

Service Specification

Supported Accommodation for Young People Individual Placements

DRAFT

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Local authorities have statutory duties to meet the needs of children they look after and to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation. The Children Act 1989 sets out the ways in which looked-after children and care leavers are to be accommodated and maintained by their local authority. Local authorities place most of the children they look after in foster care or in a registered children's home. Local authorities can, however, place children in placements in accordance with 'Other Arrangements'. Where local authorities place children in 'Other Arrangements', they must ensure that they are suitable and meet the needs of the young person.
- 1.2. Independent and semi-independent placements fall under 'Other Arrangements' placements. In practice, these are mostly settings that deliver accommodation with varying levels of support for the young people.
- 1.3. Currently services are delivered through a 'Block Contract' with a single service provider, supplemented by a 'Provider Framework'. Where necessary services are also secured on a 'Spot Purchase' basis.
- 1.4. From 2023 onwards, Milton Keynes City Council will use a web based DPS (Dynamic Purchasing System), commissioned from a third party (Access UK Ltd formerly adam HTTL or in collaboration with adam HTTL), to procure all supported accommodation services for young people who are 16 years of age or over.
- 1.5. The services procured via the DPS will need to be compliant with the Ofsted-led registration and inspection regime effective from April 2023. The latest guidance published by the DfE (Department for Education) is available at <https://consult.education.gov.uk/regulating-supported-accommodation-team/regulating-supported-accommodation-looked-after/>

2. The Supported Accommodation for Young People DPS (Dynamic Purchasing System)

- 2.1. The DPS is a fully electronic system used by public sector bodies to award contracts for works or services in accordance with the procedure and requirements set out in The Public Contract Regulations 2015 (as amended from time to time).
- 2.2. In this instance, the DPS will be used by the Council to secure both individual placements and Block Contracts, for a fixed number of placements, via a competitive procurement process. A Provider must successfully apply to join the DPS in order to be commissioned to deliver individual placements and/or

the Block Contracts. (Further details of the services required for the Block Contract(s) will be set out in a separate document after the DPS becomes active).

- 2.3. For an application to join the DPS to be successful, the Provider must be able to:
 - Deliver the service specification set out in this document;
 - Confirm that the enrolment criteria are met, in full;
 - Satisfy the Council's Quality & Compliance Team that the information provided in the enrolment can be verified and that all quality requirements are met. This is usually by way of a site visit; and
 - Pass the Council's financial 'due diligence' checks
- 2.4. From 1 April 2023, the DfE (Department for Education) will require all Providers to be registered with Ofsted and comply with new National Standards for Independent and Semi-independent Provision for Looked-after Children and Care Leavers.
- 2.5. As a result, from April 2023 Providers that apply to join the DPS will need to confirm that they are registered with Ofsted for Young People's Supported Accommodation and subsequently achieve an Ofsted Inspection rating of 'Good' or 'Outstanding'. For applications to join the DPS made after April 2023 and prior to April 2024, Providers will need to confirm their intention to do so.
- 2.6. Providers that are approved to join the DPS before 1 April 2023 but subsequently fail to register with Ofsted will be suspended from the DPS until registration can be confirmed. Similarly, Providers that are inspected by Ofsted and are not rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' will also be suspended until their inspection rating has improved to the required standard.
- 2.7. There is an acknowledgement that further developments in legislation and practice guidance may result in an obligation on the part of the Council to revise its expectations of the service which Providers will be expected to comply with.
- 2.8. For more detailed guidance on the application process, please see the Milton Keynes City Council Application Guide at <https://adamproviders.co.uk/>

3. Purpose

- 3.1. The supported accommodation provision is intended to cater for older children aged 16 and 17 who have relatively high or increasing levels of independence, who are ready to gain further skills to prepare for adult living, and who do not need the degree of care or type of environment provided in a

children's home or foster care. Care leavers who are 18 years of age or older but not yet able to live independently will also need to be accommodated.

- 3.2. The purpose of the services commissioned by Council is to provide young people with a psychologically and trauma informed environment in which they can be supported to develop the independent living skills necessary to successfully transition to adult life in settled accommodation.
- 3.3. The services provided will be part of the continuum of care and support for looked-after children and care leavers as they become more independent and prepare for adulthood. Whilst a rigid distinction between 'care' and 'support' would fail to capture the nuance of the varying needs and transitions that are a normal part of a child growing up, the services to be provided will be guided by Ofsted's Introduction to Children's Homes, Annex A – Supported Accommodation (2018) and any subsequent revisions. See Annex A.

