

**Report of Head of Housing Support**

**Report to Director of Resources and Housing**

**Date: 20 October 2017**

**Subject: Housing Support Structure Change**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**1.0 Summary of main issues**

- 1.1 Leeds Housing Options is the principal Council service offering housing advice to people who are homeless, threatened with homelessness or in some form of housing need. The service is geared towards maximising homeless prevention outcomes. The service is also responsible for carrying out housing need assessments including homelessness and medical re-housing need.
- 1.2 Helping young people to return home to their parental home is a major source of homeless prevention and this is achieved through negotiated with young people/parents and a more specialist three way mediation intervention. The Council in-sourced the youth mediation service in January 2014 from Foundation Housing with the TUPE transfer of two FTEs on their existing terms and conditions.
- 1.3 The Independent Living Team carry out medical re-housing assessments and the team comprises 7 FTE Independent Living Officers graded at C3. The demand for medical re-housing assessments is growing as there is an increased focus on re-housing disabled council tenants to already adapted council housing.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Approve the transfer of the Youth Mediator post holder onto Leeds City Council terms and conditions as a Housing Advisor (Young People) with the post graded at C3.

2.2 Delete the second Youth Mediator post and use the released funding to create an additional Independent Living Officer.

## **1.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 Approve the transfer of the Youth Mediator post holder onto Leeds City Council terms and conditions as a Housing Advisor (Young People) with the post graded at C3.
- 1.2 Delete the second vacant Youth Mediator post and use the released funding to create an additional Independent Living Officer post.

## **2.0 Background Information**

- 2.1 Leeds Housing Options is the principal Council service offering housing advice to people who are homeless, threatened with homelessness or in some form of housing need. The service takes lead responsibility for the discharge of all local authority duties relating to homelessness that are set out in Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended) with these duties to be fundamentally amended with the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018.
- 2.2 The Leeds Housing Option Service is focused on maximising homeless prevention: helping people to stay in their existing home or to make a planned move to alternative long-term accommodation. A particular focus is placed on the main causes of homelessness with service interventions/initiatives developed to reflect and respond to these main causes. A main cause of homelessness in Leeds is relationship breakdown between a young person and their parents. The Council has commissioned/provided a youth mediation service for approximately 12 years that aims to reconcile young people with their parents so that they can return or remain at home for an indefinite period of time. Sessions are held separately with the young person and parents and then a three way session is then convened.
- 2.3 The Council commissioned Foundation Housing to manage the Youth Mediation Service and it employed 2 FTE Youth Mediator officers. In January 2014 a decision was taken that Leeds City Council could manage the service directly and the two post holders were TUPE transferred to Leeds City Council on the existing Foundation Housing terms and conditions.
- 2.4 In addition to formal mediation work, Housing Advisors at Leeds Housing Options negotiate between parents and young people, perhaps by telephoning the parent, to facilitate the young person returning home. This could be a straightforward discussion and agreement that the young person conforms to behavioural conditions or seeks employment/education/training.
- 2.5 Homeless prevention outcomes in the last 6 month periods are as follows.
- 2.6 The Independent Living Team, comprising 1 SO2 Team Leader and 7 FTE Independent Living Officers, carry out medical re-housing assessments to help disabled people secure or move to alternative adapted or sheltered housing. The team assess whether a person's existing home does/can meet their needs and what type of accommodation they need in future.

### **3.0 Main Issues**

- 3.1 The Youth Mediator posts have remained on Foundation Housing terms and conditions since they were transferred into Leeds City Council in November 2013. There is one officer in post. The officer is currently paid £24,555 per year.
- 3.2 The Youth Mediator wants to be placed on Leeds City Council terms and conditions. The post holder works closely with Housing Advisors, delivering front facing housing advice at Leeds Housing Options Service, but the position represents a more specialist role than a generic Housing Advisor.
- 3.3 A Leeds City Council job description for the role Housing Advisor (Youth Mediation) has been job evaluated at C3: Reference 171036. The job description is appended to this report.
- 3.4 The outcome of the job evaluation has been discussed with the affected officer and they have advised that they are satisfied with the outcome. Nevertheless, the proposal will be shared with trade union representatives and they may well wish to directly discuss with the affected officer.
- 3.5 It is intended to place the new Housing Advisor (Youth Mediation) on spinal point 28 with a salary of £24,964.
- 3.6 The housing advice offered to young people is a combination of negotiation work, carried out by generic Housing Advisors, and the specialist youth mediation service. The second Youth Mediation Officer post has not been filled for over 6 months and service outcomes remain high. It is therefore proposed to delete the second post and use the available funding to meet other service demands.
- 3.7 There is an increasing demand for medical re-housing assessments carried out by Independent Living Officers not least because of the increased focus on re-housing disabled tenants, who require adaptations, to already adapted council housing. This means that the Council is not, within reason, spending money on adaptations when alternative housing options are available and to ensure that, often family sized housing, is 'best used'.
- 3.8 The process of facilitating a move to already adapted housing is a highly sensitive one that needs to be carried out by a team specialising in working with disabled people. The move process starts with an assessment of housing need to determine what re-housing priority should be given and the type of accommodation (adaptations/sheltered housing/bungalow or other level access) required.
- 3.9 It is therefore intended to use the funding from deleting the second youth mediation post to recruit to an additional C3 graded Independent Living Officer. The job description is appended to this report. The post will be recruited to through the standard Council recruitment process of talent pool and internal recruitment.

## **5.0 Corporate Considerations**

### **5.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 5.1.1 The report has been shared with Trade Union colleagues and reassurance has been given that sufficient resources will be put in place to cover both mediation and negotiation services and that the date of the officer being placed on Council terms and conditions will be from approval of the proposals.

### **5.2 Equality Diversity Cohesion and Integration**

- 5.2.1 Homelessness and disabled people living in inaccessible housing are two of the most acute examples of housing related disadvantage and the proposals reflect our commitment to tackling such disadvantage.
- 5.2.2 An Equality Diversity and Cohesion Impact Assessment has been carried out.

### **5.3 Council Policies and City Priorities**

- 5.3.1 The proposals set out in the report reflect the Council's vision to be a compassionate city and ambition to promote the health and well-being of the citizens of Leeds. Tackling youth homelessness also contributes to the Council's ambition to be child friendly city. Helping disabled people to secure the right housing promotes independent living.

### **5.4 Resources and Value for Money**

- 5.4.1 There is sufficient budget to fill the proposed posts. The Housing Advisor (Youth Mediation) post will continue to help prevent youth homelessness and the Independent Living Officer will help disabled people to secure the right accommodation that promotes independence.

### **5.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 5.5.1 The proposal set out in the report represent a significant operational decision and are not subject to call in.

### **5.6 Risk Management**

- 5.6.1 None identified.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

- 6.1 The proposals bring a long-term employee at Leeds Housing Options onto Leeds City Council terms and conditions and make best use of available resources to respond to service priorities.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

- 7.1 Approve the transfer of the Youth Mediator post holder onto Leeds City Council terms and conditions as a Housing Advisor (Young People) with the post graded at C3.
- 7.2 Delete the second Youth Mediator post and use the released funding to create an additional Independent Living Officer.

## **8.0 Background**

- 8.1 Job Description Housing Advisor (Youth Mediation) and Independent Living Officer.

The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.