

REPORT TO: CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 22 JANUARY 2024
REPORT ON: INDEPENDENT LIVING SUPPORT AT REID SQUARE
REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE
REPORT NO: 28-2024

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report requests approval by Elected Members of the adjusted use of Hillcrest Homes flats at Reid Square to provide independent living support for care experienced young people and young people at risk of homelessness aged 16 to 21 years.

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- a Approve the Council's lease of Reid Square flats for an initial period of 24 months to provide independent living support and enhanced transitions into adulthood for cohorts of young people.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The total annual rental/running cost of the property of £244k and this will be fully self-funded by a combination of Home Office funding for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) which ranges from £14k to £52k per year per young person, Housing Benefits and core funding.

4 BACKGROUND

4.1 A total of 10 flats with 22 bedrooms at Reid Square are owned by Hillcrest Homes and in a previous lease agreement between the Council and Action for Children (AFC), they had been constituted as supported accommodation for vulnerable families.

4.2 This model of support involved the Council commissioning AFC to provide outreach support to vulnerable families residing at Reid Square, alongside support from Social Work teams and an on-site 24/7 concierge service. The project ended in June 2023.

5 MAIN TEXT

5.1 The subsequent availability of the flats has been explored with Hillcrest Homes in the context of a need to build local care capacity for care experienced young people and others, including UASC, young people moving out of care or out of Continuing Care and other young people who are at risk of homelessness and/or residing in accommodation which is unsuitable to meet their needs. The following points have been considered.

5.2 The Home Office National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for UASC, which involves a rota which has a definitive outline of numbers to be transferred to Local Authority areas based on a standard formula of 0.07% of the local child population. Locally, this means that up to 4-6 young people can receive safe transfer to the city every 12 months. Since its introduction to Scotland in 2018, a total of 21 young people has arrived in the city via the scheme.

5.3 Locally, UASC have all initially been aged 16-17 years and supported in care settings suitable to meet their individual needs, including Foster Care (2), Young People's Houses (4) and Supported Accommodation (15). They typically have higher levels of independent living skills and settle well but given their experiences before arriving in the city they do require some additional support. As they are defined as care experienced young people, they are entitled to Continuing Care up to age 21.

- 5.4 There is also a longer-term imperative to build capacity via a range of options suitable to meet the different needs of other care experienced young people and care leavers, as the current age distribution includes 103 (22%) aged 12-15 years and 95 (20.5%) aged 16 and above. A number of these will remain in their existing setting in Continuing Care until aged 21 years but others will elect to leave care completely and may require independent living support as they move into early adulthood.
- 5.5 When young people do leave care or Continuing Care, they may decide to enter mainstream accommodation, which is often not suited to the type and level of support which is still necessary to meet their needs and mitigate any risks from others or to themselves. In this context, a Significant Case Review (SCR) published in June 2021 noted 'a lack of choice for care leavers with age-appropriate accommodation which hinders professionals' ability to protect them from harm including homelessness'.
- 5.6 The Council strategy as outlined in Our Promise (Article IV of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 23/10/23 and Committee Report Number 295-2023 refers) promotes the development of local care options for children and young people to prevent their escalation into external residential care. Whilst the balance of family-based versus residential has increased this year from 87.2% to 89.6%, maintaining progress requires sustained local capacity building via a range of age-appropriate options suitable to meet different needs.

6 INDEPENDENT LIVING SUPPORT

- 6.1 In response to these needs, adjusting the previous use of the Reid Square flats to accommodate suitability matched older young people aged 17-21 years is presented as a necessary, supportive and viable option. Support will include a continuation of the 24/7 concierge service, alongside a Social Work team providing immediate onsite support from one of the flats, Housing Options support and in any exceptional circumstances, additional on-site support as required.
- 6.2 The Children and Families Service and Neighbourhood Services will jointly maintain oversight of young people accessing and supported in the flats, including screening appropriate referrals, matching of compatible young people living in the flats, funding, occupancy levels, additional direct support and coordination of wider services such as NHS Tayside, Further or Higher Education and Employability Services as and where necessary. It will ensure that the flats remain a nurturing environment.
- 6.3 The city needs to build care capacity via a range of options which meet the needs of different young people, including UASC, older care experienced young people and vulnerable young people who may be homeless and otherwise placed in adult-based accommodation. The availability of the flats offers an opportunity to contribute towards these options through independent living support for young people consisting of an on-site concierge, co-located Social Work support, Housing Options and wider support.

