**Corporate Parenting Conference - 17th November 2016**

**Comments/Suggestions**

* Young people in crisis can’t often focus on training or work – it’s not their immediate priority. This can impact on them being able to secure housing, especially now that local housing allowance (LHA) and the shared accommodation rate (SAR) is being introduced from 2018.
* Rent levels being high now that LHA is going to mean that housing benefit/universal credit will not cover the costs of a 1 bed property– Young people not being able to manage the shortfall, is shared housing an option?
* Concerns about Local Housing Allowance and how the young person can actually afford to live. Is better use of guarantors a solution? Can young people actually find guarantors?
* Could trainer flats/accommodation be provided – better understanding how to manage an actual property before taking on the responsibility of their own tenancy? More tenancy training.
* Support for looked after children reduces significantly when they become care leavers – this is when it is often needed the most – can mean that bills/rent is not paid & struggle to cope. Could a housing link worker/mentor be the answer? This could be a person that has a better understanding of housing that works with the young person for the first 12 months of their tenancy.
* Lack of awareness about number of looked after children, partners did not know how many looked after children there are and where they are currently residing – Also looked after children only tend to work with specialists within each agency, such as schools so partners do not know what specific needs the young people have.
* Giving young people the choice in their housing – Including if it’s out of borough, not just about sourcing accommodation, it’s about if the accommodation is appropriate and for their needs. This could include proximity to social networks and colleges.
* Helping young people to understand the practical side to living independently. This includes things such as taking meter readings, where the stop tap is located etc. Housing might be required when leaving care but being able to manage without support is difficult, especially when they have had no experience of this.
* Local Housing Allowance offer up to 25 year olds exempt (care leavers)-more information is required about what the exemptions will be when the LHA cap is implemented. Can these be set at a local level?
* Housing providers going into care settings & schools to discuss housing – getting early work with all looked after children, rather than waiting until care leavers are offered a property.
* Emotional support as well as practical support – Young people struggle to prepare for how to manage. They can often feel isolated in their home and this can lead to them feeling unsafe. Could mentors be used?
* More skills around how to cope & do it earlier – Can housing help earlier, offer training at an earlier age? This was a common theme, much more work is required to better prepare young people for when they leave care. Also more move on options as their own tenancy isn’t always an appropriate option. Should there be more specialist move on and semi-independent accommodation?
* Tenancy training – the reality of managing & how expensive it is – mentoring the young person in the property. Understanding that the cost of living is high and that debt can easily spiral out of control.
* Where are the suitable properties? Demand for housing is often very high – can specialist housing be provided?
* Placements for young people in a housing environment. Taster weekends so that young people understand what it feels like to live on their own before they actually do.
* Link workers with housing – short term housing mentors to bridge the gap from leaving care to independence. Specialist help to manage the practical responsibilities and emotional issues that might occur.
* How the transition is managed – not just about moving into social housing, this is not always the right solution. More housing options are needed
* Cllr McClaren suggested a workshop for Members on the lack of affordable/social housing and the high levels of demand and those waiting for rehousing.
* There is a general shortage of training opportunities being provided for young people. There is also a shortage of affordable and supportive housing options.