

Appendix C

Commissioning of Accommodation & Support Services for Young People - Part 1 - Provider Consultation

A notification of the Council's intention to recommission Accommodation & Support services for Young People was published on the Sell2Wales portal in August 2017 to invite current and potential providers to register for further information.

Two consultation workshops have taken place to date with those providers who registered their interest. The purpose of the workshops has been to gather provider input to help shape the recommissioning process and the services to be commissioned. The number of external organisations and representatives attending can be seen in the table below:

	Attendees	Organisations
Workshop 1	39	19
Workshop 2	31	13

Provider Workshop 1

Issues covered

- The reasons for recommissioning services
- The Council's overall vision for the services.
- The intention to follow the Positive Pathway model
- Providers were asked if there were any other services not yet considered that they thought should be provided.
- The advantages and disadvantages of a single or multiple contracts were discussed
- Providers were also asked for their views on what they consider to be high risk/difficult to place young people.
- Providers' views were also invited on whether any types of young people should be out of scope for this commissioning.

In addition to the views gathered during the workshop, providers were invited to submit their responses and feedback in writing.

Provider Workshop 2

Issues covered

- A recap of the topics discussed in the first workshop
- A summary of the main themes of the feedback received following the first workshop and how the council were addressing each
- Feedback from the young people themselves and what they thought was important / should be improved
- Contract options:
Providers were taken through a number of options for how the services should be configured, including number and constitution of contracts; and asked for their

views as to the advantages and disadvantages of each, along with any ideas of additional potential contract models

Summary of feedback received from providers both at sessions and in writing

- Positive Pathway model:
 - Providers felt the Positive Pathway model will improve referral quality, information sharing and partnership working
 - Providers believed an appropriate final transition (from services into independence) is needed to ensure integration at the end of the pathway
 - Strongly expressed view that continuity was vital e.g. same support worker providing floating support once young person leaves supported accommodation.
- Other services suggested for inclusion:
 - Providers felt advocacy should be separate from the provider to ensure independence
 - Links with substance misuse and associated support services
 - It was not felt that therapeutic interventions were needed as it was covered elsewhere (e.g. mental and physical health)
 - The respondents felt that consideration should be given to providing Young People with positive role models to assist with building emotional resilience and life skills
 - Access to trauma trained psychotherapists
 - The development of partnerships with health service, police and truancy services
- Why projects refuse certain young people:
 - Due to number of 'high demand' services users within the project
 - If the progress being made by current service users could be adversely affected by introducing a certain service user at that time
 - Due to location/'protection issues'
- Number of contracts:
 - Most respondents felt that more than one contract would be the preferred option; allowing diversity, greater flexibility and a broader range of skills.
 - Concerns that the expertise required to support all diverse client needs would be compromised with a larger contract
 - Widespread apprehension that the size of the contract carries risk to the city and to the provider e.g. if a contractor failed
 - There was the feeling that a contract of such a wide scale would be too challenging
 - When consulted about a range of possible options the preference emerged for the example given of mixed hostel and supported accommodation, along with Move on Floating Support, to feature in both contracts; i.e. in favour of incorporating all services as equally as possible within two contracts.

- Range of accommodation:
 - Providers felt having a range of accommodation in one contract works well due to 'flow' through the levels, whilst keeping some continuity; also beneficial when a young person isn't getting on well in a certain project.
 - Providers advised some young people are more suited to 'intimate' projects, some prefer larger hostel type projects.
- Family accommodation to be commissioned separately:
 - A number of providers suggested a specific tender for young parents who need accommodation & support with their babies or very young children.
- Prevention:
 - Providers welcomed the proposal for greater emphasis on prevention
 - Providers felt that prevention and early intervention is very important at 16+ before going into adult services
- Young People in scope of recommissioning:
 - Widespread opinion that every young person should be able to access the service and that those services should be wrapped around the young person's needs, on an individual basis.
- Supported Lodgings:
 - It was felt the pathway would benefit from Supported Lodgings being included in the model & commissioning process
- Timeframe:
 - Concerns over the time needed for consortia, partnerships to be made
 - Issues for landlords - amount of property needed may not be ready/available

Changes made to Council's proposals as a result of feedback

- More than one contract:
Following widespread opposition to the suggestion of one contract, providers were taken through a number of alternative options for how the services should be configured. Proposal is to commission two contracts
- Family accommodation to be commissioned separately:
The Council is proposing to commission family accommodation separately from single Young Persons' accommodation & support.
- Increased emphasis on prevention:
Greater emphasis to be given to continuity of mediation once placed to be included in the newly commissioned service
- Longer Timeframe:
The timetable for the procurement process is being considered, and the Council is now working towards a contract start date of April 2019 for the newly commissioned service.

