

# **Feedback from interviews with parents in supported accommodation June 2017**

## **Methodology**

15 parents were interviewed either in person or by telephone. This included parents living Phoenix Place, Kilburn Court , Fortfield Road and 1625 dispersed accommodation as well as a group of young mothers at the Henbury and Brentry young mums group.

## **Summary of key messages**

### **Reasons for leaving previous accommodation**

Private landlords selling property, relationship problems with partner, relationship breakdown with parents, domestic violence, over-crowding.

### **Information**

Information given by Priory Court, Kilburn Court, council homelessness team and Next Link. Kilburn Court and 1625 had interviews with individuals prior to them moving in. Over half of the parents that gave feedback felt that there had been stages where communication had not been clear – either at the outset before moving into the accommodation or clarity about how long parents might be expected to live in supported accommodation before moving on to more settled accommodation. Several parents felt that they have been treated in an abrupt/dismissive way by the council when being given information.

### **Moving on**

All parents felt ready to move on. One young person felt they would need ongoing low level support around budgeting. Most parents had been given information about accessing private rented accommodation but about half were not interested in renting privately; they were concerned that landlords would sell, landlords wouldn't accept housing benefit or that rents would be too high.

### **Accommodation for under 25yr old parents**

Young mums said the advantages of living with other young parents was that it was easier to relate to other young mums initially but that there was varying levels of maturity with the mums aged 16-19. Issues around cleanliness were a concern in relation to sharing with younger mums. The majority of parents did not think that the age of other parents mattered in supported accommodation. Some young parents felt that older parents would be able to give advice or that they had received advice from older parents.

### **The good things and the challenges with living in supported accommodation**

There were concerns around cleanliness of accommodation when moving in /maintaining cleanliness and hygiene as well as having sufficient space for clothes and buggies.

The feedback was largely positive in relation to location – being close to transport links, shops and family were important but being placed at a distance from schools or work presents problems. In general, parents benefitted from mutual support from parents but being able to choose to keep themselves to themselves if wanted.

Young parents benefitted from the support and friendships of other young parents in the accommodation. Some reported issues with other residents including cannabis use and poor hygiene.

The majority of respondents found the groups that took place within the supported accommodation a useful way of meeting other parents and accessing information from health visitors and/or staff in the accommodation. Most respondents indicated that support was available if and when they needed it. Many parents also said their families were referred to as important sources of support.

### **Support**

The main help parents said were getting was: support with bidding on Home Choice, help and advice about benefits, support from Children centres and general support from family (childcare, shopping, advice). Other things that parents said they needed help with included tax credits, health, budgeting, domestic violence, debt, private renting and appeals, GP for depression. 'In-house' groups were popular at Kilburn Court and Phoenix Court and tended to be a place where parents could meet other residents, let their baby play as well as get receive information and advice. Some parents were very positive about the 'Roof over my head' course.

### **Questions and answers**

#### **Q1. Where were you living before you came into supported accommodation?**

- 8/15 in Temporary/Emergency accommodation 2 weeks-1 month
- 3/15 with parents
- 2/15 living with friend

Summary: Reasons for needing accommodation: Private landlords selling property, relationship problems with partner, relationship breakdown with parents, domestic violence, over-crowding.

#### **Q2. Is this the first time you have been in supported accommodation?**

10 Yes, 5 No

Those that said 'No' had previously been at Kensington House, The Foyer & 1625

#### **Q3. Were you given information in advance about the type of accommodation you had been offered?**

6 – No, 1 –Yes

"No I wasn't given any information– I just had a call from the homelessness team who said 'where are you - you should be at Fortfield road, I had to ask who they were as they didn't introduce themselves"

'they just told me to come to an interview the next day and said if I didn't go there they wouldn't help me anymore'

Summary: Information given by Priory Court, Kilburn court, Homelessness team and Next link. Kilburn court & 1625 had interviews with individuals prior to them moving in. Feedback was that information given by homeless team was abrupt.

**Q.4 How long have you been in supported accommodation?**

2 months – 9 months – average 5 months

**Q.5 Do you feel that you are ready to move-on?**

All – Yes

Summary: All parents felt ready to move on. One young person felt they would need ongoing low level support around budgeting. Henbury and Brentry young mums group said they felt that it was important that if parents weren't ready to move-on, there was some flexibility to allow them to stay longer until they are prepared for independent living, especially those without family/support networks.

**Q6. Have you been offered help with accessing private rented housing?**

3 No, 9 Yes

**Q7. Would you consider a private sector tenancy?**

8 yes, 7 no

Summary: For those that said 'no', concerns were that landlords would sell, landlords wouldn't accept housing benefit or rents would be too high. From the Henbury and Brentry young mums group 1 parent was advocating for private tenancies and explained the support available around deposits to other parents for those that wanted to move out of their parents' house. Another young parent was living at home, researching private rental accommodation - positive dialogue.

