

	<p>ACTION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS BY OFFICER {May 2019}</p>
Title	<p>Amendments to the Housing Allocations Scheme</p>
Report of	<p>Deputy Chief Executive</p>
Wards	<p>All</p>
Status	<p>Public</p>
Enclosures	<p><i>Appendix 1: Housing Allocations Scheme</i></p>
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Summary

In July 2016, the Government published their Care Leavers’ strategy ‘Keep on Caring’, which outlined plans to introduce a set of corporate parenting principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people. This included:

- *promoting high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;*
- *for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and;*
- *to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.*

Further to these principles Barnet’s care leaver local offer was launched last year, as required under the Children and Social Work Act (2017). The local offer sets out the council’s offer for young people who have been looked after by Barnet Council, including the information, services and support available. An update to the council’s Housing Allocation Scheme strengthens the local offer for Care Leavers, by ensuring an offer of suitable accommodation is retained for Care Leavers returning from University or the Armed Forces in between or after their course or tour of duty ends (Appendix 1, Paragraph 3.32).

This amendment will help young adults who are care leavers have a more successful transition to independence, through the provision of guaranteed housing if Care Leavers wish to pursue education and employment opportunities akin to their peers.

Decisions

1. That the proposed minor changes to the Housing Allocations Scheme be approved

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 In July 2016, the government published their Care Leavers' strategy, entitled '[Keep on Caring](#)', which outlined a set of corporate parenting principles that requires all departments within a local authority recognise their role as corporate parents. In accordance with this strategy, and as part of the OFSTED improvement journey, all authorities are required to update their allocations policy and provisions to support the key principles set out in this strategy.
- 1.2 The strategy requires the Council acts in accordance with the corporate parenting principles. This includes the promotion of high aspirations such as attending University or serving in the Armed Forces, and that the council seeks to secure the best outcomes for those children and young people. The scheme therefore requires an update to reflect these principles.
- 1.3 It is also good practice for the Council to review its Allocation Scheme regularly to ensure that the scheme remains fair, accessible, and legally compliant.

2. REASONS FOR DECISIONS

- 2.1 Barnet have committed to supporting children and young people to achieve their best in childhood, adolescence and adulthood within the Corporate Parenting Pledge for children in care and care leavers, as approved by full council on 29 January 2016.
- 2.2 Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 (CSWA) requires each local authority to consult on and publish a local offer for its care leavers. In 2018/19 a range of [consultation](#) and engagement activities were undertaken with care leavers across several areas that are included in the local offer, and care leavers respondents indicated they were most concerned about accommodation, fitness and health and employment.
- 2.3 A large proportion of Barnet Care Leavers now go on to education, employment or training. At the end of March 2019, 71%ⁱ (116 out of 164) of Care Leavers (aged 19 to 21) were in education, employment or training. The council encourages Care Leavers to pursue opportunities in education and employment, akin to their peers, through the provision of guaranteed housing
- 2.4 Furthermore, if a Care Leaver is in full time higher education, the council will ensure they have suitable accommodation, if they need it, during the holiday

period in between academic years or tours of duty in the armed forces. For young people in higher education the financial support the Council provides covers the academic year.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 3.1 The Council could continue with the existing Housing Allocations Scheme and not make any amendments. This is not recommended as the council will not be fulfilling its obligations set out in its local offer.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 The revised allocations scheme will be published on the website in May 2019.
- 4.2 Barnet Homes will ensure that all staff dealing with housing applicants are aware of the changes and able to apply them when considering housing applications.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2019 to 2024 is based on three main outcomes, one of which is our residents live happy, healthy, independent lives with the most vulnerable protected." By supporting Care Leavers, the Council is working to promote the Local Offer and help young people transition towards independence.
- 5.1.2 Through the growth and regeneration programme the Council is building more than 20,000 new homes by 2025. This will include more affordable homes which will be allocated to housing applicants.
- 5.1.3 Supporting young people, including care leavers, is a key priority in the Corporate, Housing and draft Children's and Young People's Plan.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 5.2.1 This decision is to make minor changes to the Housing Allocations Scheme and has no direct financial implications.

5.3 Social Value

- 5.3.1 Providing an offer of accommodation to Care Leavers who would otherwise be at risk of homelessness on their return from University of the Armed Forces into accommodation is part of our duty as Corporate Parents and therefore of great social value. Longer term better outcomes for Care Leavers are accumulated through a number of economic, social and health initiatives whilst reducing longer term costs to public services.

5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.4.1 Under Article 9 .1(a) of the Constitution, the Chief Officers have delegated powers in respect of all matters which are not key decision (as defined in Article 2) and not reserved for decision by the Council or by a Committee of the Council to make decisions relating to their functions and the functions of their department
- 5.4.2 Legal advice has been obtained to ensure that the proposed changes are legally compliant.