Further consultation is planned with providers to inform the detailed specification.

Part 2 - Service User Consultation

In preparation for the recommissioning of Accommodation & Support services for Young People ongoing consultation has taken place with young people involving both group sessions and the use of questionnaires.

Group Session 1

A Listening Event was held in March 2016 attended by 13 Young People aged between 14-25, three Councillors from Cardiff Corporate Parenting Committee and officers from Children's Services, Housing & Communities and Education. The event was facilitated by NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service).

Issues raised by the young people in attendance included:

- concern about living alone at a young age;
- difficulties faced when living independently;
- lack of access to support when needed particularly during out of hours and at weekends;
- a desire to have someone to talk to in a crisis;
- concerns about private rented accommodation:
 - an economic trap – rents are higher and can be increased at any time, the need for a bond which is not always returned, housing benefit does not cover all costs, implications of shared room rate;
 - does not offer long term security;
 - does not always meet the same standards as council and housing association properties;
 - problems with landlords living up to their responsibilities;
 - lack of support e.g. when dealing with neighbours;
- scope to move back into supported accommodation if living independently doesn't work out;
- vulnerable young people should not be placed in inappropriate areas of the city;
- the importance of continuity in terms of the person providing support;
- more support to access education, training and employment;
- practical preparation training for independent living;
- the provision of training flats with support;
- Advocates to visit supported accommodation.

Group Session 2

In November 2017 a consultation event was facilitated by Children's Services with support from Housing & Communities. The event was designed to probe more

deeply issues raised by young people previously and to gauge reaction to the Independent Living Checklist that had been developed to assess and monitor the progress made by young people on their journey through support. A total of 14 young people attended this event, some from a care background and others who had been accepted as homeless. Some young people would have liked more of a say in the accommodation they were placed in but most were generally very positive about the accommodation. The issues that were raised most frequently were:

- the impact of rent charges on their income and the disincentive this created to find work and that they should be exempt from Council Tax;
- to combat social isolation visitors (or more visitors) should be allowed and that overnight stays should be permitted;
- more care should be taken to ensure a suitable mix of residents;
- having to repeat things to different support workers (either because the worker changed or the young person was moved to different accommodation) was frustrating
- concerns that the pace at which the skills to live independently were delivered were either too fast or too slow
- more help needed with domestic skills such as cooking and operating kitchen appliances

Interesting suggestions included operating a 'buddy' system to help young people with no friends or family, carrying out mediation with family and creating a family-type environment by marking occasions like Halloween.

Service User Questionnaire

A questionnaire was devised to ask young people about their experiences of supported accommodation and what they thought could be done to improve the service they received.

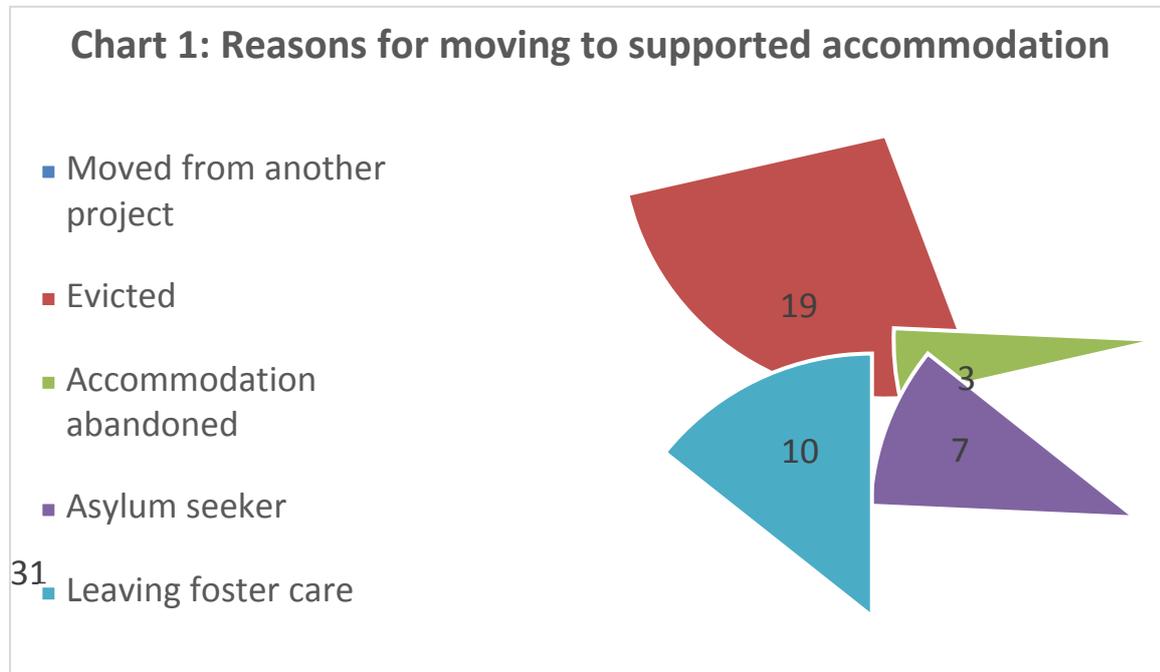
Staff from the Housing Options Centre used the questionnaire to conduct face to face interviews plus telephone surveys with young people as they moved through the Young Person's Gateway accommodation.