**Q8. Do you currently or have you lived in supported accommodation specifically for 25 and under. What are the good things about living with other young people and what are the challenges?**

| Positives   | Challenges   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Henbury and Brentry young mothers Group said that younger parents may have more in common and might be more open in some discussion i.e. around sex than older parents.</li> <li>• 'It is easier to make friends when you have similar interests and you are in similar circumstances (have a baby/looking for housing) but doesn't matter about age generally'</li> <li>• 'We are quite similar – I know them (other mums at house) from School'</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'The issue for me is their hygiene. That could be a problem with any age.'</li> <li>• 'Some of the younger mums can be childish/immature and I think that is because of their age. It wouldnt make a difference to me if there were single mums or fathers here'</li> <li>• Some of the younger mums do not have the same standards when it comes to cleanliness</li> </ul> |

Summary: Feedback suggested that young mums find it easier to relate to other young mums initially and that there was varying levels of maturity, with the mums aged 16-19. Issues around cleanliness were a concern in relation to younger mums.

**Q9. What do you think the positives or challenges would be of living with older (25+) parents in supported accommodation?**

| Neutral   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Doesn’t make any difference’</li> <li>• ‘They are all still parents and have the similar things in common’</li> <li>• ‘The right accommodation is more important than the age’</li> <li>• ‘I don’t mind’</li> <li>• ‘For me it’s not an issue as long as people get on with each-other’</li> <li>• ‘I have a bit of contact with other residents who aren’t mums. I got to know one when we were doing the Roof over my head. No problems sharing the space with other women.’</li> <li>• ‘I don’t think it’s any different’</li> <li>• ‘none’</li> <li>• ‘It’s easier to make friends when you have similar interests and you are in similar circumstances but age doesn’t really matter’</li> </ul> |
| Positives   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Henbury and Brentry group discussion: ‘in a supported environment you would be polite to other people and make friends from that point. Parents who have been in supported accommodation for a while would be able to give advice and that older (25yrs +) parents might be able to give advice if they have been through experiences that younger parents are going through.’</li> <li>• ‘Advantages are that they have more experience in raising kids and give you advice – when I was in the family hostel, the older parents gave me advice the young parents couldn’t’</li> <li>• Feels like older parents are more experienced.</li> </ul>  |
| Negatives   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Might be annoying to have to put up with other young people - the older people just want to get on with life’.</li> <li>• ‘Find it a problem living with the younger parents, not looking after their kids properly. This doesn’t just apply to young parents, applies to nearly all parents here.’</li> </ul>  |

Summary: The majority of parents could not see that the positives/challenges of living with other parents would make a difference with over 25yr old parents. Some parents felt that older parents would be able to give advice.

**Q10. What are/were the three best things and (Q11) the three biggest challenges in your supported accommodation service?**

(Due to the amount of responses, these have been grouped)

