

Service Specification

Emergency and Homelessness Prevention Service

Contract Reference CWC24071

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Ensuring appropriate and suitable accommodation and support is available is vital to preventing and relieving homelessness of young people aged 16 to 17.
- 1.1.2 City of Wolverhampton Council has number of policies and procedures in place relating to homeless young people aged 16 to 17. These were developed in light of the responsibilities placed on Local Authorities by Section 20 Children Act 1989 and Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.
- 1.1.3 In 2009, the Southwark Judgement ruled that Local Authorities' Children Act duties should take precedence over their Housing Act duties. This judgement has since shaped government's guidance, with the introduction in 2010 of statutory guidance jointly issued by the Secretary of State for Education and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government; the latest version of this guidance was published in 2018. It sets out that Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 should take precedence over duties under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, and that children should be accommodated under Section 20 unless they are judged not to be in need, or when they refuse that form of support.
- 1.1.4 The guidance also places duties on Local Authorities to ensure that there is effective joint working between children's services and housing services. Local areas should produce joint protocols which set out the roles and responsibilities of Children's Social Care, Housing and partner agencies when young people aged 16 and 17 who are not in care but present as homeless.
- 1.1.5 City of Wolverhampton Council is committed to preventing homelessness by working in partnership with public, private and voluntary, community and social enterprise partners. City of Wolverhampton Council's Our City: Our Plan emphasises the Council's commitment to providing high quality support services to prevent and relieve homelessness of young people aged 16-17.

1.2 Current Provision

- 1.2.1 Currently, the Council commissions an Emergency and Homelessness Prevention Service for homeless young people aged 16 to 17 since April 2022. The current contract will end in September 2024.
- 1.2.2 In general, homeless young people aged 16 to 17 have been offered accommodation within this contract at point of contact with the Council.

1.3 General Aims and Objectives of Service

- 1.3.1 The service provided under this contract will align the different elements that are commissioned to accommodate and support young people aged 16 to 17 who are homeless, within the statutory service. This will provide a more streamlined pathway for

service users and will allow support to be increased or decreased for an individual in response to changing needs, ensuring the best possible outcome. This will also increase added value by aligning different supported accommodation commissioned and/or provided by the Council in this way.

1.3.2 The elements within this contract directly support the Council's objective to build strong families where children grow up well and achieve their full potential; and to fulfil lives for all with quality care for those that need it.

1.3.3 This contract also illustrates Wolverhampton's commitment to implement the statutory requirements of the Southwark Judgement.

1.4 Service Aims and Objectives

1.4.1 The provision of key staff within this contract aims to support and enhance the multi-agency partnership work that takes place in Wolverhampton with this cohort. The contribution which will be made by partners will help to build on existing relationships with statutory partners and voluntary sector organisations which will ensure that interventions have the best chance of being successful.

1.4.2 The successful provider will:

- Provide a safe and secure emergency housing provision for young people aged 16 to 17 who are at risk of coming into care. Due to their age, they cannot illegally hold any accommodation or housing tenancy agreement.
- Provide an emergency provision before social care team making an appropriate placement decision.
- Provide a short-term accommodation of a few to 90 bed nights (social care and housing assessment period).
- Provide support to enable service users to make and sustain links with social care and homeless services in Wolverhampton to address individual needs.
- Enable clients to achieve and maintain their full potential independent living skills regardless of their vulnerability level.
- Encourage and enable service users to exercise choice safely in their lives.
- Ensure that clients' rights are promoted.
- Enable clients to lead inclusive lives as part of the community.
- Deliver a service that is timely and value for money.
- Demonstrate continuous improvement in the quality of service delivered.

1.5 Service Outcomes

1.5.1 The services within this contract will work with vulnerable young people aged 16 and 17 who are homeless, rough sleeping, at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping or those who have a history of homelessness or rough sleeping to support them to achieve the best possible outcomes. The service will provide safe accommodation while individuals to be assessed by the City of Wolverhampton regarding their social care and housing needs. The work will acknowledge that the support and timelines will vary between

services users and the bespoke support plans put in place will be tailored to fit an individual's needs.

1.5.2 Overall and high-level outcomes will be achieved by:

- Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping from occurring
- Early and rapid intervention when homelessness and rough sleeping does occur
- Supporting individuals with either a history of homelessness or rough sleeping or who are at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping to sustain emergency accommodation
- Supporting individuals to connect with support services including social care and housing
- Improving information sharing between partners within the entire contract
- Encouraging problem solving skills, resilience and independence
- Empowering individuals to recognise and address triggers that lead to crisis points.

