



Surrey CVYS

**TITLE: Issues Paper: Young People and Homelessness**

**MEETING: Connexions/ VCFS Forum**

**REPORT BY: Mike Abbott**

**AGENDA ITEM: 4**

### **Purpose**

1. The purpose of this Issues Paper is to focus on some of the key issues about young people and homelessness in Surrey as a basis for starting, and structuring a discussion in the Forum.

### **Strategic Guidance**

2. There is a recent, and very helpful, joint DCLG and DCSF document<sup>1</sup> providing guidance about the way the statutory and voluntary sector should work together to initially prevent, and subsequently address homelessness amongst young people. A key passage is quoted in **Appendix 1**.

2. It is clear that the county council children's services, borough council housing and the VCFS are expected to work together to avoid the homelessness of young people arising from four circumstances:

- Care leavers aged 18 to 21
- Children of families living in temporary accommodation
- 16 and 17 year olds at risk of homelessness
- Children of families at risk of becoming homeless.

3. There is also the category of young people at risk of re-offending because of being placed in unsuitable accommodation.<sup>2</sup>

4. The Government's target is that the use of B&B accommodation for 16/17 year olds should be phased out by 2010.

5. To achieve these strategic aims the Guidance suggests the following approach:

- the development of joint protocols
- a shared ethos of prevention
- making strategic connections, and developing shared strategic objectives a targets
- effective use of joint resources to achieve shared aims
- sharing information

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<sup>1</sup> "Joint Working between Housing and Children's services: Preventing homelessness and tackling its effects on children and young people" – DCLG – March

<sup>2</sup> Surrey Youth Justice Service Accommodation Strategy – SYJS/ Rainer – Feb 2008

- use of the Common Assessment Framework
- involving children, young people and parents.

**Issue1:** *to what extent does current practice comply with this Guidance?*

### **Statutory responsibilities/ Joint Working**

6. There is considerable complexity about the statutory responsibilities of agencies working with young people, and as to how their responsibilities interact. In brief the responsibilities are:

**Children’s Services:** duty to **provide accommodation** for Care Leavers aged 16/17 (a “relevant child”), and to provide sustained support (including care plan and personal adviser) for young people aged 16+ who have been looked after by the local authority (an eligible child”)

### **Housing authorities:**

For those age 18-21, a duty to provide accommodation if they become homeless, through no fault.

For those age 21, a duty to provide accommodation if they are vulnerable as a result of being in care

For those **over 21**, a duty to provide accommodation if they become vulnerable as a result of having been in care.

7. There is currently a joint protocol agreed with Surrey Children’s Service, Rainer, and supported housing Providers. This ensures that the support costs of the placement of a ‘eligible or relevant child’ owed a duty under the Children Leaving Care Act 2000, or ‘child in need’ owed a duty under the Children Act 1989 in accommodation based supported accommodation are met by Children’s Service and/or by other relevant agencies. This relates only to placements where the young person cannot claim housing benefit. This protocol does not cover cases where a young person in such circumstances receives SP funded floating support services.

8. The complexity, and variation in practice between housing authorities accepting referrals up to ages 21, 24, 25, 30, 35 and 39 prompted Supporting People to conclude that a “young person” is anyone 16- 25.

**Issue 2:** *Are there any issues in the way in which the statutory authorities work together in Surrey to address their responsibilities?*

### **Provision of Accommodation**

9. There is a geographic disparity across the county in the provision of accommodation for homeless young people, with the majority of provision in Guildford and Reigate & Banstead. In particular all the provision for teenage parents is in the west of the county: Guildford, Woking, Waverley and

Runnymede. The following table<sup>3</sup> illustrates the provision of housing related support across the county:

Borough	Population estimate mid 2005	% of total	Total 16 - 25 yr olds at 2001 census	% of total	SP funded units – young people at risk or young people leaving care	% of total
Elmbridge	130,300	12.1	11,066	9.6	13	5.8
Epsom and Ewell	68,500	6.4	7,064	6.1	5	2.2
Guildford	132,200	12.3	18,746	16.3	74	33.2
Mole Valley	81,100	7.5	7,213	6.3	10	4.5
Reigate and Banstead	127,200	11.8	12,875	11.2	63	28.3
Runnymede	79,600	7.4	11,428	9.9	8	3.6
Spelthorne	88,500	8.2	9,185	8.0	0	0.0
Surrey Heath	81,500	7.6	8,123	7.0	13	5.8
Tandridge	79,400	7.4	7,536	6.5	4	1.8
Waverley	116,800	10.9	12,342	10.7	3	1.3
Woking	90,500	8.4	9,642	8.4	30	13.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,075,600</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>115,220</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>100</b>

10. Note that this chart looks at services where the primary or secondary client group is young people at risk or young people leaving care. There is a total provision of 264 units for young people and teenage parents in the county – details are in Appendix 3.

