

# **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

7<sup>th</sup> September 2017

## **PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP – HOUSING OPTIONS ACCOMMODATING AN AFTER CARE SOCIAL WORKER**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Mark Shurmer, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Portfolio Holder Consulted	No.
Relevant Director	Deputy Chief Executive
Ward(s) Affected	All wards.

### **1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 This report provides background information in relation to a proposal from the Performance Scrutiny Working Group for the Council to offer space in the Housing Options team's offices in Redditch Town Hall as a work base for an After Care Social Worker.
- 1.2 Members of the group have asked for it to be noted that they feel very strongly in favour of this proposal being approved.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Committee is asked to RECOMMEND that an After Care Social Worker should be provided with a base to work in the Housing Options team's office at Redditch Town Hall in order to work with care leavers in Redditch.**

### **3. KEY ISSUES**

#### **Background**

- 3.1 During a meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2017 Members interviewed relevant Officers about the Council's arrangements for housing care leavers in the Borough.
- 3.2 From the date when a young person in care turns 16 plans start to be made by Social Services in respect of that individual's transition from care to independent living. Care leavers should be allocated a Personal Advisor, or After Care Social Worker, whose job is to support the care leavers and to ensure that they can claim everything they are entitled to.
- 3.3 In Worcestershire the Personal Advisor provide support in relation to the following areas:
  - practical life and independence skills

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- education, training or employment
  - accommodation
  - health and development
  - money and finances
  - support needed
  - advice with negotiating solutions or signposting on to other agencies.
- 3.4 The Personal Advisor should stay in contact with the care leaver and provide ongoing support until the young person turns 21, or until their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday if they are in full-time education.
- 3.5 In Worcestershire the County Council's Social Services department refers young people to the Borough Council's Housing Options team for accommodation.
- 3.6 The Performance Scrutiny Working Group has been advised that at the moment all After Care Social Workers are based in Worcester. To ensure that young people leaving care in Redditch have easy access to their Personal Advisor the group has discussed the possibility of at least one After Care Social Worker operating from a base at Redditch Town Hall.
- 3.7 Members have been advised that there would be sufficient space available within the Housing Options Team's offices in Redditch Town Hall to accommodate an After Care Social Worker. This would provide that Officer with immediate access to staff who could provide assistance in respect of housing young care leavers.

**Financial Implications**

- 3.8 There are no direct financial implications for the Council.

**Legal Implications**

- 3.9 Young people aged 18 to 21 who have spent at least one night in care when they were 16 or 17 are automatically classified as being in priority need for housing when they turn 18. This is reflected in the Council's Housing Allocations Policy.

**Service / Operational Implications**

- 3.10 Worcestershire County Council staff have in the past worked from the Town Hall for other services, such as Public Health. Given the vulnerability of young care leavers and their need for support during a transition period after leaving care the group is proposing that it would be appropriate to arrange for at least one After Care Social Worker to also be based at the Town Hall.

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**Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 3.11 Young people leaving care are often particularly vulnerable. The potential for young people to access an After Care Support Worker in Redditch, rather than at a distance in Worcester, is therefore considered by the group to represent good practice from an .

**4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

No specific risks have been identified for the Council.

**5. BACKGROUND**

Housing Allocations Policy (approved by Council 24<sup>th</sup> July 2017)

'Care Leavers and Pathway Plans', information provided on Worcestershire County Council's website at <https://ylyc.worcestershire.gov.uk/care-and-support/care-leavers/care-leavers-and-pathway-plans/>

'Help and Housing for Care Leavers', information provided on Shelter's website at [https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing\\_advice/housing\\_for\\_young\\_people/help\\_and\\_housing\\_for\\_care\\_leavers](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/housing_for_young_people/help_and_housing_for_care_leavers)

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