7 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This report has been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment to identify impacts on Equality & Diversity, Fairness & Poverty, Environment and Corporate Risk. An impact, positive or negative, on one or more of these issues was identified. An appropriate senior manager has checked and agreed with this assessment. A copy of the Integrated Impact Assessment showing the impacts and accompanying benefits of/mitigating factors for them is included as an Appendix to this report.

8 CONSULTATIONS

8.1 The Council Leadership Team were consulted in the preparation of this report.

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.

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APPENDIX 1

Integrated Impact Assessment

Committee Report Number: 28-2024

Document Title: Independent Living Support at Reid Square

Document Type: Service

Description:

This report outlines a proposal for the Council lease of Hillcrest Homes flats at Reid Square to be used as independent living support for cohorts of young people aged 17-21. This includes Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) arriving in the city via the National Transfer Scheme (NTS), care leavers not wishing to remain in Continuing Care and other young people who would otherwise need to be placed in adult accommodation not suitable to meet their needs.

There are 10 flats with a controlled security entrance, CCTV and a 24/7 concierge service which monitors entrance/exit and is available to provide basic advice and support during day-time, evenings and weekends. Only the 2-bedroom flats will be used to accommodate suitably matched young people. In addition to standard arrangements, Social Work staff will also be onsite Monday to Friday via a team rota and will provide and/or coordinate wider supports.

Intended Outcome:

The intended outcome of the proposal is to extend the range of suitable accommodation options for vulnerable young people on their transition to adulthood, enable young people to move on from formal care arrangements including external placements in a more graduated manner and place less reliance on the use of Foster Carers and/or Young People's Houses for UASC.

Period Covered: 22/01/2024 to 22/01/2026

Monitoring:

The proposal will be monitored in terms of the appropriate matching, support and onward living arrangements of young people and in terms of funding arrangements by the Children and Families Service, Neighbourhood Services and Hillcrest Homes. There will also be ongoing liaison with the Home Office in relation to UASC arrivals via the NTS.

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Equality, Diversity And Human Rights

Impacts & Implications

Age: Positive

The flats will provide enhanced support for key cohorts of young people/young adults.

Disability: Positive

One of the flats has disability access and facilities.

Gender Reassignment: No Impact**Marriage & Civil Partnership: No Impact****Pregnancy & Maternity: Positive**

The 2-bedroom flats would offer suitable accommodation for very young families where necessary.

Race / Ethnicity: No Impact**Religion or Belief: No Impact****Sex: No Impact****Sexual Orientation: No Impact**

Are any Human Rights not covered by the Equalities questions above impacted by this report?

No

Fairness & Poverty

Geographic Impacts & Implications

Strathmartine:	Positive
Lochee:	Positive
Coldside:	Positive
Maryfield:	Positive
North East:	Positive
East End:	Positive
The Ferry:	Positive
West End:	Positive

Positive Implications: The flats will be used for young people/young adults from all parts of the city.

Household Group Impacts and Implications

Looked After Children & Care Leavers: Positive

The flats offer enhanced independent living support for care experienced young people who do not wish to remain in Continuing Care.

Household Group Impacts and Implications

Carers: No Impact

Lone Parent Families: Positive

It is possible that a flat could be used for a young lone parent family where necessary.

Single Female Households with Children: Positive

As above.