1.6 Demography and Demand

1.6.1 In the '[Homeless 16- and 17-year olds in need of care](#)' report published by the Children's Commissioner in November 2023, the latest government statistics show that over the past year 55,250 young people between 16 and 24 presented as homeless in England, of which 2,340 (5%) were aged 16 or 17.

1.6.2 Reasons of their homelessness include domestic abuse, eviction from supported housing, and family or friends not willing or able. If this group of 16- and 17-year-olds are not being provided with the care that they are entitled to it will only store up difficulties in the long-term.

1.6.3 The latest government statistics (July to September 2023) show that homeless young people aged 16-17 fell by 5.1% nationally. The usage level of young people emergency accommodation due to homelessness in Wolverhampton mirrored this trend during the same quarter. However, the local demand fluctuated during the 3 financial years ending March 2024.

Financial Year	Number of Bed Nights Occupied
2021/2022	1160
2022/2023	792 (down 32%)
2023/2024	1994 (up 152%)

2. Purpose

2.1 Core Service Values and Principles

2.1.1 The successful provider will ensure that:

- Service delivery has a clear focus on practice excellence, using innovative approaches to achieve improvements
- The staff it provides deliver high quality services with service users' needs at the centre of decision making and practice

- It is an organisation that retains, attracts and develops the people it needs to succeed
- Service users will be valued and respected
- They have rigorous policies to safeguard the welfare of vulnerable adults which are positively implemented. The Provider will ensure that they comply with Council's safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Service planning and delivery is based on equal opportunities and values, diversity and ensure that services are accessible to service users from all ethnic, religious, language, racial and social backgrounds or family structure.
- The service is fully accessible against the service availability as detailed in the specification. Referrals and enquiries must be responded to in a timely manner, including a fully monitored phone line for in and out of hours enquiries.

2.2 Contract Information

2.2.1 Service Principles

- The services shall work to reduce and prevent homelessness in line with the Southwark Judgement 2009.
- The delivery of the service should be centred on the achievement of successful outcomes.
- Each service user shall be respected as a unique individual with rights and responsibilities and be recognised as a valued member of the community, who can contribute to society.
- A primary focus is to ensure fair and equitable access to those eligible regardless of; gender, sexuality, race, religion, belief, disability, relationship status, cultural heritage or language. The service provide must take a 'people first' approach and have the ability to engage and support all eligible individual without discrimination and prejudice.
- Service users shall be fully consulted and involved in the planning and delivery of the service they receive when appropriate and their views should be fully considered. The provider shall inform the Council when service users require an advocate, if necessary, to assist them in expressing their views.
- Service users shall be protected from exploitation and abuse and the provider shall not act in a way which might directly or indirectly discriminate against potential, existing or ex-service users.
- Emergency accommodation support is not care and therefore will not include personal care, social care, health care or domestic care. Should the need for care arise the teams will be expected to make the appropriate referrals into Children's Services.
- The service is not responsible for supporting individuals under the age of 18 who are in care.

- The service under this contract will not be expected to accommodate people without a local connection to Wolverhampton unless under exceptional circumstances (for example fleeing domestic abuse or other forms of violence).

2.2.2 Payments

During the term of the Contract, 2000 bed nights per year to be provided. Payments will be made by the Council monthly in arrears upon receiving an undisputed invoice.

3. Service Description

3.1 Services to be Provided

- 3.1.1 The service will deliver a maximum of 2,000 bed nights of emergency accommodation with Host families that are accessible 24 hours a day, 365 days a year from the start of the contract.
- 3.1.2 The service will be available five days a week between the hours of 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday with emergency out of hours support available.
- 3.1.3 The service will be made available to young people aged 16 to 17 who are at risk of going into care and or in need of emergency accommodation.
- 3.1.4 Information about the service should be made available in forms reflecting the diversity (including literacy levels) of the local population and be included in the guide to Emergency and Homelessness Prevention Service being developed as a result of the full-service review.
- 3.1.5 The service will operate on a city-wide basis, maintaining contacts with the Council's A Roof over Our Heads Panel to optimise the opportunities for service users to move onto the most appropriate accommodation or service to meet their needs.
- 3.1.6 The support should have systems in place to evict service users in order to successfully manage the scheme and protect other service users, staff and the local community. However, eviction must be considered a last resort.
- 3.1.7 A service user can be evicted for:
 - Violent or threatening behaviour,
 - Putting other users or staff or the local community in danger by their actions, or
 - Repeated refusal to engage with the support service.
- 3.1.8 A decision to evict a service user will be made by two staff, one of whom is a manager. Every effort shall be made to avoid eviction. Where eviction is imminent the support service will inform the Council's A Roof over Our Heads Panel (or the Council's Out of Hours Emergency Team which provides a children and adults safeguarding, social care and mental health emergency service out of normal office hours if the eviction takes place out-of-hours). Key agencies working with the service user will be alerted with a

