

TITLE OF REPORT: **How we assess young people in crisis (Changing Lives Project)**

REPORT OF: **Caroline O'Neill, Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report gives an overview of how services work with children and young people in crisis and how services support and assess young adults via the Supported Accommodation and Independent Living Service (SAILS) pathway, which is a commissioned model and has been operational since July 2018. The report looks at the data provided by the commissioned services for a 12month period.

Background

1. Within Care, Wellbeing and Learning several teams work intensely with children and young adults in crisis.
2. Assessment and Intervention (A&I) service holds Child in Need cases from assessment through intervention to closure or transfer if escalated to Child Protection plan, legal intervention or the child becomes looked after. The work is predominantly focussed on crisis intervention with families who have children of any age.
3. The Complex Child in Need Team, also known as the Edge of Care team (EoC) is part of the A&I service and works intensely with teenagers who are in crisis and at risk of becoming looked after by the Council.
4. The Safeguarding and Care Planning (SGCP) service pick up children's cases from either A&I or the EOC teams when it becomes clear that the young person will need a significant period of social work involvement. Throughout this work safeguarding children and young people is integral to all assessments undertaken by the teams. Social workers in SGCP are skilled in working directly with children and young people to determine their views regarding their future care.
5. Within the Looked After Children's (LAC) teams and Leaving Care team young people continue to need support and interventions to help them understand their life story and the impact this has on how they manage their emotions, relationships and lifestyle.

6. Our approach to social work practice is not limited to one model or 'way to do it'. Gateshead CAN is an overarching systemic and strengths-based approach which recognises the interrelationships between Context, Action and Narrative. Some of the methods and models our social workers use are Relational Genograms, Ecomaps, Solution-focused and motivational interviewing, Signs of Safety, Narrative techniques and tools from positive psychology.
7. Our Social work practice is driven by our aspirant vision that "Children and families are at the heart of everything we do, ensuring all children can thrive and reach their full potential". Our ethical driver is rooted in the belief that our responsibility to children and families in need of help should start from the position where families are empowered and supported to make positive changes, enabled to make self-determined choices and seek their own solutions to build on existing strengths and resilience within the family network. Our firm resolve is to work relentlessly in supporting families to remain together and where a child's needs demand alternative living arrangements these will firstly be sought from within the child's own family network.
8. Professionals involved in delivering statutory social work regardless of which service they belong to hold a determination to seek the opportunities for change within families, utilising the families own resources, by demonstrating reflexivity in their thinking and seeking to reach proportional and evidenced based conclusions.
9. There are times where young people/adults need additional support and accommodation in the form of supported accommodation. This is used widely across the country and is something Gateshead have always used. The SAILS service differentiates from traditional supported housing models in that there are on-site clinical interventions on offer for young people with complex needs. To encourage wellbeing and recovery, all the services are also contractually required to be either PIE (Psychologically Informed Environment) or PIP (Psychologically Informed Practice) compliant.
10. A "pathway" for vulnerable young people has been developed with a person-centred assessment resulting in placements offering targeted, including psychological interventions. Substance misuse drop in services are also available on-site.
11. The services within SAILS are intended to operate as needs led and flexible supported housing services for young people. The aim of all the services is to provide appropriate, safe, supported accommodation to vulnerable young people in housing need during their transition into adulthood.

Policy Context

12. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places legal duties on English councils so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness will have access to meaningful help, irrespective of their priority need status, if they are eligible for assistance.

13. Under the Children's Act 1989 and the Housing Act 1996, the Council has an obligation to fund services to support young people presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness and Care Leavers requiring accommodation.
14. In response to the national guidance document "Developing positive accommodation and support pathways to adulthood", the "Council Plan 2015-2020" has invested in projects to support the early intervention model of working with young people to prevent young people becoming homeless.

SAILS Commissioned services

15. The procurement process was followed, and the following providers were successful in their bids for each lot.
 - Lot 1 – Direct access, Assessment & Emergency Accommodation Unit – Eslington House (Changing Lives)
 - Lot 2 – Shared Living Supported Housing Service and Semi-Independent Living & Floating Support in 5 dispersed properties – Alexander Road and Poplar Crescent (Home Group)
 - Lot 3 – Supported Lodgings Accommodation Service for Looked after Children/Care Leavers - Barnardo's (decommissioned from 1st October 2019 as limited success in recruiting host families within Gateshead)
 - Dispersed Accommodation – The Gateshead Housing Company. 30 Taster flats with 2 hours floating support per week.

