

Agenda item:

Title of Meeting: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 22nd September 2016

Subject: Response to the Housing and Social Care Scrutiny Panel - Isolation Report

Report by: David Williams, Chief Executive

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Budget & policy framework decision: No

1. Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to respond to the Housing & Social Care Scrutiny Panel's review of support services for people aged 16-25 living in isolation.

2. Recommendation

That Cabinet notes the comments in relation to the Scrutiny Panel's recommendations at point 4 below.

3. Background

This review was undertaken by the Housing and Social Care Scrutiny Panel to:

- Identify whether people aged 16-25 in Portsmouth experience feelings of isolation.
- Understand the reasons why people feel isolated.
- Examine the symptoms of isolation
- Assess what support is available
- Assess the possible barriers to accessing support services

4. Responses to the Recommendations made within the Scrutiny Panel report

The Panel raise a range of issues associated with isolation, and whilst the council has no obligations to address 'isolation' per se, members will note the

range of activities and practices adopted by the Council which help address causes and consequences. These are outlined in response to each of the Panel's recommendations.

4.1 To consider providing a support mechanism for those young people and their families who have been forcibly isolated and to encourage integrated and cross departmental working.

It is important to note that the term 'forcibly isolated' does not relate to any action by the Council, but is used to describe exceptional circumstances where the family either rejects the young person from the family home or where the family have moved out of the home and left the young person in the property.

A joint working protocol exists between Housing Options and Children's Social Care to deal with young people aged 16 and 17 who present as homeless. This protocol details the assessment and intervention pathways so as to assist young people accessing accommodation and support services that properly meet their needs. Children's Social Care and Housing Options are currently undertaking a comprehensive review of the support services for young people living away from their families. As part of this work, a survey has been completed with children in care and care leavers and a new protocol will be developed outlining assessment and intervention pathways.

Within the Education Service, the Youth Advisory Service, works closely with the two hostels in Portsmouth (All Saints and Portsmouth Foyer) that provide accommodation and support for 16-25 year olds who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness. The Youth Advisory Service takes referrals from the hostels and provides support and advice to ensure young people can access and secure post-16 education, training and employment opportunities and in turn reduce the proportion of young people who are not in education, training or employment (NEET). The service also drops-ins across a variety of community locations in Portsmouth, providing young people with regular opportunities to access support.

4.2 Part of the voluntary sector transition fund be utilised to examine the process to work holistically towards an integrated path by groups (including churches).

The voluntary sector transition fund or public sector challenge fund is part of the council's ongoing drive for savings, which invites innovative partnering solutions through opportunities to involve Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations (VCS) in redesigning and re-providing core Council service activities.

The Council seeks the expertise of the VCS through Expressions of Interest in re-providing and re-designing services that the council currently provides which demonstrate credible and sustainable service models but crucially, produce real savings to City Council budgets.

It is unlikely that this piece of work will meet the criteria for this fund unless adjustments are made to the criteria.

4.3 The council to continue to work with private sector landlords to encourage the take up of younger tenants.

The housing options team have and will continue to explore options with private sector landlords, to encourage them to accommodate young people, especially those from the supported housing pathway, who have proven their ability to live independently.

There is funding available to cover rent deposits and reasonable tenancy set up costs, but the reality is that most private sector rents are unaffordable for young people and landlords are not prepared to take risks on the rent being paid.

Local research has been undertaken to explore the barriers to accessing the private sector from the supported housing pathways, which should give clarity to the barriers in place which may be useful in identifying solutions.

4.4 The council should work proactively with other agencies to manage the impact of legal highs in our accommodation.

The Psychoactive Substance Act 2016, which came into force in May, now makes it an offence to produce, supply, offer to supply, or possess with the intent to supply any substance that is capable of producing a psychoactive effect (previously known as legal highs).

It also includes provisions for civil sanctions which has enabled the Police and local authorities to respond to the supply of psychoactive substances.

Whilst it is too early to conclude that this will assist in the management of psychoactive substances misuse within the supported housing pathway for young people it does provide the legislation and penalties which can be used to try and stem the problem.

The situation will continue to be monitored and a multi-agency approach taken if needed and appropriate.

4.5 Provide further training to enable teachers, youth workers, and health visitors to identify and tackle the 'hidden isolated' in schools and classrooms.

The Education Service commissions The Harbour School (THS) to provide support for young parents in Portsmouth working closely with teachers, youth workers and health visitors.