| Feeling safe – good things   | Challenges   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Privacy – having my own room (Kilburn)</li> <li>• Brentry and Henbury young mums group, including young mum who had high needs who had been at Priory court felt that feeling safe is important and for the right people to be in high support who need it and for those that don’t to</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think there should be at least two people on at any one time. There should always be a woman on duty, never just a man. This is place of sanctuary for women and there should be a woman here at all times (Phoenix Place)</li> </ul> |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>be in low support (less intense).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not homeless (Fortfield Road)</li> </ul>   |  |
| <p><b>Cleanliness – good things</b></p>  | <p><b>Challenges</b></p>   |
| <p>No relevant comments</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Beds were covered in blood and smelt of urine’ (Fortfield Road).</li> <li>• ‘Could be cleaner. It was disgusting, dirty walls and dirty carpets, there was a nasty smell’ (Fortfield Road).</li> <li>• ‘Wasn’t cleaned before we moved in and was really dirty. We moved in at 11.00 in the morning, didn’t have anyone to clean it until the evening. We all got ill’ (Fortfield Road).</li> <li>• At Fortfield Road we only have 3 hrs a week to do washing which isn’t enough if you have several children.</li> <li>• ‘Flatmates lack of hygiene – some young parents have different standards when it comes to cleaning bathroom and kitchen’ (Phoenix Place).</li> <li>• Cleanliness, Not everyone is at the same level around cleanliness (1625).</li> <li>• ‘Living room and kitchen were really dirty, cookers were really dirty’ - 1625</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Space – Good things</b></p>  | <p><b>Challenges</b></p>   |
| <p>No relevant comments</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Not much space for the baby to walk’ (Fortfield Road).</li> <li>• ‘Having to share kitchen and bathroom facilities and not having a schedule can be awkward to work out especially when someone not pulling their weight’ (Phoenix Place).</li> <li>• ‘The stairs and doors. Have to carry the buggies upstairs. Can leave buggy downstairs but there is a risk it will be stolen. I had a bar on my last buggy stolen but I haven’t heard of a buggy being stolen’ (Phoenix Place).</li> <li>• ‘Living on upstairs floor and having to carry everything up and down the stairs, sometimes if my health is bad I find this difficult’ (Fortfield Road).</li> <li>• ‘Accommodation is too small’ (1625).</li> <li>• I don’t have enough storage, just three draws for me and the wardrobe for the baby’s things (1625).</li> </ul>                            |
| <p><b>Location – Good things</b></p>   | <p><b>Challenges</b></p>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Close to shops, children’s centre, schools and work, close to the centre. Being close to my family/support network as I need a lot of help’</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Too close to my ex-partner’ (Fortfield Road).</li> <li>• ‘Takes 1.5 hours for sons to get to school. Next year eldest is doing his GCSEs, Husband has to</li> </ul>  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>(Fortfield Road).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Being familiar with the area' (Fortfield Road).</li> <li>• 'It's a nice area. Close to shops and good transport links. I like it here' (Fortfield Road).</li> <li>• 'Location is good and parking is available (I'm borrowing my brother's car)' (Phoenix Place).</li> <li>• 'It's a great location and close to my work' (Kilburn Court).</li> </ul>  | <p>shorter hours because the buses stop running at 10.00 in evening. He works in a shop. Far away from school friends' (Fortfield Road).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'I had to give up my job as it was too far away' I didn't need support, 'I only need accommodation so I was ready to move straight away' (Kilburn Court).</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Other parent's behaviour – Good things</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Mutual support from other mums who I get on with' (Phoenix Place).</li> <li>• 'Support from other girls in the flat. I got on really well with a mum who has just moved out. Company with people you are in the same boat with. Good not to be on your own in the early days' (Phoenix Place).</li> <li>• 'Supportive parents' (Phoenix Place).</li> <li>• 'Same age, everyone has babies, everyone is understanding, considerate' (Kilburn Court)</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'One mum smoked weed and didn't look after her baby, bring man and smoked weed together even we complain nothing changes. That was shock for me' (Phoenix Place)</li> <li>• 'Smelt cannabis sometimes (but Elim have cracked down on it). It makes me angry because we are living here with our babies. I wouldn't mind if it was just adults living here. I'm concerned about babies' health' - Phoenix place.</li> <li>• 'Behaviour of some parents, being immature' (Kilburn Court).</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Support - Positives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Supportive staff and other parents' (Phoenix Place).</li> <li>• 'Support is there when you need it, not feeling alone' (Phoenix Place).</li> <li>• 'Mutual support from other mums who I get on with' (Phoenix Place).</li> <li>• 'Having a social work student that allows there to be groups and give more attention to those parents with higher needs'(Kilburn Court)</li> <li>• 'Groups in the house where parents get to choose what advice sessions we plan for' (Kilburn Court).</li> <li>• 'The Health visitors helped me change my GP' (Kilburn Court)</li> <li>• 'Office very helpful, e.g. with my housing, benefits, my paperwork – they are friendly and I know they are there when I need it' (Phoenix Place).</li> <li>• 'Food shop – Fair Share (50p an item)' (Phoenix Place).</li> </ul> | <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'When the social worker student is gone, I am thinking that the groups won't happen as well and some parents with higher support needs will get less support as the other staff are very busy. Planning for endings with the social worker not just for the people they support directly but for the other parents that might get help from them sometimes or through the groups' (Kilburn Court).</li> </ul>  |

Summary: 3 parents identified feeling safe as important, 8 respondents had concerns around cleanliness/maintaining cleanliness and hygiene, space for buggies/having to carry them up to their room + baby/shopping etc. was an issue as well as sufficient storage.

The feedback was largely positive in relation to location – being close to transport links, shops and family were important but being placed at a distance from schools or work presents problems. In general, parents benefitted from mutual support from parents but being able to choose to keep themselves to themselves if wanted.

Commonalities around being the parent of a young baby and housing issues helped them form friendships and settle in. Some concern around anti-social behaviour including cannabis use and poor hygiene.

The majority of respondents found the groups that took place within the supported accommodation a useful way of meeting other parents and accessing information being delivered by health visitors or supported living staff. The majority of feedback was positive about feeling that support was there when it was needed and was provided by knowledgeable staff. Families were referred to as important sources of support.