4. Service User Profile

- 4.1. The services are required for 'Looked After' young people, 'Care Leavers', young people assessed as a 'Child in Need' under Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989, 16/17 year olds at risk of homelessness and UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children), as detailed below.

Client Group	Age range
Looked After Children	16-17
Care leavers	18-25
Children in Need (Section 17)	16-17
Young people at risk of homelessness	16-17
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children	16-25

- 4.2. The young people requiring the services will be those who are not yet ready to live independently but are considered likely to benefit from the help and support necessary to prepare them for adult life. Whilst many will have low level support needs others may have greater support needs. These could relate to issues associated with emotional and mental health, substance and/or alcohol misuse, a history of criminal activity, anti-social behaviours and/or risk of child sexual exploitation.

- 4.3. The length of time that a young person will require support from the service will be dependent on the individual's age, needs and personal circumstances. The likely duration of the support will be highlighted in the referral but may be subject to change as a result of the care planning review process.

5. Population Level Outcomes

- 5.1. The services will progress the following priority within the Corporate Plan (2022/26):

Tackling social inequalities - Children and young people are safe from harm and neglect

6. Service Outcomes

- 6.1. Young people, resident for twelve weeks or more, demonstrate progress towards achieving the specific outcomes set out in the Pathway Plan/Care Plan
- 6.2. Young people, resident for twelve weeks or more, rate the accommodation and support provided as 'good' or better
- 6.3. Young people who leave the service are able to sustain settled accommodation.

7. Individual Outcomes

- 7.1. The service will enable the young person to make a successful transition to living independently, contributing to delivery of the package of support set out in the Pathway Plan/Care Plan and helping the young person to achieve specific outcomes in relation to:
- Money Management;
 - Education, training and employment;
 - Health and Wellbeing;
 - Life Skills;
 - Risk Management;
 - Resilience.
- 7.2. Specific outcomes for each young person will be set out in the IPA (Individual Personal Agreement) and progress monitored via:
- Social Worker/Personal Adviser Reviews at appropriate intervals

- Independent Review Officer, 'Looked After Child' Review at appropriate intervals.
- 7.3. The provider will be expected to evidence progress towards the achievement of the outcomes as set out in Appendix B: Outcomes

8. Service Description

- 8.1. The services will provide 'Looked After' young people, 'Care Leavers', young people assessed as a 'Child in Need' under Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989, 16/17 year olds at risk of homelessness and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children with the supported accommodation services appropriate to their needs, enabling the Council to meet its statutory duties as set out in Section 22 of The Children Act 1989 and The Children Act 1989, Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers (2010 rev 2015).
- 8.2. The Council will always endeavour to place the young people with Providers that have properties within 20 miles of its offices located at 1 Saxon Gate East, Milton Keynes, MK9 3EJ. Where a placement within the Borough of Milton Keynes cannot be identified a young person may be placed in a property located within a neighbouring local authority area (Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire). In exceptional cases, where it is a young person's best interest, a placement may be made in a property that is located further afield.
- 8.3. Young people who are 18 years of age or older should not be placed in accommodation where other residents are 16 or 17 years of age. (See also para 10.2.4)
- 8.4. The services required for each placement will be based on the following delivery model.

Medium Level Support Needs	Descriptors
24/7 On-site staffing 4 to 5 hours of personalised, one to one support Up to 6 residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people who are 16 or 17 years of age, on referral, who are moving from residential children's homes or specialist foster placements. May have mental health needs, attachment difficulties and ASD traits. (May be vulnerable to CSE, gang related activity, missing episodes, drugs and alcohol misuse). • Care leavers who are 18 years of age or older, on referral.

Low Level Support Needs	Descriptors
24/7 On-site staffing 2 to 3 hours of personalised, one to one support Up to 6 residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people who are 16 or 17 years of age, on referral, who are assessed as able to live with others given appropriate support. • Care leavers who are 18 years of age or older, on referral.
Basic Level Support Needs	Descriptors
24/7 On-site staffing Up to 1 hour of personalised, one to one support required each week Up to 6 residents (24/7 on-site staffing may not be essential for those 18 years of age or older)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people who are 16 or 17 years of age, on referral, who are very independent and only require a relatively low level of support. • Care Leavers who are 18 years of age or older, on referral
Other	Descriptors
To be determined – based on the specific needs of the young person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people 16 years of age or over who, owing to exceptional circumstances require a different level of support than those that are described above.