Lot 1 Eslington House

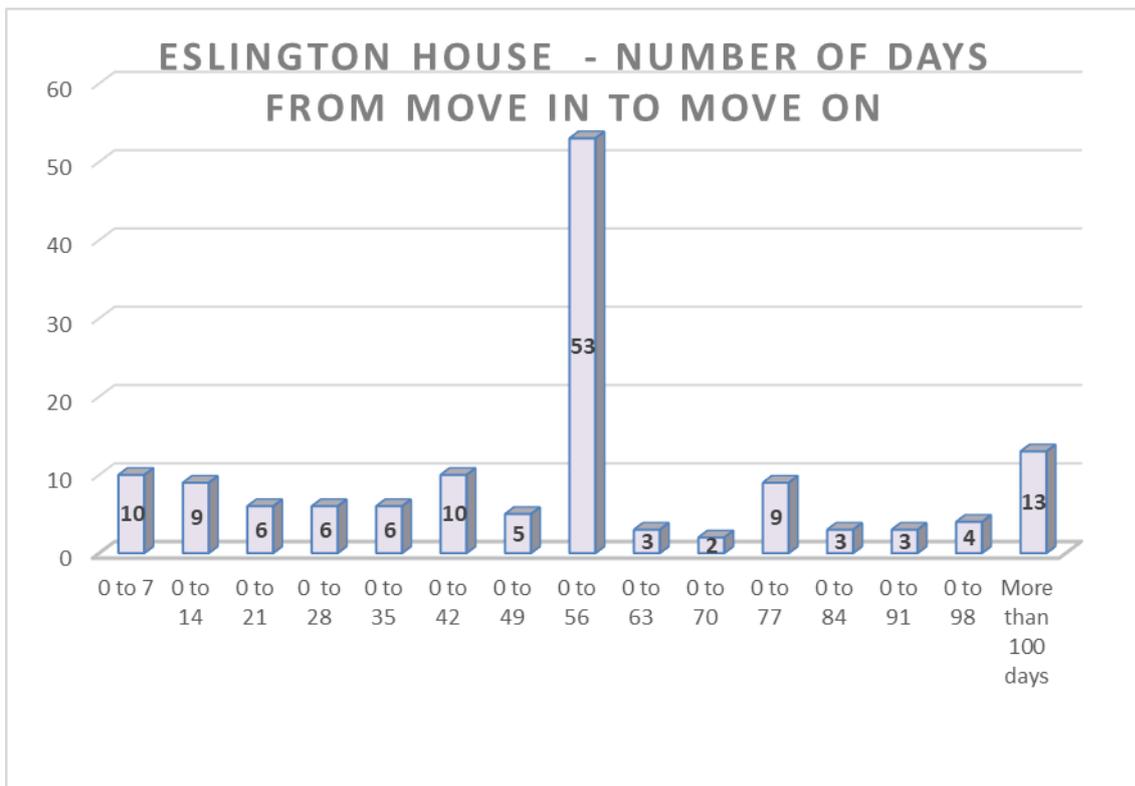
16. Since the SAILS housing pathway for young people aged 16 to 25 years commenced July 2018, the following outputs up to end of June 2019 have been:
 - Total number of referrals 194, of which 175 (91%) were accepted and accessed services
 - Of 194 young people accessing support 14 returned home to family
 - 22 young people were successfully referred to the high needs, clinical intervention
 - 46 young people moved outside the pathway i.e. not homeless or in custody
 - 35 young people were successfully referred to Gateshead Housing Company for Taster Flats Service
 - 1 young person was referred to Supported Lodgings Service, however they rejected this placement. Provider terminated their contract July 19 due to low levels of referrals.
 - Of 194 young people accessing support 18 have been evicted from service for a variety of reasons

Referrals through SAILS

17. Initial referrals are made directly to Eslington House as they take young people in crisis and in emergencies from a range of sources, which include
- Housing services
 - Children's services
 - SAILS panel
 - YOT
 - Probation
 - Northumberland adolescent services
 - Northumberland CRC
 - Family intervention
 - Psychosis community treatment team
 - Domestic abuse team
18. Of the accepted referrals there were 42 young people known to be former LAC or young people leaving care.