view to averting the eviction or in the worst case, making alternative accommodation arrangements.

3.1.9 Details of all evictions will be recorded. The records will include:

- Service use name
- Host location
- Reasons for eviction
- Actions and efforts made to avoid eviction
- Agencies contacted to inform of the eviction and the support service ending

3.1.10 The eviction process will be clearly laid out in the service's Welcome Pack and explained to service users when they arrive at their Host family.

3.1.11 The provider will identify common reasons leading to eviction and consider ways of avoiding future evictions, through a change in procedures or improved staff training.

3.1.12 The provider shall act to minimise anti-social behaviour and nuisance to the local community as a prime responsibility. The provider shall act to minimise incidents and engage with the local community on a regular basis to address issues arising. The provider shall develop and maintain effective lines of communication with the local police.

3.2 Accommodation

3.2.1 The provider will provide accommodation in a Host family when the referral of the service user has been assessed by the provider to a satisfactory level and carefully matched with the selected Host family.

3.2.2 The service user is provided with an evening meal, bed for the night, breakfast, laundry facilities and basic toiletries. They can also talk to the Host who will support the service user while they are living in the Host family .

3.2.3 General throughout the Host's property should have:

- Suitable floor coverings to all rooms, hall and stairways
- Suitable bedroom furniture
- Suitable curtains/blinds to all windows
- Suitable Lamp shades or appropriate light fittings
- Outside washing line, where feasible
- Television aerial
- Smoke, Carbon Monoxide and fire alarms
- Access to WiFi with no charge

3.3 Support

3.3.1 Hosts are never alone in supporting the young person, the provider will be on hand if extra or more specific support is required.

3.4 Eligible Service User Group

- 3.4.1 Young people aged 16 to 17 who are at risk of going into care and/or are in urgent need of emergency housing;
- 3.4.2 Homeless young people aged 16 to 17 without a support infrastructure at risk of coming into care who have been assessed as eligible to access the service through the Council's referral process.

3.5 Service Delivery Location

- 3.5.1 Locations of all Host families must be primarily within the City of Wolverhampton, or within the Black Country areas.

3.6 Service Availability (times)

- 3.6.1 The service will be required to be delivered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with staff contactable at all times. The staff will be expected to work to ensure that support takes place at times which meet the needs of the service users.

3.7 Referral Pathway

- 3.7.1 The provider will manage the referrals made into the emergency Host bed nights. The referrals for emergency accommodation will be received exclusively from the commissioned children's services of the City of Wolverhampton Council.
- 3.7.2 The provider shall ensure a referral procedure is in place to capture the information required to accept or reject the referral. Each referral must contain a systematic risk assessment of the likelihood of risk of harm to or from the service user. The provider may refuse a referral only in extreme circumstances. Where a referral is refused, the provider shall signpost the referral to other appropriate services.
- 3.7.3 The referrals for the emergency Host beds will be for short term placements to prevent or relieve homelessness or rough sleeping whilst the Council's children's services and homeless team will assess the needs of the service user and make recommendations to their social and/or housing needs.

4. Policies and Procedures

4.1 Staffing

- 4.1.1 The successful provider will provide suitably trained, skilled and experienced staff to make a full and positive contribution to the City's homeless young people aged 16 to 17 and the achievement of its aims and objectives. The provider must ensure that the staff provided are suitably qualified and experienced to meet the requirements of the service specification and needs of the service users. The provider must ensure that all relevant staff have been subject to checks by the Disclosure and Barring Service.