8.5. Please also see Paras 10.2.2 and 10.2.3.

9. Scope

9.1.1. As of 17 May 2022, there were 67 young people placed in existing Supported Accommodation provision. Of these, 45 young people were placed with a single 'Block Contract' provider. 24 were recorded as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), of which 12 were 18 years of age or older with no confirmed status. A further 22 young people were placed with a Framework or Spot Purchase provider. 13 were recorded as UASC, of which 4 were 18 years of age or older with no status

9.1.2. Based on Government Participation Data for 16/17 year olds, it is anticipated that the number of those in care in Milton Keynes will increase by approximately 3% per year.

9.1.3. It is anticipated that demand will be also influenced by:

- Local population growth
- Potential increase in the number of UASC allocated to Milton Keynes via The National Transfer Scheme
- Increasing number of UASC who on reaching 18 who continue to have no status
- Young people who on reaching 18 years of age are, owing to local accommodation factors, are unable to find suitable accommodation.

10. Service Delivery

10.1. Accommodation

10.1.1. The young people referred to the service will need to be accommodated within properties where facilities are shared with others.

10.1.2. If the Provider is not the owner of the property, the Provider shall have a signed lease or management agreement with the landlord which clearly details the respective roles and responsibilities of the Provider and Landlord in relation to the property. It will be the Provider's responsibility to ensure that the conditions of the lease or management agreement are adhered to and that there are no negative impacts on the operation of Housing Related Support Service. Where the property is held on a leasehold basis, it is expected that the terms of the lease and/or the facility to extend will ensure that it remains available for the full duration of the contract.

10.1.3. The Council will expect Providers to ensure that:

- Each young person is provided with a bedroom or self-contained area which is lockable and equipped to meet the individual's needs and lifestyle.
- There is space within each bedroom or self-contained area for a young person to house a reasonable number of personal possessions.
- A comfortable space is provided, either for shared or private use, in line with the service's statement of purpose.
- Where a young person does not have access to essentials such as bedding, personal hygiene products and eating utensils, these are provided by the service.
- Each young person is provided a written agreement, in an accessible format which outlines their rights, the terms and conditions of the service and how they can complain.
- A good standard of decor and furnishings are maintained throughout the service, and within individual and shared living spaces.
- Equipment for the use of young people, i.e. cooker/washing machine/tv etc, is maintained and in working order.

- The building complies with all relevant health and safety legislation and fire regulations.
- Appropriate security checks and measures are in place to maintain a safe service for young people.
- Appropriate arrangements are in place for young people to access help in a crisis or emergency, 24 hours a day.
- A written statement is available which sets out the agreed protocol with regard to any incidents of criminal or violent behaviour at the service. This statement should ensure the safeguarding and protection of all young people and staff but must also be measured and proportionate, so as not to cause unnecessary criminalisation.
- An adequate level of insurance is provided for the service, its staff and the young people using the service.

10.2. Support

10.2.1. The Council will expect Providers to ensure that:

- Young people are encouraged and enabled to take a lead role in the support they receive.
- Support plans are created from initial referral information and consultation with the young person and take account of other existing plans for the young person.
- An information pack containing relevant information about the service is available for young people accommodated at the service. This information should be produced in user friendly formats which also address cultural and disability needs.
- A formal plan is in place to support a young person to move on when ready for more independent living and that, where appropriate, an adequate level of support is available to the young person to assist with the next stage of transition.
- The service is conducted in a way which is compliant with equality legislation and promotes the rights of young people.
- The service engages with other organisations and community services to encourage and enable young people to obtain a range of services such as advocacy organisations and training providers.
- Young people are enabled to maintain appropriate and safe relationships with family and friends.
- Young people are able to participate in and influence how the service operates.
- Where necessary, staff will assist the young person to access specialist support and make arrangements for initial introductions.
- All records are kept securely and are up to date.
- Each young person receives the agreed amount of personalised, one to one support.

- 10.2.2. Where a young person has complex needs and/or requires a greater level of ongoing care and supervision, supported accommodation would not be appropriate. However, the services should be flexible enough to accommodate temporary increases in support for young people who would otherwise manage well in this type of provision, enabling placement stability where appropriate.
- 10.2.3. The DPS has the facility to increase or decrease the level of support required. Either the Provider or the Council can request a change at any time, which will then be subject to the agreement of the other party.
- 10.2.4. In order to minimise the number of occasions that a young person needs to move from one placement to another, Providers will be expected to continue to support the young person from the time that the placement starts until such time as they are able to move on to living independently. Where this may result in a young person who reaches the age 18 years of age continuing to share premises with 16 and/or 17 year olds, a risk assessment will need to be undertaken and approved by the Council's Quality & Compliance Team prior to the young person's 18th birthday.