Assessments at Eslington

19. Young people who are accepted into Eslington for are there for an assessment period of 56 days. The assessment looks at the skills and abilities young people and are scored by staff and the young person, focussing on the following areas
- Self-Care & Living Skills
 - Managing Money
 - Meaningful Use of Time
 - Social Networks & Relationships
 - Drug & Alcohol Misuse
 - Emotional & Mental Health
 - Managing Tenancy & Accommodation
 - Offending
 - Motivation & taking responsibility
20. The observations, assessment and scores are used to make recommendations on
- Skills the young person has
 - Areas that need further support/interventions
 - Type of move on accommodation required
21. Although the assessment is 56 days, not all young people stay for that length of time - see below



22. The assessments are brought to the SAILS decision making meeting to discuss recommendations. It is evident from the statistics that most young people go to the following:

- 24 hour supported accommodation – Alexander Road
- General lets
- Taster flats

23. There are several young people that do not engage or have had to be evicted, which is also monitored very carefully by the SAILS panel

Lot 2 Alexander Road, Polar Crescent and dispersed properties

24. The length of stay per provision within Home Group is currently not collated from the provider therefore I am unable to provide data on the length of stay in each of Home Groups individual provisions. This will be collated in the next 12 months.

25. Home group have however provided information via the outcome framework workbook and have been able to identify the positive progress young people make and the interventions used to help them with:

- Emotional wellbeing
- Health
- Education, employment or training
- Managing finances
- Relationships
- Community based activities
- Independent living skills
- Managing own tenancy

26. As part of the contract, supporting young people into education, training and employment is a key focus. Home Group have employed a support worker who had been through the SAILS project. Home Group have offered this young person a comprehensive training programme during their probationary period and have worked through confidentiality, DBS checks etc. Home Group have also recruited an apprentice, who has also been supported through the SAILS pathway.

LOT 3 Taster flats - The Gateshead Housing Company

27. From the start of the SAILS contract The Gateshead Housing Company will prioritise 30 flats for young people on the SAILS pathway. For LAC/ Care leavers the setting up home allowance is used to furnish the flat and for young people coming through the homeless route flats are furnished by the Housing Company.

28. Summary of reporting made by the TGHC:

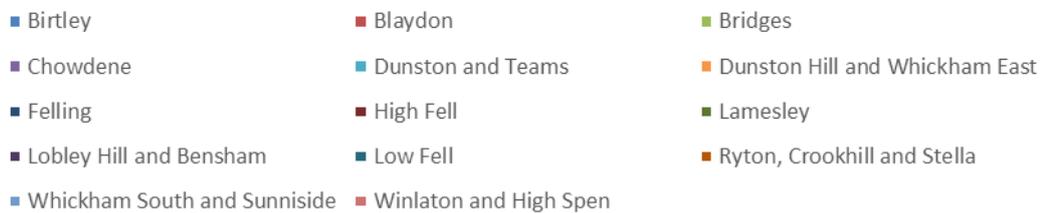
- Over three quarters of commissioned clients, including those who have had any involvement with a taster flat, are maintaining or showing a positive trend in their outcome framework scoring assessments.
- Support workers review progress at 7 days, 28 days and 3 months. Following this, progress is reviewed every 3 months.
- There are instances where other support issues such as domestic abuse and safeguarding the client have had to take priority over getting the assessments completed

29. There had been delays in the preparation of taster flats, but a lot of the barriers and challenges have now been resolved. The service will have 6 properties that can be prepared and ready for immediate use. Identifying future properties will depend on areas of choice from young people and the availability of properties in that area.

30. In addition, young people are offered 4 hours floating support, this is valued in feedback from our young people. The service is client led and therefore young people receive as much support as they need. In the beginning of support, workers will spend more than 2 hours per week as setting up a tenancy can be time intensive. This will then go down to 2 hours with support being decreased the more independence the young person gains.