Throughout the summer and autumn of 2017, Young People who attended training to prepare them to move into Training Tenancy flats were also asked to complete the questionnaire.

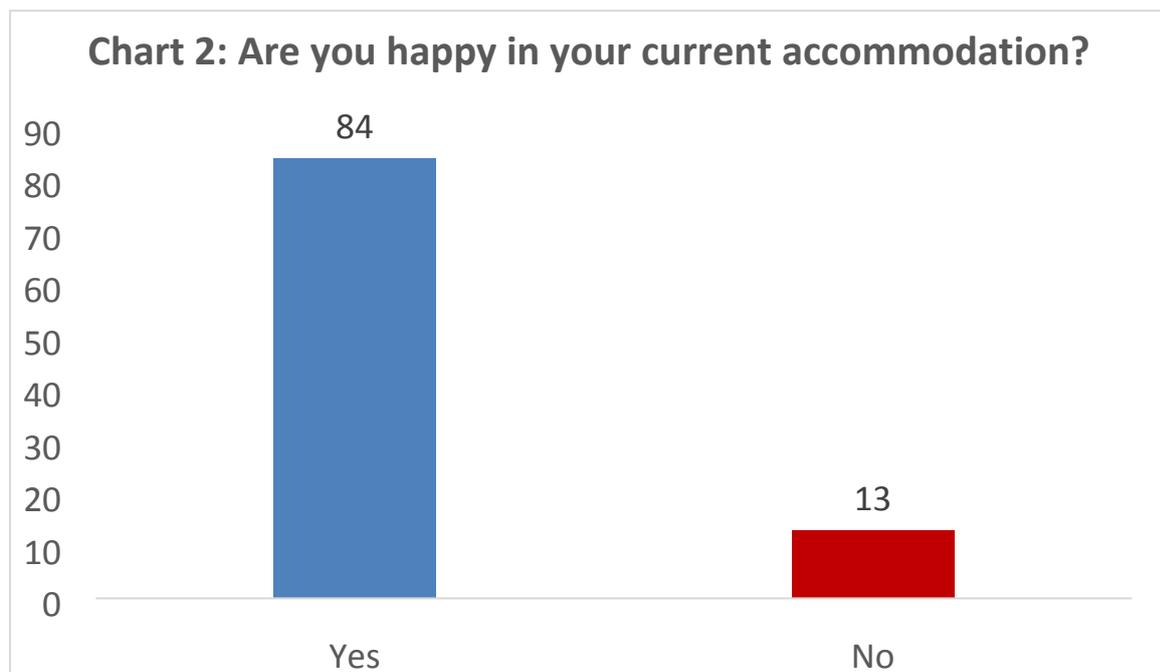
A total of 93 questionnaires were completed. Some young people completed more than one questionnaire reflecting that they had spent time in more than one scheme. This was useful as these young people were able to compare their experience of one scheme against another.

Chart 1 below indicates the reasons why the young person moved into their current supported accommodation. The largest number were moving from one project to

another. This may have occurred because the placement had not worked out or because the initial crisis had been resolved and they were moving to a project more geared to prepare them for independent living. Most of those recorded as 'Evicted' had moved out of the family home.



The young people were asked if they were happy with their current accommodation and, as the numbers in Chart 2 reveals, the overwhelming majority were content with just 20% offering any comments.



The criticisms that young people had of their accommodation were evenly spread around a number of different issues as illustrated by Chart 3.

