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**Manchester City Council  
Report for Resolution**

**Report to:** Citizenship and Inclusion Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 25 May 2011

**Subject:** Housing Opportunities and Support for young offenders leaving custody

**Report of:** Director of Housing  
Director of Children's Services

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**Summary**

To advise committee of how young offenders leaving custody are housed, covering:

- Availability of accommodation
- Support available
- Lessons learnt from Hindley Resettlement project

To advise Committee of partnership initiatives taking place to maximise accommodation for young people, including young offenders, and link the accommodation to education and training.

**Recommendations**

Members note the content of the report

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**Wards Affected:**

All

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**Contact Officers:**

Name: Gail Heath  
Position: Strategic Lead for Housing  
E mail: g.heath@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Ciaran Rafferty  
Position: Service Lead, Corporate Parenting and Placements  
E mail: Ciaran.rafferty@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Marie McLaughlin  
Position: Youth Justice Manager Manchester Youth Offending Service  
E mail: m.mclaughlin1@manchester.gov.uk

**Background documents (available for public inspection):**

Report to Communities & Neighbourhoods Overview & Scrutiny Housing Sub Group - April 2009 "Housing Opportunities for Young People"

Report to Communities & Neighbourhoods Overview & Scrutiny Housing Sub Group – March 2010 "Housing Opportunities and Support for Young People"

Report to Children's Board July 2010 "Access to Affordable Housing for Young People"

Report to the Children's Trust Executive August 2010 "Access to Affordable Housing for Young People"

## 1.0 Introduction/Background

1.1 Young people across the UK and in Manchester, face increasing difficulty in finding suitable independent housing. This was reported to Children's Board and the Children's Trust Executive in 2010, in a Strategic Housing report titled "Access to Affordable Housing for Young People". The options available to young people are restricted by problems of affordability and accessibility and the housing issues faced by vulnerable young people are particularly acute. Young people who offend are more likely to experience difficulty accessing housing and this is a significant factor affecting success rates in tackling re-offending behaviour.

1.2 Nationally, there is an established link between youth crime and homelessness. Criminal activity can be a factor that contributes to becoming homeless and can occur as a consequence of homelessness. Those with an unstable family background and a poor relationship with their parents are more likely to offend and be at risk of homelessness. Those coming out of custody are often most vulnerable to homelessness and for some returning home is not an option that can or should always be offered, particularly if they had insecure living arrangements which have now been lost, or their family relationships may have been damaged significantly by their offence and subsequent sentence.

1.3 Lack of education, training or employment is also a key factor in continued reoffending. Whilst good support and opportunities are provided in a custodial setting, these are often difficult to maintain upon release. A lack of stable accommodation exacerbates this as a young person will be unable to focus their attention in a classroom/training or employment if they are unsure about where they are living.

1.4 The prospects for the successful rehousing of young people leaving custody will be affected by Manchester's financial settlement, the savings which need to be found within Supporting People budgets, changes to benefits and in particular housing benefit entitlement for young people. The impacts of these changes have not yet been fully scoped, however commissioners in Supporting People are working to identify the impact of the significant budget reductions during the current formal consultation period, which draws to a close on 14<sup>th</sup> June.

1.5 Recently steps have been taken to improve partnership working and to provide a more streamlined and effective resettlement service for young offenders. Manchester is part of a national and regional pilot to improve services for young people coming out of custody: The Resettlement Consortium aims to improve outcomes for young offenders leaving custody and reduce the risk of re-offending by providing an enhanced package of support that is tailored to the needs of the individual and extends beyond the licence period if required.

1.6 This includes the extension of District Family Resource Panels to better coordinate the combined service offer, including the housing offer, available for this group. But it remains the case that there are fewer specific housing related support services available to support young offenders and much needs to be done to convince landlords, and communities, that agencies are able to provide the

necessary level of support to allow this particular group of young people to live successfully in independent housing.

1.7 The Access to Housing for Young People Steering group was established in 2010 and the steering group and its workstreams have been working to address issues identified in the "Access to Affordable Housing for Young People" report, and consider issues relating to housing prospects for all young people, including young offenders, in light of financial and benefit changes.

