

**Engagement Report:****Executive Summary Report**

Review of Young People's Supported Housing Services:
Questionnaire for Professionals
16 October - 14 November 2018

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Introduction

Oxfordshire County Council has contracts with five providers to deliver Supported Housing services for homeless young people, aged 16 to 24 years of age. There are approx. 229 units of accommodation within the Young People's Supported Housing pathway. Young people are provided with a place to live and guidance from professionals around housing related matters, which aims to help them to reach independence. Other support needs are met by professionals working in other services.

There are two 'Move On' homes within the REoC Pathway (4 beds within each). These places are generally prioritised for young people who are moving from out of county residential provision into county provision or from existing county residential provision and need more intensive support than that provided through the YPSH pathway. There are currently 13 supported lodging hosts where a young person lives with a family or a single person. The hosts have been assessed and trained by the local authority.

New contracts will need to commence in April 2020, as contracts with the existing services come to an end. We want to ensure services offer the best support to the young people who need them. A project is underway to look at how we can strengthen our housing and support services for young people, to inform future provision.

Stakeholders have been involved in the review of the existing supported housing pathway. In addition to the survey, there have been workshops, focus groups and telephone interviews to provide additional opportunities for professionals and current and past users of services, to share views about the existing pathway in terms of strengths, challenges and opportunities to shape the future pathway when services are recommissioned.

The questionnaire for professionals was split into 4 parts with questions about;

- Preventing young people from entering the pathway
- Supporting young people within supported housing services
- Support for young people to access employment, education and training
- Supporting young people to move out of the pathway.

The questionnaire contained 15 questions and there was a total of 63 surveys received. The responses were from a wide range of teams/services.

This report covers a summary of the findings of the questionnaire for professionals open between 16 October - 14 November 2018. Request the full report for the full findings and detailed qualitative responses.

Summary of Findings from Survey for Professionals

Each question posed a statement that responders could show their agreement or disagreement on a 5 point scale. Throughout the questions, a range of responses were given and there was rarely an overwhelming single response. A high number of respondents reported feeling neutral to all questions. Q3 and Q11 are the most positive agreed questions and Q1 is the least positively answered questions. All the questions allowed respondents to add any additional comments.

Many respondents:

- 1) **Disagreed that services are working well to prevent young people from becoming homeless¹**
- 2) **Agreed that joint working across agencies effectively prevents young people from becoming homeless and entering the pathway**
- 3) **Agreed that there are opportunities to work differently to help prevent young people from becoming homeless and entering the pathway²**
- 4) **Agreed that the right young people are being supported**
- 5) **Agreed that housing services are helping young people in their care to become more independent**
- 6) **Agreed or felt neutral about whether services helped young people to 'move on' from needing supported housing**
- 7) **Agreed that joint working across agencies effectively supports young people in supported housing to become more independent**

¹ This question had the highest number of respondents who answered 'disagreed' to this statement out of all the survey questions.

² This question had the second highest number of respondents who answered 'agreed' to this statement out of all the survey questions.

- 8) **Agreed there are opportunities for all staff to work differently** with each other to better support young people within the supported housing pathway to become more independent
- 9) **Agreed that housing providers effectively support plans** to engage young people into accessing positive and sustainable **education, employment and training opportunities**
- 10) **Were neutral as to whether joint working between agencies effectively engages young** people into education, employment and training
- 11) **Agreed there were opportunities to work differently** with each other to support young people in supported housing to engage with **positive and sustainable education, employment and training**³
- 12) **Were neutral as to whether supported housing services help young people to 'move on'** to positive and sustainable destinations as they leave the pathway
- 13) **Were neutral as to whether joint working across agencies effectively supports plans to move young people on** to positive and sustainable destinations as they leave the pathway
- 14) **Agreed or felt neutral as to whether there were opportunities for all staff to work differently** with each other to help and support young people in supported housing **to 'move on'** to positive and sustainable destinations

Recurrent themes

More Prevention Work Needed

Many respondents felt that more work was needed to keep young people at home rather than referring them to the pathway. This was felt particularly regarding 16-year olds, most of whom were thought too young to manage well in the pathway.

