lots, to focus on the provision of high-quality local homes for our children and young people:

Lot	Purpose	Provider(s)
Lot 1a - Block purchased provision in Plymouth from existing 16+ supported accommodation beds within the city boundary	This ensures that a number of local homes are always available for Plymouth young people, and supports a close working relationship with the provider	Parallel Independence
Lot 1b - Supported accommodation providers who are either already operating within the Plymouth city boundary or intend to open provision within the Plymouth city boundary during the lifetime of the	This ensures that the number of available local beds is able to grow if needed during the lifetime of the contract and gives the provider some security to be able to invest	Parallel Independence, Livewest, Keys and CSM Independence

contract. Lot 1b providers will be able to request consideration of beds to be added to the Lot 1a block contract within the lifetime of the contract	in new provision. The Council retains the right to decline if the proposal does not meet local needs.	
Lot 2 - spot purchase supported accommodation provision in Plymouth and within 20 miles of the city (no limit on the number of providers that will be allowed on the framework).	Ensures that local placements in and near to Plymouth are provided under the Council's specification and terms and conditions, to ensure quality	Caring for Communities, Key 2 Futures, Keys, Next Step Care Management, Parallel Independence and Young Devon.
Lot 3 - spot purchased supported accommodation provision outside 20 miles (no limit on the number of providers that will be allowed on the framework).	Ensures that placements which are further away are provided under the Council's specification and terms and conditions, to ensure quality	Acorn, Birchwood Independence, CSM Independence, Key 2 Futures, Keys, Livewest, Next Steps Care Management, the Halfway and Young Devon

The contract includes a weekly price for the placement, and these are monitored in line with the needs of the young people. All are realistic for the quality provided and include 24-hour staffing, which fits with our local requirements. There is currently an inconsistency in terms of the offer from the providers when young people move on – some providers allow young people to take all their furniture and furnishings with them to help them to settle into their adult accommodation, but others are more limited. We will address this as part of the contract variation so it is made clearer for young people - our expectation is that young people are supported as much as possible when they are preparing to move on.

The incumbent providers are performing well, adapting to the new regulations and preparing for their first Ofsted inspections. They are regularly engaging with us through a dedicated 16+ provider forum. The Council has also supported our local providers with preparation for registration through the distribution of small grants, using funding from central government to support the implementation of the regulations. Local providers have used grant funding to support recruitment, staff training and development, case management and quality systems and also improvements to their buildings, for example creating space for young people to be able to do homework.

### 3. PROPOSAL

The rationale for a modification of the current contract through variation is to ensure continuity of provision for our young people, and continue to work with our incumbent providers as they progress towards their first Ofsted inspections. Value for money will continue to be monitored, linked directly to the needs of individual children and young people. We will ensure that any new providers seeking to join the contract are not disadvantaged by reopening Lots 1b, 2 and 3 during the lifetime of the new contract.