1.8 This report provides an update of current homelessness services and housing related support available to young offenders released from custody and the progress being made via the Hindley Resettlement Project and the Access to Housing for Young People Steering group and its workstreams, in relation to supporting young offenders to access appropriate housing upon their release from custody.

## **2. Homelessness services and housing related support currently available to young offenders in Manchester**

2.1 Homelessness compounds the number of problems faced by young people. This is particularly evident with mental health problems and /or the onset or exacerbation of drug and alcohol misuse. There is particularly strong evidence that homelessness impedes young people's participation in employment, education or training.

Manchester's Homelessness services have had considerable success in discouraging and preventing homelessness, through, amongst other initiatives, extensive training of agencies and by establishing a specialist young people's homelessness service in partnership with the Young Persons Support Foundation, a voluntary sector youth charity.

2.2 The fact remains however that we continue to see a large number of young people accessing homelessness services. In 2010/11 2061 16-24 year olds came into direct contact with MCC's homelessness service, of which 189 were aged 16 or 17. There was a higher incidence of young offenders and young people from BME communities amongst this group. Approximately 100 – 150 young people return to Manchester from custody each year.

In total 221 young people, aged between 16 and 24 were accepted as homelessness in Manchester, 34% of the total number of homeless acceptances compared to circa 24% representation in Manchester's total population, 19 were by young people aged 16/17years of age.

In the vast majority of cases young people were prevented from becoming homeless via measures such as referral to Children's Services, deposit paying, home visits and mediation.

2.3 For vulnerable young people housing itself is not sustainable unless they have the life skills and support they need to live independently. Supporting People currently fund circa 668 units of support for young people. The services are comprised of a mixture of accommodation based services and floating support which follows the young person into whatever accommodation they are able to access. The

services are provided by a mixture of Local Authority, Voluntary, Private and Charitable organisations. Information on services can be found on the Supporting People website at [www.b3.manchester.gov.uk/speople/directory/index.asp](http://www.b3.manchester.gov.uk/speople/directory/index.asp). The majority of these services are accessible to young offenders. Some of these services are targeted specifically at ex offenders, and according to client record returns for 2009/10 and the first half of 2010/11 approximately 28% of those accessing services for offenders were 25 years old or younger.

2.4 The provision of supported housing is supplemented by a range of specialist services. The Youth Offending Service employs two accommodation officers and jointly funds one place at "Safestop", crisis accommodation for young people. Manchester Leaving Care Service, commissioned from Barnardos, provides accommodation pathway planning for 16 and 17 year old looked after children and care leavers, a small number of whom are young offenders. Some Registered providers of social housing, for example Willow Park Housing Trust, have developed specific in-house tenancy support services. However, these services tend to operate in isolation from each other and apply specific referral criteria, this can lead to a patchwork of provision that is very difficult for young people and their advisors to navigate and access.

2.5 The range, quality and volume of support services for young people in Manchester currently compares favourably with other large cities. Nevertheless, "unsuitable" accommodation is still sometimes the only available option to meet the acute housing needs of our most vulnerable young people. This might include staying with family members or friends where this contributes to the risk of the young person reoffending, and can include the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.

In 2010/11, 33 households where the main applicant was aged 16- 17 years were temporarily accommodated in Bed and Breakfast accommodation. B&B accommodation is the only accommodation available at short notice for young offenders and whilst this is not a long term option, is preferable to rooflessness. Significant steps are being taken to improve the quality of B&B accommodation in the City and where specific issues arise with B&B accommodation putting residents and the local community at risk they are being tackled through multi-agency collaboration that includes the use of enforcement powers against the owners and support for the residents. A MCC review of Mandatory HMO licensing and proposed changes to the way licenses are administered and conditions attached, are expected to bring about better management of the premises, recognise the distinction between B&B's and other HMO's and enable tighter controls to address anti social behaviour, management issues, property condition and support for vulnerable residents within B&B's.