It is important to note the links with Future in Mind and the review in Portsmouth which is focusing on how mental health services are provided to children and young people and their families across the city. An investment of £2m has been secured over the next 5 years which will be used to transform the way mental

health services are organised, commissioned and provided. As part of this review, the Education Service has agreed a secondment with Priory School to work with schools and look at whole school strategies to promote wellbeing resilience in children and young people. A follow up stakeholder event is being held on 28th September 2016.

Whilst the report does not specifically mention young people with learning difficulties and disabilities or Autism, this is a cohort vulnerable to poor outcomes and isolation. The SEND reforms provides a mechanism for joint planning for young people with SEND which includes health care and housing needs as well as support to access training, education and employment. The Portsmouth SEND Strategy is one of 4 priorities within the Children's Trust Plan and has recently been refreshed to cover the period 2016 to 2019. The overall aim of the strategy remains the same: to promote inclusion and improve the outcomes for Portsmouth children and young people aged 0-25 years with SEND and their families. The outcomes that this strategy is aiming to improve are: to increase the percentages of children and young people with SEND who are able to:

- Be included within their local community
- Lead healthy lives and achieve wellbeing
- Learn and make progress
- Make and maintain positive relationships within their family and community
- Participate in education and training post-16 and prepare for employment

There are six strands of the SEND Strategy:

- Strand A: Promote good inclusive practice to improve outcomes
- Strand B: Successful implementation of the SEND reforms
- Strand C: Effective joint commissioning to improve outcomes
- Strand D: Co-production, embedded as a way of working with children, young people and their parents and carers
- Strand E: Early identification and early support for children with SEND and their families
- Strand F: Effective preparation for adulthood and smooth transitions to adult services

4.6 Schools are encouraged to teach more life skills within PHSE and publish how much they are currently doing on the council's website

Within the Public Health service, and supported by the Education service, staff have been working with primary and secondary schools to deliver a bespoke PSHE programme for Portsmouth which has included a traded services offer, PSHE training and termly meetings with school PSHE leads. From September 2016 the service is launching the *Public Health Portsmouth Schools and Colleges Health Programme* which includes PSHE as a key component. Six schools will be piloting the programme ahead of a wider roll out across Portsmouth. Life skills will form an important part of the programme and will be covered under 'healthy lifestyles' and 'healthy relationships'.

4.7 The council to work with partners to explore the feasibility of allowing access to support service and advice under one roof, ideally using existing facilities. Services like those provided at the Foyer to be available elsewhere in the city.

This is already being actioned. The Society of St James, who are commissioned to provide supported accommodation for young people are looking for appropriate funding to enable them to provide an advice & support service to young people who are not resident in their service.

This is something that will also be considered in future service specifications when commissioning support services for young people.

4.8 Young carers to be included in any decision affecting respite care which may impact on them

Children's Social Care currently supports two young carer's groups across the city - one that runs in the evening and the other that runs at the weekend. In addition to this the young carers groups offer activities during school holidays. There are 2 workers who organise these groups, and these members of staff are able to advocate on behalf of a young carer receiving a service.

The recent Care Act 2015 and the Children and Families Act 2014 have specified that young carers must be assessed and consequently our assessments are becoming more robust. We are working with approximately 500 young carers across the city.

If a young carer's needs are such to require respite care an assessment would be completed by a qualified social worker and this would include seeking the views and wishes of the child. At this time our corporate audit team are auditing a sample of assessments to determine the level of compliance with procedures. This will include checking evidence that children and young people are contributing to the decisions that affect them. Whilst this audit will not be specific to young carers it will pick up issues for children and young people generally.

Within the Public Health service, staff are working with primary and secondary schools and colleges to identify young carers and support them appropriately within their provision and this work is funded by the CCG. In addition to this there are specialist substance misuse and mental health workers who adopt 'whole family' approaches so as to be alert to the needs of isolated young carers.

4.9 The council to assess the impact for charging affordable market rent.

The links between housing and poverty are complex and whilst there is research available on this subject, there is nothing linked directly to affordable rents. To assess the financial impact for tenants of moving from social rents to affordable rents would need a specific piece of work which would need to be planned and resourced.

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Signed by:

Appendices: Report by the HSC Scrutiny Panel (24 March 2016)

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by Cabinet on 22 September 2016.

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Signed by: