



**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**  
**COMMITTEE – 3 MARCH 2020**

**16+ SEMI-INDEPENDENT ACCOMMODATION**  
**BY EXTERNAL FRAMEWORK**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY**  
**SERVICES**

**Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the 16+ Accommodation and Support provided by external framework to Looked After Children (LAC) aged 16 and 17 years of age.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. Some establishments and types of accommodation are not required to register with Ofsted. These are sometimes known as ‘unregulated settings’. Providers who provide accommodation but not care do not need to be registered as a children’s home. The critical point is the provision, or not, of care.
3. Semi-independent accommodation is not subject to any minimum standards in law and the responsibility for determining the suitability of the accommodation falls to the placing local authority. Semi-independent accommodation meets the needs of some young people as a stepping stone towards adulthood.
4. Ofsted sets out in ‘Introduction to Children’s Homes’ criteria to help identify whether the service being proposed or provided is ‘supported accommodation’ and would therefore not require the provider and manager to register under the Care Standards Act 2000, rather than a children’s home, which would require the provider and manager to register with Ofsted and be subject to annual inspections. These criteria include:
  - Can young people go out of the establishment without staff permission?
  - Do young people have full control of their own finances?
  - Are young people in charge of meeting all their health needs, including such things as arranging GP or specialist health care appointments?
  - Are young people in full control of their medication?

**Background**

5. The 16 + Supported Accommodation Framework commenced on 1 August 2017. Providers offer accommodation and support to 16 – 18 year old LAC. The accommodation is shared or individual flats and usually includes five hours of support a week. Additional 1:1 support can be commissioned, as required, and is informed by the young person's assessment of need or Pathway Plan.
6. There are 24 Providers on the Framework and there are 96 young people (LAC) living in 16+ semi-independent accommodation. Of these 43 are Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. Costs per week range from £425 to £3000. One young person is in a Care Quality Commission (CQC) provision costing £5,625 per week. This cost is shared with Health.
7. Placing authorities are responsible for ensuring that any placement in an unregulated setting is suitable for the child or young person. The Council undertakes these duties through Quality Assurance Visits. Monitoring visits are planned and undertaken to all provision (minimum of annually) which includes an inspection of the provision, head office paperwork and considering the young person's feedback. Findings are documented and fed back to relevant professionals including the young person's social worker. Placement and Commissioning ensure any identified actions are completed.
8. Social worker and personal advisor statutory visits to the young person are also undertaken.
9. The Family Placements Team complete an annual audit to confirm that the criteria as set out by Ofsted is being adhered to. The last audit was completed in August 2019 and submitted to Ofsted for the inspection in September 2019.

### **Consultations**

10. Young people's views are sought during quality assurance visits undertaken by the Family Placement Team and inform action identified to improve the provision of accommodation and support.
11. Social Workers visit young people frequently, visiting patterns are set during Pathway Planning. The Pathway Plan is a Care Plan, detailing the services and support needed by young people aged 16 to 21 years. The Pathway Plan should be pivotal to the process whereby young people map out their future, articulating their aspirations and identifying interim goals along the way to realising their ambitions. Until the young person is 18, the Pathway Plan is overseen by an independent reviewing officer.

### **Resource Implications**

12. Children and Family Services holds responsibility for the provision of placements and accommodation for LAC, under the Council's sufficiency duties.
13. The Care Placement Strategy sets out these duties and the budget requirements are set in line with the predicted demand (LAC numbers and ages) and is impacted on by change in duties or how the Council executes these duties.

### **Conclusions**

14. Semi-independent accommodation is not subject to any minimum standards in law and the responsibility for determining the suitability of the accommodation falls to the placing local authority.
15. There is a consensus that semi-independent accommodation meets the needs of some young people as a stepping stone towards adulthood. The Council uses a range of methods to ensure the provision of supported accommodation is of a good standard and that these provisions are being correctly used.

### **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

16. An equality impact assessment is not required for the purposes of commissioning of 16+ semi-independent/supported accommodation.

### **Other Relevant Impact Assessments**

17. Section 22C Children Act 1989 sets out how local authorities should determine where a child will live. Section 22C(6)(d) allows a local authority to place a child in 'other arrangements', that is in a placement that is neither approved under Fostering Regulations nor a registered children's home, where this is consistent with the child's welfare and the most appropriate placement available. Semi-independent accommodation is an example of an 'other arrangement'.
18. However, use of unregulated provision to provide care for a child or young person, is illegal. Care is when the child or young person requires looking after, being done for rather than receiving advice and support. Where care is being provided, the child or young person should be placed in a setting registered with Ofsted.

### **Background Papers**

19. None

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

20. None

**Officer(s) to Contact**

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