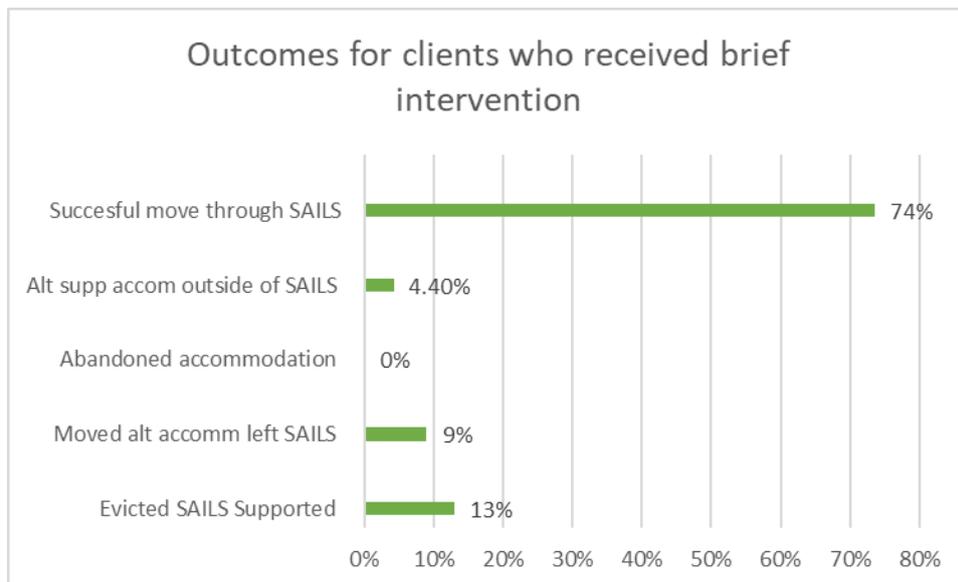
31. Support activities can be wide ranging in nature and include home visits, benefit applications and appeals, child protection involvement, core group attendance, home repair issues, support around physical or mental health etc. Due to the fluctuating client need the weekly support and activity time can vary.

Location and Number of Taster Flats Per Ward



Gateshead housing Company – Brief intervention worker

32. The Under 25 Brief Intervention post is provided by the Gateshead Housing Company as part of the commissioned under 25 support floating support service that is part of the wider SAILS model. This post has been agreed until July 2021.
33. The post provides short term brief intervention support to young people aged 25 and under. It was initially envisaged that the postholder would provide short term support to young people who needed immediate intervention, support to cases who had been signed off by the service but needed some further intervention as well as providing some of the initial support to those going into taster flats. The post has evolved since its inception and now also contributes to the smooth transition and movement of young people between the different supported housing schemes of the SAILS model through drop in sessions at Eslington, Poplar or Alexandra Road as well as linking into the LAC Young Persons drop in, contributing to an effective multi agency service delivery for young people.
34. A total of 31 of the direct referrals have received support from the brief intervention worker. In addition, 23 young people received support and advice from the Brief Intervention Service through the drop-in sessions provided resulting in a total of 54 clients have received brief intervention.



35. Feedback from providers within the SAILS Process

- I would like to take this opportunity to say what a pleasure it has been working with you. The drop in's at Poplar Crescent have proved very useful and beneficial to both me and the housemates.
- "The housemates have commented how helpful you are and how you really explain housing and what's expected of someone when moving into their own tenancy. You have given them clear guidelines and come to help out at the drop of a hat "
- "The communication between Eslington and our workers ensures that the smoothest transition is made when the young person moves out. They also mentioned the contribution the brief intervention worker makes as being the 'face of the council' and the drop in's this worker holds are really beneficial to both staff and residents "

36. Overall the feedback of the brief intervention worker has been positive and helpful in terms of encouraging and supporting joint working between the providers within the SAILS model, the post has allowed for a flexible approach to supporting young people.

Feedback from Young People on the services being provided

37. Eslington House - for Care leavers week Eslington House organised a football match between Gateshead and Durham Care leavers. The day was a huge success and we would like it to be a regular event

38. Home Group - group work looked at what the we would like to deliver and how we can achieve this. The service now pays for Fareshare food deliveries and evening group cooking sessions have been put in place at our request.

Summary

39. The report demonstrates the support both statutory services and the SAILS pathway give to young people in crisis. Ofsted recognised the good work of the social work teams and the positive outcomes we achieve with children and families.
40. SAILS has provided an option to those young people who were homeless in Gateshead. It has provided them with a clear and defined pathway based on their individual needs. It is being acknowledged that staff in the accommodation settings work hard with care leavers who have complex needs and can be very challenging to manage. Their commitment to them has been recognised and positive progress has been seen in a number of cases. Overall, the hard work and dedication from providers has created a foundation in which the process can be developed and enhanced.

Recommendation

41. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting OSC note and comment on the information provided in the report.

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