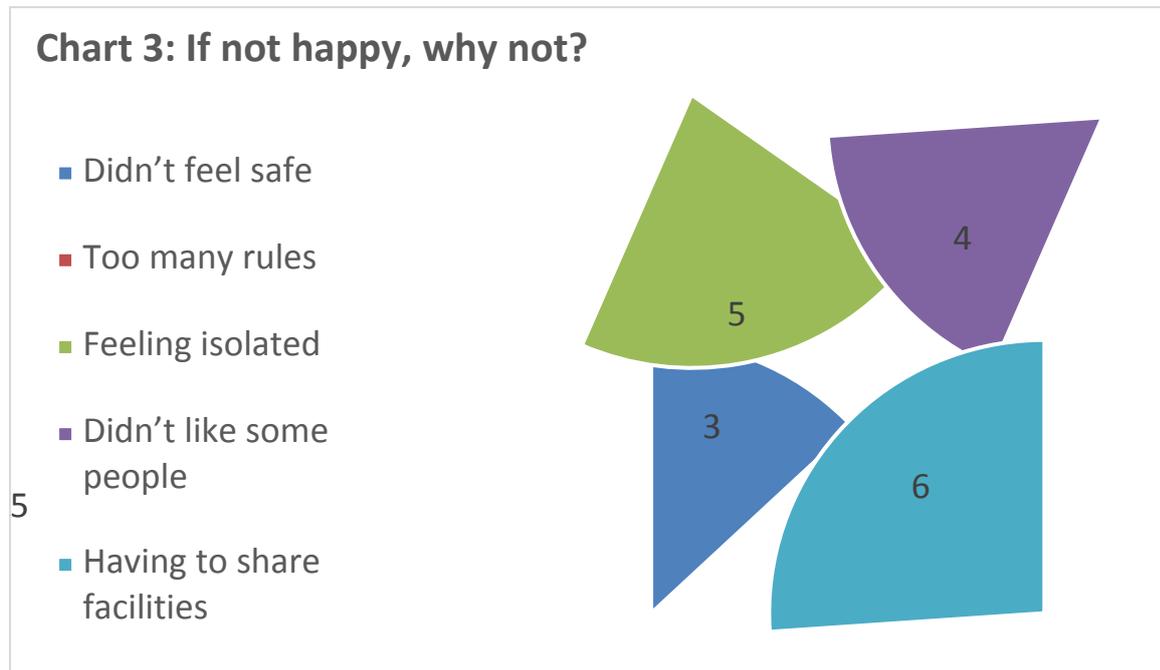
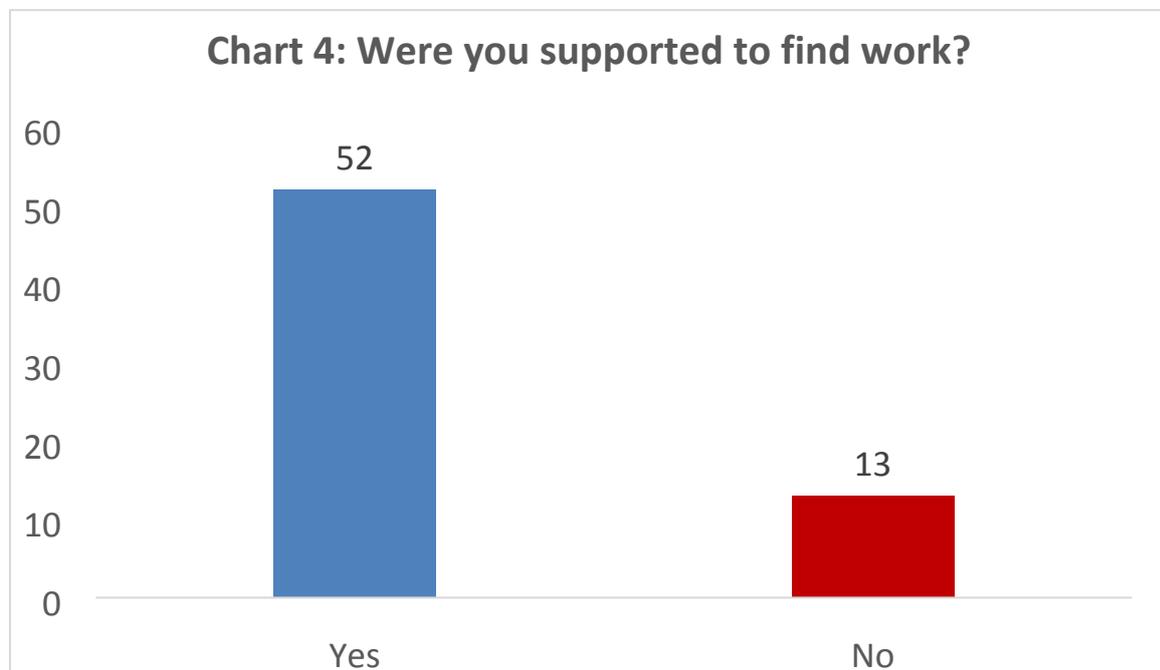


Chart 4 shows that a high proportion of young people felt that, when they wanted support in finding work, this was not always provided.