5.5 Risk Management

- 5.5.1 From time to time the Council has to review the Housing Allocations Scheme in response to legislative changes and court judgements, and to continually ensure that the scheme is as accessible and robust as possible. These changes ensure that the scheme remains legally compliant.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity

- 5.6.1 The Equality Act 2010 outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires Public Bodies **to have due regard** to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it; and
 - foster good relations between people from who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- 5.6.2 The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.
- 5.6.3 No update to the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was required because this did not represent a policy change. It represented a clarification of the existing scheme and a re-wording to ensure compliance with the new guidance.
- 5.6.4 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken last year as part of the updates to the Allocation Scheme to comply with the Homelessness Reduction Act. There was no evidence to indicate that individuals who identify as having a protected characteristic would be adversely impacted as a result of those amendments. A full EIA was undertaken in 2017 as part of a review of the scheme.

5.7 Corporate Parenting

5.7.1 In line with the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the council has a duty to consider Corporate Parenting Principles in decision-making across the council. There are seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people. This includes:

- *To act in the best interests and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people*
- *To help those children and young people gain access to and make best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;*
- *For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and;*
- *To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.*

5.7.2 The outcomes and priorities in the refreshed Corporate Plan reflect the council's commitment to the Corporate Parenting duty to ensure the most vulnerable are protected and the needs of children are considered in everything that the council does, specifically:

- *Working with Family Services to understand the needs of care leavers and the barriers preventing safe and stable home lives and successful preparation for adulthood and independent living of care leavers*
- *Within the Housing Committee priorities of 'Developing housing fit for our future population' and 'Tackling and preventing homelessness and rough sleeping', outlining and committing to take actions that will deliver more housing and appropriate support for care leavers*
- *Ensure that a plan to deliver more houses for care leavers is explicitly included as an action within the Housing Delivery Plan 2019/20;and ;*
- *Collaborative multi-agency working to develop a Youth Homelessness Action Plan 2018/19 and Corporate Parenting Plan 2017-2020 to address housing issues affecting care leavers.*

5.7.3 Our Allocations Scheme prioritises care leavers, foster carers and providers of supported lodgings. The amendments ensure we continue to support our care leavers on their return from University or the Armed Forces.

5.8 Consultation and Engagement

5.8.1 There have been two public consultations on the Allocations Scheme; in 2011 when the scheme was originally introduced and the second in 2014. As part of this second consultation consultees were specifically asked to comment on the proposed increase of the Residential Connection from two to five years, the introduction of a Community Contribution. As the proposed material changes are only minor amendments to these particular issues and are within the scope

of the 2011 and 2014 consultations, the Council has taken the view that it is not necessary or proportionate to send these proposed changes out for further consultation.

5.9 Insight

5.9.1 None

6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 Relevant previous decisions are listed in the table below.

Item	Decision	Link
Cabinet 10 January 2011	Decision item 6- approved the existing scheme following an extensive period of consultation.	http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/CeListDocuments.aspx?Committeeld=120&MeetingId=317&DF=10%2f01%2f2011&Ver=2
Cabinet 4 April 2012	Decision item 5- approved revisions to the existing scheme following a 6 month review.	http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/CeListDocuments.aspx?Committeeld=120&MeetingId=6792&DF=04%2f04%2f2012&Ver=2
Delegated Powers Report 27 November 2012	Approved further minor changes in relation to the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012.	http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s6674/1873%20-%20Revisions%20to%20Housing%20Allocations%20Scheme.pdf
Cabinet 24 September 2013	Decision item 7- approved amendments to the existing scheme and the introduction of a placements policy.	http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=120&MId=7464&Ver=4
Housing Committee 30 June 2014	Decision item 6- approved draft changes to the existing scheme and approved public consultation in the proposals.	http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=699&MId=7935&Ver=4
Housing Committee 27 October 2014	Decision item 8- approved the proposed revisions to Scheme following on from a period of public consultation, subject to a further review.	http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=699&MId=7936&Ver=4
Housing Committee 2 February 2015	Decision item 13- approved the proposed revisions to the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme.	http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=699&MId=7937&Ver=4
Delegated Powers Report 21 June 2016	Minor Changes to Housing Allocations Scheme	https://barnetintranet.moderngov.co.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=6473

Corporate Parenting Pledge January 2016	Signing up to the Pledges	https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=162&MId=8342&Ver=4
Delegated Powers Report 15 December 2016	Minor Changes to the Housing Allocations Scheme	http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s36905/Housing%20Allocations%20Scheme%20minor%20changes.pdf
Delegated Powers Report August 2017	Amendments to the Housing Allocations Scheme	https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?id=6688
Delegated Powers Report May 2018	Amendments to the Housing Allocations Scheme	https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=6901
Delegated Powers Report April 2019	Amendments to the Housing Allocations Scheme	https://barnetintranet.moderngov.co.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=7176

7. DECISION TAKER'S STATEMENT

7.1 *I have the required powers to make the decision documented in this report and have consulted the Housing Committee Chairman. I am responsible for the report's content and am satisfied that all relevant advice has been sought in the preparation of this report and that it is compliant with the decision-making framework of the organisation which includes Constitution, Scheme of Delegation, Budget and Policy Framework and Legal issues including Equalities obligations.*

8. OFFICER'S DECISION

I authorise the following action

Signed Cath Shaw

Date 16 May 2019

ⁱ Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2018/19