Greater number of children and/or young children: No Impact

Pensioners - single / couple: No Impact

Unskilled workers or unemployed: Positive

The flats will provide stable accommodation from where young people can obtain and maintain suitable employment.

Serious & enduring mental health problems: Positive

The flats will provide stability and security for some vulnerable young people.

Homeless: Positive

The flats offer a bespoke alternative to adult accommodation for young people at risk of homelessness with additional levels of age appropriate support.

Drug and/or alcohol problems: Positive

As above, although care will be taken to ensure that young people accessing the accommodation are suitably matched and supported.

Offenders & Ex-offenders: Positive

It is possible that some young people will have been involved in the youth or adult justice systems.

Socio Economic Disadvantage Impacts & Implications

Employment Status: Positive

As above.

Education & Skills: Positive

As above.

Income: Positive

As above.

Caring Responsibilities (including Childcare): Positive

As above

Affordability and accessibility of services: Positive

The flats will be funded by a combination of income streams dependent on the status of the young person, including Home Office, Housing Benefits and core funding.

Fuel Poverty: No Impact

Cost of Living / Poverty Premium: No Impact

Connectivity / Internet Access: Positive

All flats are furnished and young people will also be supported to suitably personalise the properties.

Income / Benefit Advice / Income Maximisation: Positive

The flats will provide stable and secure accommodation from where young people are more likely to be receptive towards advice and capable of acting on it.

Employment Opportunities: Positive

As above

Education: Positive

As above in respect of Further and Higher Education.

Health: Positive

As above.

Life Expectancy: Positive

A recent Significant Case Review (SCR) noted that a range of suitable accommodation is necessary to minimise risks to vulnerable young people.

Mental Health: Positive

As above.

Overweight / Obesity: Not Known

No information at present.

Child Health: Positive

As above.

Neighbourhood Satisfaction: Not Known

The proposed use of the flats does not deviate from their previous use for vulnerable families and there have been no reported community issues but this will be monitored.

Transport: No Impact

Environment

Climate Change Impacts

Mitigating Greenhouse Gases: No Impact

Adapting to the effects of climate change: No Impact

Resource Use Impacts

Energy efficiency & consumption: No Impact

Prevention, reduction, re-use, recovery or recycling of waste: No Impact

Sustainable Procurement: No Impact

Transport Impacts

Accessible transport provision: No Impact

Sustainable modes of transport: No Impact

Natural Environment Impacts

Air, land & water quality: No Impact

Biodiversity: No Impact

Open & green spaces: No Impact

Built Environment Impacts

Built Heritage: No Impact

Housing: No Impact

Is the proposal subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)?

No further action is required as it does not qualify as a Plan, Programme or Strategy as defined by the Environment Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.

Corporate Risk

Corporate Risk Impacts

Political Reputational Risk: Positive

The flats demonstrate the Council commitment to humanitarian support and support for vulnerable young people.

Economic/Financial Sustainability / Security & Equipment: Not Known

Funding for the flats will be met through a combination of Home Office funding for UASC, Housing Benefits, core funding and contributions from young

people where they are in employment. It is not possible to quantify the balance of these contributions but the service is confident that through appropriate matching the overall costs will be met. This will be monitored and reviewed, with an option to end the lease in 24 months if any financial risks cannot be mitigated and the flats are not affordable.

Social Impact / Safety of Staff & Clients: No Impact

Technological / Business or Service Interruption: No Impact

Environmental: No Impact

Legal / Statutory Obligations: Positive

The flats offer additional capacity to enable the Council to comply with the NTS and meet all requirements in relation to care experienced young people.

Organisational / Staffing & Competence: No Impact

Corporate Risk Implications & Mitigation:

There are moderate levels of risk associated with the subject matter of this report. However, having undertaken a full analysis of the upside and downside risks there is a clear benefit in what is proposed and we are satisfied that adequate controls are available to mitigate the downside risks.

The downside financial exposure to the Council is less than £250,000 and this together with other areas of risk can be effectively managed.