- 4.1.2 The provider shall ensure it has systems to provide cover for planned and unplanned staff absences and evidence this by keeping a record of staff rotas. These records shall be made available for monitoring.
- 4.1.3 The provider shall have a team leader or supervisor on duty who can deal with any difficulties appropriately and who are contactable by the service user, if appropriate, and by staff at all times. The team leader will be responsible for coordinating the team's workloads and focus. The team leader will hold regular supervision sessions with team members to ensure that the team is supported and that performance measures are met. The team leader will also be responsible for coordinating referrals through the referral routes.

4.2 Recruitment and Selection

- 4.2.1 There shall be a clear written job description for all posts. There must be a written statement of what qualifications, training, experience, special knowledge and skills are (or are not) required for specific posts and these requirements should be appropriate to the post in question.
- 4.2.2 The provider shall ensure job applications are in writing and include such factual information as previous experience and relevant qualifications and/or training. The form must detail a full employment history and gaps must be explained.
- 4.2.3 The provider shall confirm offers of employment only following satisfactory outcomes of checks which include all of the following:
- Verification of identity
 - Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau
 - POVA and POCA registers or prevailing national checks
 - Work permit (if appropriate)
 - Declaration of medical fitness
 - Sex offenders register
 - Declaration of past offences in line with current law.
- 4.2.4 The provider's recruitment and selection process shall demonstrate a commitment to equal opportunities and non-discrimination and be compliant with all relevant legislation.

4.3 Management

- 4.3.1 The successful provider will hold all responsibilities for the management of the staff appointed. The provider will be expected to appoint a management position for this contract. The position will be the named point of contact for the contract and accountable for ensuring delivery, compliance and the submission of all required monitoring information.
- 4.3.2 Performance review will take place regularly and any issues relating to poor or under performance will be the responsibility of the successful provider. Frequency of meetings may be more often if circumstances require it. Performance reviews will be carried out using the employing body's policies and procedures.

4.4 Training

- 4.4.1 The provider must ensure that all relevant staff are suitably qualified and have access to the training necessary to ensure that the services delivered are of a high quality. The provider must make staff available for any training identified and agreed as necessary by the Council, including guidance and procedure set by [Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together](#).
- 4.4.2 Based on national evidence of working with this cohort, the team will be required to adopt a trauma-informed approach to their work.

4.5 Equality

- 4.5.1 The provider must demonstrate that the legal obligations in the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Act 2010 are met in the service delivery.
- 4.5.2 The provider is required to foster good relations by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and others.

4.6 Private Arrangements by Staff

- 4.6.1 The provider shall use its reasonable endeavours at all times to ensure that none of its staff enter into any private arrangement or agreement of any kind with any service user.
- 4.6.2 The provider shall ensure that members of staff understand the professional boundaries of their contract with service users e.g. staff should not give service users their home address, home telephone number or personal mobile number.
- 4.6.3 The provider shall ensure that members of staff understand that they cannot accept gifts or bequests from service users and that they must not be involved in any way in the wills of service users.

4.7 Access to the Provider

- 4.7.1 The Council's expectation is that the provider will always have a named person with management responsibility for the service to engage with proactively.

4.8 Complaints & Compliments

- 4.8.1 The provider is required to ensure that its staff and service users are aware of how to report a complaint, comment or compliment. This procedure must include details on how any complaints are investigated, how any remedial action will be instigated, and the complainant notified, with a defined timescales for response.
- 4.8.2 If a service user and/or their representative are not satisfied after following the provider's procedure for dealing with complaints, the provider shall refer the service user/their representative to the Council's Customer Engagement Team.
- 4.8.3 If a complaint alleges any criminal offence by any member of staff, the provider shall immediately refer any complaint to the Police in the first instance, and to the Council's Children's Commissioning Team in writing.

5. Quality Assurance

5.1 Systems and Processes

- 5.1.1 The provider must have a robust recruitment processes in order to provide suitably qualified/experienced/skilled key workers and staff management/development system/policies and procedures. Staff must work to a trauma informed approach, including Psychologically Informed Environment training, and must ensure that all safeguarding processes are adhered to. In addition, the provider must have a robust quality assurance system to ensure that it meets its obligations and delivers an acceptable level of service.
- 5.1.2 This system should give the Council and the people who use the services confidence that the provider has appropriate systems in place to deliver the service as agreed and in a safe and timely manner. It should address the arrangements for managing the delivery of the services, how it will ensure that staff understand what the people who use the services require, arrangements for monitoring service delivery and taking action where improvements are necessary, or risks are identified.
- 5.1.3 The system must include how the provider intends to seek the views of individuals who use the services and enables them to make comments about the service they receive.
- 5.1.4 The provider must take account of the views of individuals who use the services and be able to report on the key issues raised and how these will be addressed. Copies of written reports of this should be available to the Council's Children's Commissioning Team.