**Q12. How are you being helped currently?**

| <b>How are you being helped</b>       | <b>No.</b> |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Not getting help                      | 3          |
| Housing benefit & other benefits      | 4          |
| Finances                              | 3          |
| Home Choice                           | 2          |
| Activities for the kids and Playgroup | 2          |
| Funding for furniture                 | 2          |
| Family                                | 3          |
| GP/Health Visitor                     | 2          |
| Social worker                         | 1          |
| Home-choice application               | 6          |
| `Education                            | 1          |
| Children centre                       | 3          |

Summary: Feedback indicated that the main support that parents were accessing was with home-choice bidding, benefits support, support from Children centres and general support from family (childcare, shopping, advice).

**Q13. Did you need any other help (e.g. help with finding accommodation, help with your children, help with money and debt, accessing health services, help with drug or alcohol issues etc)?**

3 No

9 yes

Summary: There was some cross-over with responses from previous question but feedback was that additional support was need around tax credits, health, budgeting, domestic violence, debt, private renting and appeals, GP for depression.

## Q14. What could have been done differently to help you? (All comments – grouped by theme)

### Communication and information

- 'Better information 'Before we were kicked out of our house, didn't get told the right thing by the council. They kept telling us to wait until got court papers, then told us to wait for the bailiffs. If we had done that we would have had to pay court fees. We were given the wrong advice, we were entitled to emergency accommodation at that stage. Tried to go through Shelter, they said don't stay until bailiffs show up. Shelter just gave advice.'
- 'I have been here 6 months and I need to know that I can move soon.'
- 'Having information about the accommodation in advance and enough time to prepare. I felt that I was treated rudely when the council called me and asked me where I was.'
- 'I got given mixed information by HomeChoice hotline (council) about whether or not I was entitled to 'mother and baby' accommodation because I was too old.'
- 'I was told I would get a place before my due date. I had to ring every day. Was expecting to move in for about 1-2 months. I really didn't want to go into emergency accommodation. I was on the waiting list from June and moved in October.'
- 'Eventually told I could be put onto the waiting list and then offered a place after 7-8 months.'
- 'I haven't had information about private renting until recently. I would have liked more support around how to get childcare and how to get back to work.'

### Location

- 'Could have been closer to their school.'
- 'Putting me on the ground floor – I struggle with stair for health reasons.'
- 'I was placed too far from where I work (Bedminster) so I can't go back to work.'

### Other

- 'Nothing' could have been done differently (x3).
- 'Recommission all the empty council houses.'
- 'Could be cleaner. It was disgusting, dirty walls and dirty carpets, there was a nasty smell.'
- 'They could have left me on the housing support register for longer – I was taken off because I turned down the offer, it was too far from my support – my mum. If they had left me on, I would of got a place at a mother and baby unit near me'.
- 'I had a call from the council telling me to come to an interview the next day and said if I didn't go there they wouldn't help me anymore'.

Summary: Over half of the parents that gave feedback felt that there had been stages where communication had not been clear – either at the outset before moving into the accommodation or clarity about how long parents might be expected to live in supported accommodation before moving on to more settled accommodation. Several parents felt that they have been treated in an abrupt/dismissive way by the council when being given information.

There was some cross-over from previous questions –those impacted by the location and around the cleanliness of the property.

**Q15. What advice would you give to other parents moving into supported accommodation for the first time? (all feedback)**

- "Try to be friendly and communicate with people or it can be lonely. When I moved in, me and the other two girls in my flat always kept our bedroom doors open. They were communicative and welcoming. I was lucky with the people I shared with.
- 'For me the benefits of sharing have outweighed the disadvantages.'
- 'Do the Roof over my head course as soon as possible.'
- 'Accept the help offered to you the staff are very good.'
- 'Don't get distracted by other parents behaviour – just be yourself.'
- 'I would recommend it, I would tell them not to worry.'

**Q16 Did you access group-work/ information & advice sessions whilst living in supported accommodation?**

6 – No

4 – Yes

**Q17. If so, what groups/sessions did you attend?**

- First aid
- Advice sessions around teeth and oral hygiene,
- Stay and play type groups that discuss topics relevant to the group.
- Roof over my head.
- 'I didn't like to go in a group with other people',
- I attend various groups at the children centre

Summary: 'In-house' groups were popular at Kilburn Court and Phoenix Place and tended to be a place where parents could meet other residents, let their baby play and receive information and advice from either health visitors, student social work, supported living staff or from an organisation that was delivering specific content.

**Q18. Which groups did you find the most useful?**

Roof over my head, Stay and play to meet other parents and for the babies to socialise, Teeth and oral hygiene.

**Q19. What other group-work/information and advice sessions would have been useful?**

No feedback from individual respondents. Henbury and Brentry young parents group felt that life-skills type training such as cooking and budgeting would be useful especially for young parents.