10.3. Staffing

- 10.3.1. The Council will expect Providers to ensure that:
- Every individual involved in delivering any part of the service to young people has undertaken an enhanced DBS (Disclosure Barring Service) check.
 - Recruitment policies have been developed to ensure the safeguarding of young people, by carrying out all necessary pre-employment checks.
 - Managers and staff are suitably experienced and qualified and understand the roles and responsibilities assigned to them in relation to protecting young people.
 - Reasonable timescales are in place for staff to complete induction, probation, and any core training, such as safeguarding, health and safety qualifications.
 - There are processes in place for managing and improving poor performance.
 - There are arrangements in place process and for supervision and monitoring of practice.
- 10.3.2. For 16 and 17 year olds, on-site staffing is required for 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 52 weeks a year including weekends and public holidays. For young people who are 18 years of age and over this requirement may be relaxed. In this instance there must be adequate arrangements and sufficient risk mitigations in place to ensure the ongoing safety and support of the young people, including access to 24/7 on-call support.

- 10.3.3. Each young person placed with a Provider will require up to 5 hours of personalised, one to one support each week from a designated support/key worker at a time and frequency appropriate to their needs.
- 10.3.4. As a minimum staff should hold a Level 2 Qualification in a GCSE Core Subject or other relevant subject area.
- 10.3.5. Managers will be required to have experience of delivering services to young people and as a minimum possess:
- a recognised social work qualification - Certificate in Social Service (CSS), Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CQSW); Diploma in Social Work (Dip SW), Social Work Degree, or
 - a Level 4 professional qualification

10.4. Safeguarding

- 10.4.1. The service provider must comply at all times with the policies and procedures set out by MK Together (the Milton Keynes Safeguarding Partnership) as set below.
- For 16 and 17 years of age - <https://mkscb.procedures.org.uk/page/contents>; and
 - Care leavers who are 18 years of age or older - <https://mkscb.procedures.org.uk/ykyxto/mk-levels-of-need/missing-children>
- 10.4.2. Notwithstanding the above, the Council will expect Providers to ensure that:
- Staff have the necessary skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or any other risk that may cause a young person harm, and act to reduce this risk as effectively as possible.
 - Staff work collaboratively with young people to ensure they understand how to keep safe and offer guidance and support on how to minimise any potential risks.
 - The accommodation, and all accessible areas of the service are designed, furnished, and maintained to remove avoidable hazards which could pose a health and safety risk.
 - A 'location assessment' is undertaken, with focus on any potential safeguarding concerns, and the accessibility of local services.
 - The service's child protection policies are monitored regularly

10.5. Standards

- 10.5.1. Services must comply with the following Statutory Requirements, Guidance and Standards:
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
 - Children's Act 1989
 - Children and Families Act 2014

- Working Together 2010
- Equality Act 2010
- The Milton Keynes Safeguarding Partnership Policies & Procedures.
- New National Standards issued by the DfE (Department for Education)

10.5.2. The provider is also required to have policies in place, deemed to be essential to the safe and effective delivery of the service, that cover the following:

- Anti-Bullying and Counter Bullying
- Behaviour Management
- Boundaries and Confidentiality
- Care and Placement Planning
- Case Recordings, Case Files and Access to Records
- Complaints and Representations
- Confidentiality and Managing Client Information
- Dealing with Violence
- Equality and Diversity
- Fire Precautions and Emergency Procedures
- First Aid and Administration of Medication
- Health and Safety
- Information Sharing
- Linguistic and Cultural Needs
- Lone Working
- 'Looked After' Reviews
- Management and Staffing
- Managing Risk
- Matching
- Missing Persons
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Radicalisation
- Positive Approaches to Health Awareness
- Preparation for Independence
- Referrals, Admissions and Reception of Children
- Safeguarding and Protection from Abuse (Compliant with The Milton Keynes Safeguarding Partnership Policies & Procedures)
- Safer Caring
- Safer Recruitment
- Sanctions
- Searching
- Sexual Exploitation
- Significant and Notable Events
- Smoking, Drugs and Substance Misuse
- Staff Code of Conduct and Professional Boundaries
- Staff Personal Information
- Staff Skills and Training

- Sustainable Development
- Transportation
- Visitors
- Whistle Blowing
- Risk Taking Behaviours
- Gangs and County Lines

10.6. Equality, Inclusion and Diversity

10.6.1. The Council has a duty to have due regard to equality in all its functions (Section 149 EA 2010). This duty is passed onto services who are commissioned to fulfil these functions. Providers will therefore need to commit to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act. This will include having due regard to employment procedures, results from tribunals, feedback from service users and how issues are addressed, as well as how major policies contribute to access and inclusion of people with different characteristics.
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. This will include having due regard to organisational priorities and outcomes, including how the organisation engages with its service users to design and deliver services
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. This will include having due regard to how the organisation handles incidents and complaints, in particular when there are race, age, disability, religious, LGBT and gender characteristics or considerations.