5.2 Information Sharing and Confidentiality

- 5.2.1 The provider must be prepared to agree to, sign and comply with an information sharing and data processing agreements as specified by the Council. These agreements will cover the processes and systems that will be in place to ensure there is appropriate information sharing/processing between the Council, the provider and any other partner organisations relevant to this project/service.
- 5.2.2 In terms of contract delivery and performance management data, the provider will need to make a commitment to, and have systems in place, to ensure that any requested data is supplied in a timely and efficient manner both on a planned basis as agreed with the Council and in response to data requests to meet the day-to-day needs of the Council.
- 5.2.3 Staff from providers linked to this contract will be required to sign a City of Wolverhampton Council confidentiality statement.

6. Service Outcomes and Monitoring

6.1 Contract Monitoring and Review

- 6.1.1 The contract with the provider will be reviewed on a six-monthly basis at contract monitoring meetings. The meeting will be attended by the provider and representatives of the Council who have the relevant service oversight. The six-monthly meetings will focus on performance monitoring and management and any pressing contractual and organisational issues. In addition, there will be an annual review which will include, but not be limited to, the following agenda items:

- a. Contract Specific - This will involve a review of existing contract terms and conditions to ensure that the contract and service specification are fit for purpose in terms of delivering individual outcomes.
- b. Organisation - This will involve identifying organisational issues that may act as barrier to effective and efficient service delivery and work in partnership to find solutions to overcome any barriers identified.

6.1.2 The provider will be expected to complete monthly statistical returns that support data returns required by Central Government and report against outcomes as specified in Appendix 1.

6.1.3 In addition to the required data as detailed in paragraph 5.1.3, the provider will be expected to provide specified qualitative information on a six-monthly basis, ahead of the contract monitoring meetings. This information will be required to evidence the following:

- Service users manage their behaviour and relationships
- Service users are achieving their own goals
- Services users' confidence levels increase
- Service users' independence increases
- Service users understand their rights
- Services users have choice in the way in which their service is delivered

6.1.4 This can be evidenced through a number of different forms including, but not exclusive to, feedback from service users, support plans and feedback from stakeholders and partner organisations (including the Police and health services).

6.1.5 The provider will also be expected to provide qualitative information relating to staff performance ahead of the contract monitoring meetings. This information will be required to evidence the following:

- Staff are working within the team
- Staff are skilled in their work with the cohort
- There are no performance issues in relation to the staff
- The provider is providing good quality support to staff
- Any performance issues are responded to in a timely manner
- Periodic performance assessments are completed satisfactorily
- Any turnover in staff

This can be evidenced through a number of different forms including, but not exclusive to, training logs, feedback from professionals and service users, induction processes, supervision logs.

Appendix 1: Contract Performance Monitoring Framework

Emergency and Homelessness Prevention Service (Contract Reference CWC24071)

Views of service users			
Outcome Sought	Measure	Frequency of monitoring	Performance Target (if applicable)
Service users are well informed and involved in the development of the service	Please summarise any consultation and participation activities undertaken	Bi-annually	
	Number of Compliments	Bi-annually	
	Number of Complaints (please provide details)	Bi-annually (or immediately to Council's Homelessness team if severe)	
	% of service users satisfaction with service	Bi-annually	80%. If below, please explain
	Evidence of improvements made to any or all of the three services as a result of feedback	Bi-annually	
	3 triangulated case studies that demonstrate the work carried out by the three services every six months	Bi-annually	

Outcomes for Service			
Outcome Sought	Indicators	Monitoring	Performance Target
Young people moved on into suitable accommodation within the agreed timeframe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service user lists • Feedback from service users • Number of extensions requested 	Quarterly	85%
Young people placed in emergency accommodation do not return within three months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service user lists • Feedback from service users 	Quarterly	>70%
All young people placed in emergency accommodation have a local connection to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service user lists 	Quarterly	90%

Wolverhampton, unless in exceptional circumstances (as outlined in the specification)			
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