There is an increasing awareness of the need to ensure that vulnerable people, including young people, placed in safe B&B accommodation are appropriately supported to secure the swiftest possible move into longer term affordable appropriate accommodation.

### **3.0 The Hindley Resettlement Project – outcomes and progress made**

3.1 MCC and its partners are participating in a Youth Justice led pilot – The Resettlement Consortium – to improve outcomes for young offenders leaving custody and reduce the risk of re-offending by providing an enhanced package of support that is tailored to the needs of the individual and extends beyond the licence period if required.

3.2 An essential part of the pilot is the ‘new process’ to ensure effective governance, co-ordination and tailoring of the resettlement process. MCC has a multi-agency steering group overseeing the Resettlement project which is chaired by Geoff Little.

3.3 The North West pilot has a focus on young men from Manchester, Stockport, Rochdale or Wigan, serving their sentence at Hindley and sentenced after 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010. The cohort members have been subject to an enhanced offer in terms of interventions and supervision provided by all partners ie YOS, Children’s Services, Connexions and Manchester College. In Manchester a key feature of the enhanced offer is the multi-agency Family District Panels, chaired by Children’s Services, which will agree and oversee the resettlement plan for each young person.

3.4 A lack of suitable accommodation and support is recognised as a significant factor in re-offending and failing to resettle successfully. A feature of the enhanced accommodation offer of the project is the provision of supported accommodation. In addition to the supported housing referred to in paragraphs 2.3 and 2.4 above the Catch 22 charity was commissioned to deliver on behalf of the Youth Justice Board, 4 properties in Manchester, Wigan and Rochdale, each with 2 places for young people. However, the funding for this contract ceased on 31<sup>st</sup> March and these units of accommodation have not been replaced.

3.5 Initial assessments of the housing interventions made have indicated a mix of poor and potentially good accommodation outcomes. To date, 48 young men have come out of Hindley since the pilot began. The majority (71%) returned to live with a parent on release or move between parents who live separately or live with another family member such as grandparent or sister. However, in 11 cases, this was judged to be not suitable and three later moved to Bed & Breakfast accommodation, others re-offended or have been subsequently charged with other offences. Those who did not live with a family member on release went into:

- Catch 22 accommodation initially (3),
- Children’s Services’ Residential Care (1 in Manchester, 3 out of area)
- Children’s Services Supported Lodgings (2)

3 case studies of young people in the cohort of the North West Resettlement Consortium are provided at appendix 1

3.6 Whilst it will not be possible to provide definitive evidence until the project has been concluded, early indications are that, re-offending rates have significantly reduced within the cohort of Manchester young men who have received the enhanced offer. An independent evaluation of the Resettlement Consortium has recently been commissioned and is being carried out by Salford University and ARC

consultants to assess potential cost savings of providing such an enhanced offer against young offenders returning to custody and the impact on reoffending.

#### **4.0 Ongoing partnership work to improve support and accommodation outcomes for young offenders**

4.1 The Youth Offending Service has recognised that providing additional support to families of young offenders is a good investment. In December, a small project was developed between YOS and Partners of Prisoners (POPS) a voluntary sector with experience and skills in supporting family members through the criminal justice system when a husband/parent or child is imprisoned. Two Family Support Workers are working in the Youth Court and with a YOS team in Longsight. These two members of staff are responding to the needs of families for information, guidance and support. To date, they have seen over 90 family members (over 80% are mothers) and a high proportion (40%) are BME. They are supporting families with issues such as safeguarding, mental health difficulties, domestic violence, drugs and alcohol, and accommodation. It includes the families of young people who go into custody as well as those who are on bail or serving a sentence in the community. This project has been funded for a further 12 months.

4.2 Connexions are working closely with YOS and HMYOI Hindley to provide an enhanced offer of an education/employment or training placement upon release. The YOS fund a dedicated Connexions worker who has formed good working relationships with Manchester College staff working at Hindley and with ETE providers in the community. In January 2011, figures from the previous 12 months showed that approx 67% of young people coming out of Hindley went into a FTE placement.