11. Referrals

11.1. All referrals will be made via the DPS and distributed to all those providers that have confirmed their capability to deliver the required service in the initial application process. Each referral will contain details of the support required, based on the assessed needs of the young person, and the date on which the placement will need to start.

11.2. Providers will subsequently consider whether or not they can meet the needs of the young person and, if so, respond accordingly, with an 'Offer' to deliver the services stating the weekly price, within the timeframe specified in the referral.

- 11.3. The DPS provides messaging tool that can be used by Providers to communicate with the Council and obtain clarifications relating the referral, where necessary.
- 11.4. Once the Requirement is closed to 'Offers', those that have been received within the specified timeframe will be evaluated.
- 11.5. An Offer will be accepted by the Council and a Service Agreement awarded to the Provider that can best meet the needs of the young person at the most competitive price. This will, however, be subject to a 'Matching Conversation' between the Council and Provider to confirm that there are adequate mitigations that can be put in place to address any risks that might arise from the placement being made alongside existing residents and/or its location.
- 11.6. In those instances where the risks cannot be mitigated, the Offer will be rejected and the Provider that has submitted the next best Offer will be invited to engage in a 'Matching Conversation'. Provided that potential risks can be mitigated the Offer will be accepted and a Service Agreement awarded. As before, if there are risks identified that cannot be mitigated the process will be repeated with the Provider that submitted the third best Offer and, where necessary, the Provider that submitted the fourth best offer until a successful match can be achieved.
- 11.7. For more detailed guidance on how the DPS will operate in practice, please see the Milton Keynes City Council Operational Guide at <https://adamproviders.co.uk/>

12. Price

- 12.1. The price quoted by the Provider, in response to the referral, must be fully inclusive and there should be no expectation that the Council will make any additional payments in respect of the placement.
- 12.2. The agreed price will not vary unless there is a clearly identified need to increase the number of hours of personalised one to one support required. In these circumstances the number of hours of personalised one to one support may be increased, subject to the agreement of both parties, by up to 50% for a period of up to 4 weeks.
- 12.3. Where a young person is under 18 years of age (Section 17) or 18 years of age or older and eligible to claim Universal Credit, on verification of a successful claim, the Council will require the young person to pay the rent and service charges directly to the Provider from their Housing Benefit entitlement. In these circumstances, the price paid to the Provider by the Council will be

reduced by the equivalent amount whilst Housing Benefit remains in payment.

13. Quality & Performance

- 13.1. Prior to a placement being made, the Council's Quality & Compliance Team will undertake a site visit to the property in order to verify the information supplied by the Provider on enrolment and ensure that all quality requirements are met. See Annex C (Milton Keynes City Council Children's Quality Assurance Review) for details. Subsequent visits will usually be undertaken on an annual basis.
- 13.2. Where, exceptionally, a young person is to be placed in a property more than 30 miles from the Council's office in Central Milton Keynes a virtual review will be undertaken by the Quality & Compliance Team. See Annex D (Milton Keynes City Council Virtual Review) for details. Subsequent reviews will usually be undertaken on an annual basis.
- 13.3. Any areas of concern will be identified and, where necessary, an Action Plan agreed with Provider. Significant areas of concern or failure to implement the agreed Action Plan may result in the Provider being suspended from the DPS until such time as the Quality & Compliance Team can be assured that provision meets the Council's quality requirements.
- 13.4. Similarly, a Provider's failure to achieve an Ofsted inspection rating of 'Good' or 'Satisfactory' may also result in suspension from the DPS until such time as the necessary rating is achieved.
- 13.5. The effectiveness of the support provided will be measured by the success the Provider has in helping each young person to achieve the outcomes specified in the IPA and their overall preparedness to live independently.
- 13.6. Providers will, therefore, be expected to evidence progress for each outcome as set out in Annex A (Outcomes) in weekly/monthly reports supplied to the referring Social Worker or Personal Advisor.
- 13.7. Performance of the service will also be monitored through
 - Progress reports provided to the Social Worker/Personal Adviser as requested
 - Social Worker/Personal Advisor reviews meetings at regular agreed intervals; and/or
 - Independent Review Officer, 'Looked After Child' Reviews at six -month intervals; and
 - Feedback from service users and key stakeholders