Issues

A number of suggestions were received regarding ways of improving the accommodation provided:

- people to have their own bathroom and kitchen;
- more spacious accommodation;
- standards of cleanliness to be improved;
- extending the kitchen opening hours.

When it came to the rules operating in the projects young people commented that:

- it felt they were being watched all the time;
- visitors should be allowed to stay;
- it stopped them moving on with their life;
- it felt they were being treated as a child.

More general comments included:

- a request for a more diverse range of training courses;
- more support for those whose first language is not English;
- an observation that the hostel could be a bit chaotic;
- more help to access work or education;
- putting on more events at the weekend.

Key Issues

The key issues raised in all aspects of the consultation are summarised below with initial responses.

Accommodation Issues

Generally people were happy with their accommodation although there a number of young people who would prefer to be accommodated in a flat rather than a single room. The other main issue relating to accommodation was a desire to allow visitors to stay overnight or sat least to visit their room. At a more practical level, young people raised issues such as cleanliness of common areas and access to common areas such as kitchens. There was a general view that rules were more onerous than they would expect in a family home and that more should be done to create a family-orientated atmosphere.

- The recommissioning provides the opportunity to specify a mix of accommodation that best fits the needs of the young people.
- Discussions with also be held with providers about some of the more practical issues.

Continuity of Support

Young people find having to repeatedly explain their history and experiences to a range of different support workers, particularly if they are moved from Provider to Provider, a frustrating process.

- The introduction of an Independent Living Checklist – a document that will move with the young person and be supported electronically – will help to address the frustration of frequently having to recount experiences.

- Significantly reducing the number of contracts offered should help to reduce the frequency of change in provider and give greater continuity of support.
- The importance of continuity of support will also be stressed in the service specification.

Advocacy and mediation

Young people requested that more effort be put into mediating with their parents to try and secure a successful move back to the family home. Requests to set up an independent advocacy service were also made.

- Family mediation currently takes place following the initial presentation as homeless. Options are being considered as part of the recommissioning of services to extend mediation throughout the period of initial assessment or, alternatively, to provide mediation on an 'as and when' basis throughout the period of time in supported accommodation.
- Including independent advocacy as an element of the services to be commissioned is also being considered.

Employment / Rent and Service Charges

Young people felt that they were not encouraged to work and that the costs of living in supported accommodation, and if they were to move on to the private rented sector, would take up most of their earnings.

- Information is being developed to help dispel some of the myths around the impact of earnings on welfare benefits to show that living in supported accommodation will not necessarily make the young person worse off. This information will be presented to providers as well as young people.
- The Council has developed an offer to private landlords which provides financial and practical support to encourage them to accept young people from a support background.
- Assisting young people to get back to work will be a key part of the recommissioned support and the number of those who are not in education or employment will be a key indicator for assessing the services.
- The Council's new employment service which will commence in April will focus on these clients providing mentoring, support and volunteering opportunities to help them into work.

Independent Living

It is clear that the prospect of independent living, coupled with the fear of isolation is a significant worry for many young people. Many felt the need for more help to prepare for independent living with particular emphasis on training, practical domestic skills, accessing accommodation and having someone to turn to in a crisis.

- To address these concerns Training Tenancies have been developed as a way of supporting young people as they make their first steps to independence. Tailored training is delivered ahead of the move to independent living and floating support is provided for six months, to

smooth the transition, this support can be extended if necessary. Particular care is taken to ensure that the young person is not housed in an area of the city that might expose them to unnecessary risk. Young people can also move back to supported accommodation if they find they were not ready for independent living. Training Tenancies will be continued and expanded in the recommissioned service.

- The Independent Living Checklist will monitor a young person's progression, ensuring that they receive the skills they need to carry out everyday tasks such as cooking, cleaning and managing their finances.

Ongoing Consultation and Involvement

Consultation with young people will continue throughout the recommissioning exercise. Questionnaires will continue to be issued with a focus on those leaving supported accommodation. When completing the questionnaires received a number of young people have indicated that they would be prepared to become involved in helping develop out thinking and we will tap into this pool going forward.