4.3 There is significant partnership work taking place to improve accommodation outcomes for young offenders. The Access to Housing for Young People Steering group, is leading and co-ordinating actions to review, refocus and relocate resources, services and procedures to better engage services, partners, developers and funders in meeting the housing needs of all young people, including young offenders. The group is focussing upon:

- Increasing the engagement from Registered Providers of social housing with Childrens Services at a District level. This will involve engagement in transition planning for young offenders and Looked After Children and involvement in District Panels.
- The development of a 16/17 year old Homelessness protocol to streamline the assessment and referral processes for homeless young people and set out the roles and responsibilities of Children's Services Social Care (CSSC) and the relevant Housing Authority and partner agencies, following the House of Lords judgement of May 2009 in the case of G v LB Southwark.
- The implementation of the joint Children and Families and homelessness protocol, which will require a single point of referral for all 16 and 17 year old young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Building on a successful model operated by the Young Person's Support Foundation

(YPSF) this will provide an early intervention and prevention service to mitigate the need for more expensive care and or accommodation solutions in a context of scarcity of such resource and reductions in Supporting People funding. It is proposed that this resource is commissioned on a corporate basis and work is ongoing to identify costs and if and where they can be met.

- Streamlining and joint commissioning housing linked support provision for young people. Commissioners in Children's Services and Homelessness are working on remodelling the supported housing offer to better meet the needs of vulnerable young people. Despite the significant budget reductions recently announced this has the potential to transform the supported housing offer for young people going forward, and allow us to meet identified gaps in provision.
- Continuing to identify suitable affordable sharing options for young people. There continues to be a shortage of suitable affordable accommodation for young people in general and the more complex the need of the young person the more acute the shortage becomes. The next stage of a study into a new shared accommodation offer for young people, including young offenders, linked to education, training and employment is being overseen by the steering group.
- Assessing the potential for Children's Services to provide specific 16 to 18 year old accommodation for the small number of young offenders leaving custody who also become Looked After Children, with funding drawn from Children's Services and the Youth offending Service.
- Implementing more efficient resource management and joint working to provide a service targeting young people before and after leaving care or institutions, for independent living or reintegration with family where safe. It is intended that housing CLG grant funding and the placing of 2 accommodation officers from the Youth Offending team within the Young People Support Foundation will enable the delivery of this service and more efficient resource use.
- Assessing the impact of reductions in welfare benefits, the removal of Education Maintenance Allowance and changes to Housing Benefit non-dependent deductions on young people and families, which in turn affect access to affordable accommodation of singles and families.

4.2 As a result of service restructuring within MCC, YOS are to sit within Children's Services. The restructure of services to SRF neighbourhoods, will enable more effective working between all parties at a neighbourhood level, with district level protocols and action plans developed and implemented.

4.3 A Centralised Placement Team which currently brokers all fostering, residential and supported lodgings placements for looked after children is being further developed to be one point of contact for all placements, including supported provision for those looked after children who are young offenders. Manchester with two other Local Authorities is leading on a regional contract for supported provision for 16 and 17 year old young people.



4.4 The Accommodation and Offender Management Pathway Group chaired by Strategic Housing, considers wider issues regarding offenders and access to housing and are focussing upon:

- Improving the quality of B&B accommodation
- Access to housing for offenders, including young offenders

## **5. Next Steps**

5.1 Regular reports are made on access to affordable accommodation for young people and offenders to:

- Children's Board
- YOS Management Board, chaired by Geoff Little
- Reducing Reoffending Steering Group, chaired by Geoff Little
- The Resettlement Consortium Steering Group
- Corporate Parenting Panel
- Children And Young People's Overview And Scrutiny Committee
- Communities and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Manchester Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB)

5.2 Progress has been made in identifying the specific barriers to effectively rehousing young people and in ensuring effective collaborative working between key services to ensure resettlement outcomes improve. Nevertheless, it is recognised that more needs to be done and that there is a risk posed by funding cuts. Collaborative working will continue to focus upon accommodation and support for all young people, including young offenders and structures and protocols are being put into place which will have a positive impact on outcomes for young people.