**Issue 3:** *Is this geographic imbalance a problem, and if so what can be done about it?*

### **Need for Accommodation**

11. It would be helpful if colleagues brought with them any evidence of the trends in the homelessness of young people.

12. However Figures from the Strategic Review show that between April 2006 and June 2007 there were 161 16/17 year olds for whom client records existed, of whom 34 were in B&B. Rainer and Surrey CC Children’s Service have now developed an emergency beds scheme for young people to avoid the risk of going into B&B especially on release from secure accommodation.

13. The evidence however is that the numbers of young people in need are higher than this – for example a detailed study by Spelthorne BC showed evidence of a higher than expected need.

14. The Surrey Youth Justice Service has a target of ensuring that, at present 95% of young people leaving the secure estate should have suitable

<sup>3</sup> “A Strategic review of Supporting People services for young people (Aug 2007- Jan 2008)” - Surrey Supporting People Team – Jan 2008.

accommodation to go to, and they are achieving a high degree of compliance. However during the period July to Sept 2007, 13 young people were in unsatisfactory accommodation, and their experiences have led the YJS to conclude that the housing needs are as follows:

1. A lack of varying types of accommodation. Hostel accommodation is not always the most appropriate accommodation for a young person and if a young person is refused from a project then there are very few other accommodation options that are not hostels for them to go to.
2. Lack of emergency accommodation. None of the supported accommodation providers in Surrey take direct access / emergency referrals.
3. For each vacant bed space in a Surrey Supported Housing Project there will be approximately 4 referrals. The waiting lists can be 10 yps long in some projects
4. Lack of bail accommodation which has led to young people remaining in custody or being placed in unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation
5. There is not a supported lodgings scheme in Surrey for young people with medium to high level support needs (since the closure of the previous scheme 2 years ago). SYJS are in discussion with SCS to evidence the need for this provision. SYJS are keen to develop a scheme, which provides remand-supported lodgings carers. This is the same for remand foster care
6. The use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation, which is classed as inappropriate by the DFES and is not in line with the Every Child Matters objectives.
7. Secure accommodation placements are limited for remand, which could result in young people being inappropriately remanded into young Offender Institutes.
8. Lack of joint working protocols between SCS and the 11 Housing Departments leaves young people unsupported and vulnerable. The current situation for most vulnerable 16 & 17 year olds in Surrey is that they are passed between the two departments and joint assessments are not taking place, impacting on the level and consistency of service and support a young person gets. YJS Practitioners also raised concerns regarding the numbers of vulnerable young people (especially 16 & 17 year olds) being deemed intentionally homeless.

15. Discussions have already taken place with Rainer and Surrey Children's Services (SCS) about the development of a supported lodgings service in Surrey, which would offer scope to develop and expand opportunities for young offenders and those on remand. As already noted, Rainer have also launched a pilot scheme for emergency accommodation placements with existing accommodation providers, with the main aim of avoiding young people being placed in bed and breakfast and other types of unsuitable accommodation. If the evaluation proves successful, it is hoped to extend the scheme to include young people with whom the YJS is working - especially those who are at risk of being remanded into custody, instead of bail being an option because they have no safe, suitable appropriate accommodation to go to.

**Issue 4:** *Is there an imbalance between need for accommodation for homeless young people, and / or those leaving secure accommodation? If so, what steps should be taken?*

### **Prevention better than cure?**

16. Reverting to the starting point, the Government's Guidance is to focus on prevention, and to make early use of the CAF to identify young people at risk. Specifically they suggest that authorities work together to focus on the following areas of work:

- early intervention to prevent homelessness
- prevention at the point of near crisis
- prevention of repeat homelessness
- assessment processes including how the Common Assessment Framework will be used in the context of homelessness services
- provision of appropriate accommodation and support with clear and flexible pathways towards independence.

**Issue 5:** *Is it possible to make an early identification of those at risk, and if so to prevent homelessness?*

### **Conclusion**

17. This is simply an Issues Paper to get a discussion started in a structured way. There will undoubtedly be other issues to address besides these and we'll tease this out at the start to make an agenda for discussion. The product of the discussion and suggested actions should then be referred to the C&YP SCP.