Respondents also felt that more work with families was needed to prevent crisis situations at home. Currently, it was felt, that by the time a young person enters the

³ This question had the second highest number of respondents who answered 'agreed' to this statement out of all the survey questions.

pathway they are traumatised and family relationships have become irrevocably broken.

It was stated that more help was needed to prevent drug dealing and addiction within the pathway.

Capacity Issues

Many respondents felt that more capacity is needed in the pathway and cited the difficulty of placing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, with some being placed out of county due to lack of capacity in the pathway. Some felt that we should focus exclusively in the pathway on the young people to whom we have a statutory duty. However, it was also felt that a non-statutory young person over 18 was unlikely to be accepted into the pathway.

More ‘move on’ Options Needed

Whilst the ‘move on’ homes help some people, many respondents felt that the lack of affordable ‘move on’ options from the pathway greatly hampered young people’s ability to live independently. It was felt by several respondents that work should be done to allow young people to move back home after a time in the pathway. Supported lodgings were felt to work well in helping young people into independence. A floating support service was suggested to assist young people once they have moved on. The benefit system was cited by several respondents as a disincentive to moving on.

Staff Turnover within Pathway Providers

Many respondents felt the high staff turnover impacted upon the service delivered by pathway providers. Staff shortages meant that resources were used on firefighting rather than encouraging young people into education or employment. It was also felt that the level of service given by providers was inconsistent and dependent on individuals within a service.

Complex Needs of Young People

There was a feeling that the needs of many of the young people in the pathway were too complex for them to cope well in that environment. Some posed a high risk to others. The complexity of need was also a barrier to the young people gaining independent living skills and being able to 'move on'.

Young People with ADHD, Mild Autism and Mild Learning Disability

There was concern that the needs of many of young people with low level support needs were not being met. If they enter the pathway there is not adequate support for them, but living at home can cause difficulties to the point of threatening a family's tenancy.

In addition to these recurrent themes, specific questions elicited these broad responses:

Joint Working

It was felt there were some good examples of joint working in place with some providers and services singled out. However, it was felt that more co-ordination, communication and information sharing was needed between providers and services. It was felt that different projects have different expectations and that consistent messages need to be given by all services. Pressure on resources was cited as a reason for fragmentation and the absence of joint working. Several people commented that there needs to be more joint work with Housing. It was felt that more work was needed to prevent the build-up of rent arrears in the pathway which hindered a young person finding independent accommodation.

Support in Engaging with Education, Employment or Training (EET)

Many respondents felt that the service was inconsistent across providers in this respect but there were some providers singled out where support offered around EET is working well. It was felt that some providers did not make use of the specialist

education and training providers available to them. The difficulty in engaging young people in activities which will help them ‘move on’ was cited several times. This was attributed either due to their complex needs or their young age.

Preparing young people for independence and moving on from the pathway

It was felt that more could be done including more step-down provision and more joint work with social housing providers over ‘move on’ options from the pathway. As well as the lack of suitable ‘move on’ provisions, a high incidence of post pathway evictions and rent arrears was reported resulting in young people returning to the pathway.

Some respondents felt that quiet young people were not encouraged to ‘move on’ and others felt that some providers were too quick to evict young people. It was also felt that some young people can stay too long in the pathway and that this hampered their gaining of independent living skills. It was felt that more input from other services such as the Youth Offending Service, drugs and alcohol services, and mental health services was required.

What Happens Next?

This report will be published on the consultation portal on the OCC public website and staff will be sent a link so that they can access it and cascade it as appropriate.

The findings from this questionnaire will be used as evidence to support the review underway to identify where we can improve the young people’s supported housing pathway to better prevent young people from entering the pathway, reaching independence through the pathways intervention, or being reunited with family where it is safe to do so.

A recommendations report will be developed based upon the data gathered as part of this review and will be taken to the directorate leadership team for consideration in Spring 2019.

Thank you to all who took part in the questionnaire.

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