Mike Abbott  
4 Sept 2008

## **Appendix 1; Core Government Guidance on strategic roles**

“The Children Act (2004) (section 10) sets out a statutory requirement for local authorities and their ‘relevant’ partners to cooperate to improve children’s well-being.

The guide applies to four groups of children and young people who have been identified as being at particular risk of poor outcomes in the absence of effective joint working between housing services and children’s services and their partners:

- 16 and 17 year olds who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- care leavers aged 18 to 21
- children of families living in temporary accommodation
- children of families who have been, or are at risk of being, found intentionally homeless by a housing authority.

The guidance is based on research into existing effective and emerging practice and draws into one place the key elements of current government policy, guidance and relevant legislation in the fields of homelessness and children’s services.

### **The local authority strategic housing role**

Local authorities are expected to take a strategic approach to housing by playing a strong role in addressing the housing needs of all residents in their area, across all tenures, as part of their place shaping role. Authorities are responsible for assessing and planning for the current and future housing needs of local people, including children and young people, and setting out their arrangements for planning and commissioning housing support services. Collaboration with partners to meet housing needs is also a key aspect of the strategic housing role.

The key elements underpinning effective joint work to prevent and mitigate the effects of homelessness on children and young people are:

- the development of joint protocols
- a shared ethos of prevention
- making strategic connections and developing shared strategic objectives and targets
- effective use of joint resources to achieve shared aims
- sharing information
- use of the Common Assessment Framework
- involving children, young people and parents.

Consistent, reliable and sustainable joint working can only be achieved through formal agreements between the relevant agencies, referred to in this guidance as joint protocols. Joint protocols enable partners and services users to understand their roles and confidently engage in joint working. They lead to better communication, increased and more effective joint working and better outcomes for clients. In recognition of this the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities requires authorities to set out the processes that underpin and enable joint working and information sharing in both unitary and two tier areas.

A joint protocol should set out the jointly agreed vision, objectives, systems and processes intended to achieve the following:

- prevent homelessness
- make sure people get the housing-related and other support they need without being passed between services unnecessarily
- ensure access to suitable accommodation when homelessness cannot be prevented.

Housing and Children's Services Authorities and departments will want to consider which agencies should be involved in the development and implementation of joint protocols to meet specific objectives. This may, for example, include Youth Offending Teams, Connexions Services, schools, colleges and training providers, Youth Services and voluntary sector agencies. In two tier areas all housing authorities in the county should be party to a joint protocol.

A joint protocol should set out the following:

- the partners
- vision and scope
- aims, objectives, planned outcomes and indicators of success
- roles and responsibilities of partners:
  - the responsible senior officer in each service or agency and how they will work together to lead and manage the delivery of services through the protocol.
  - which services are to be delivered, who is responsible for each element, how and in what circumstances referrals between services are made and how information is shared. Process maps and flow charts showing how clients move through the services may be helpful.
- clear, concise and easily navigated tools and guidance to act as a manual to support staff in their roles.
- arrangements for resolving disputes between partners

- a system for monitoring and review of achievement against the objectives.

Each partner will need to satisfy themselves of the legal compliance of joint protocols with particular attention to information sharing and information security.

## Appendix 2: Units for Young People and Teenage Parents by Borough Units for Young People and Teenage Parents by District/ Borough

Provider	Service	Capacity
<b>Elmbridge</b>		
Look Ahead	Floating support for care leavers	10
SCDT	Shared Houses	3
<b>Epsom and Ewell</b>		
Rainer*	Floating support service	5
<b>Guildford</b>		
Stonham	Weyforward	9
Guildford YMCA	Guildford Y Centre & Midway House	53
SCDT	Shared Houses	8
Rainer*	Floating support service	4
A2	TP service	15
<b>Mole Valley</b>		
In touch	YP Housing	10
<b>Reigate and Banstead</b>		
Keychange	Wayside	18
Reigate & Redhill YMCA	Hillbrook House	42
In touch	YP Housing	3
<b>Runnymede</b>		
Rainer*	Floating support service	5
Life Housing	TP service	9
<b>Spelthorne</b>		
<b>Surrey Heath</b>		
Accent Peerless	Connaught Court	10
SCDT	Shared Houses	3
<b>Tandridge</b>		
Rainer*	Floating support service	4
<b>Waverley</b>		
Stonham	Weyforward	3
A2	TP service	7
<b>Woking</b>		
SCDT	Pound House	12
SCDT	The Crescent	14
SCDT	Shared Houses	4
Life Housing	TP service	4
A2	TP service	9
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>264</b>

