



## **Commissioning Services for Vulnerable Parents with Young Children Summary of draft commissioning plan For consultation between 11th October to 6th December 2017**

### **Which services are we re-commissioning?**

**Parent and child assessment placements** – These are short-term placements, usually of about 12 weeks, for families where there are concerns about the parents' ability to safely parent their child(ren). Placements are often ordered by the court in child protection court proceedings to inform the court about whether or not the child(ren) should continue to live with their parent(s). These placements are either in residential centres or with foster carers.

**Homelessness prevention services** – These services are for vulnerable parents with babies and young children who are at risk of homelessness. They include floating support and short-term supported accommodation.

### **Parent and child assessment placements**

#### **Current services and spend**

The council places about 33 families per year in an assessment placement, about half with foster carers and the other half in residential assessment centres or residential substance misuse rehabilitation centres. The council spot purchases residential assessments from a number of providers in the Southwest and Midlands. There is no residential assessment centre in, or close to Bristol, with the closest being 50 miles away in Taunton. We purchase parent and child foster placements from independent foster agencies (IFAs) on the sub-regional IFA framework agreement. We do not generally commission assessments from IFAs. Instead, the council's social worker carries out the assessment.

Placement costs are high. The average weekly cost of a residential assessment placement made by Bristol City Council in 2016/17 was £4,500 and the average total cost of a placement was £40,360. For parent and child foster placements (excluding assessment) the average weekly cost was c. £1,400 and the average total placement cost was £17,300.

#### **Key aims**

- Have good quality local parent and child foster placements able to accommodate families that have range of needs and risks, including single fathers and couples.
- Have a residential assessment centre local to Bristol so that families don't have to move away from their support networks and are assessed in a more realistic environment as well as making it easier for families to stay together when they move back to their home.
- Reduce spend.
- Commission timely, good quality assessments that the council and the courts can rely on to inform their decisions for children.
- Assessment placements that link into the whole-system of assessment and support for families, including making recommendations that follow the family once they leave the placement.

## Residential assessments - Proposed options for consultation

We have not yet formed a view about our preferred option for commissioning these placements. During the consultation period, we are seeking the views of stakeholders on the following three options.

1	Establish a new five-year open framework for residential parenting assessments. This would be a Bristol City Council framework; other local authorities would be asked if they wish to join the framework as potential purchasers. We would undertake proportionate quality assurance and contract management of providers on the framework. Prices to be fixed for an initial period of two years.
2	Bristol City Council to develop its own 4 or 5 unit residential assessment centre in Bristol. A suitable building has been identified in South Bristol; planning permission would be required for the change of use. The scheme would have to be registered with Ofsted as a residential family centre. The centre's staff would include family support workers to give guidance and help to families. Assessments would be completed by a specialist senior practitioner social worker working with a clinical psychologist. Places in the scheme could be purchased by other local authorities.
3	Bristol City Council to work in partnership with an external provider to develop a new 4 or 5 unit residential assessment centre in Bristol. The scheme would have to be registered with Ofsted as a residential family centre. The council could make a building available on favourable terms. A suitable building has been identified in South Bristol; planning permission would be required for the change of use. The council would wish to block purchase some of the places, probably three. The council would carry out a suitable procurement process to appoint the provider.

## Foster placements - proposals

We propose to establish a council-run parent and child assessment foster scheme managed within the council's existing foster agency. We plan to recruit five specialist foster carers to provide an average of four parent and child assessment placements a year, including to some single parent fathers and couples where appropriate. The scheme will include social workers to carry out assessments and supervise foster carers. Foster carers will contribute to assessments, by providing observation logs and other input, as well as supporting and supervising the family. The assessment team may also include a clinical psychologist. This scheme would be able to deliver about 20 assessment placements per year.

If additional parent and child assessment placements are required, we will purchase these from suitable providers on the existing sub-regional IFA framework with the assessment being completed by a Bristol City Council social worker.

## Homelessness prevention services

### Current provision and spend

We have a contract with Bristol Young Parents Alliance to provide an integrated service for young parents aged 16-25 at risk of homelessness. This includes providing 36 accommodation units and a linked floating support service supporting a minimum of 150 new clients each year. The accommodation is based in Southmead, Easton and Knowle providing a geographical spread so that clients can live near their support networks. The budget is £404,000 p.a. for this integrated service, which is roughly evenly split between accommodation-based support and floating support. This contract expires in 2019.

## Key aims

- Target supported accommodation for those vulnerable parents with the highest support while also making best of use of supported accommodation for homeless families who otherwise would need to be housed in higher cost temporary accommodation.
- Limit spend on temporary accommodation for homelessness families.
- Make sure that families in assessment placements (both residential and foster placements) are able to move on to supported accommodation without delay if this is the best home for them.
- Effective services including flexible floating support services.

## Proposals – integrated homelessness prevention service for vulnerable parents

We propose to have one contract to provide an integrated supported accommodation and floating support service for vulnerable parents with young children aged up to two years. The service will be for parents of any age. The contract will be to provide:

- Support at the 36 units of accommodation used for the current specialist young parents homelessness prevention service. We will require a higher level of support at 15 units of accommodation, potentially with a 24 hour seven day a week staff presence. (We will be seeking views on the need for a 24 hour staff presence during the consultation.)
- Floating support to prevent homelessness, help vulnerable families settle into accommodation and link into support networks in their local community and to provide additional ‘bolt-on’ support to vulnerable families in lower support accommodation where needed.

We are proposing that the current level of funding for the floating support element of the integrated service be reduced to fund increased supported housing in the city for homeless families. This aligns with the aims of the linked commissioning plan - ‘Preventing Homelessness Accommodation Pathways – families and adults (22+)’ - to increase the overall level of supported family accommodation in order to reduce the level of expenditure of more expensive spot purchased emergency temporary accommodation.<sup>1</sup>

The proposed service will be for vulnerable parents (of any age) with babies (up to the age of 2 years) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, as well as providing move-on accommodation and/or support to families moving on from parent and child assessment placements. In relation to the latter families, the support the service provides will be informed by any recommendations from the assessment placement and work in partnership with the family’s social worker and other practitioners working with the family. The maximum budget envelope for the new integrated service will be £368,000 but we may seek to reduce this.

## How to respond to the consultation

Please read the commissioning plan first - [https://www.bristol.gov.uk/en\\_US/tenders-contracts/services-being-commissioned](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/en_US/tenders-contracts/services-being-commissioned)

You can then respond in the following ways:

- Electronic survey - <https://bristol.citizenspace.com/people/commissioning-services-for-parents-with-babies-and/>
- Attend the consultation workshop for providers and practitioners - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/commissioning-services-for-vulnerable-parents-with-young-children-tickets-38653596949?aff=es2>
- Email us at [jcu@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:jcu@bristol.gov.uk)

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.bristol.gov.uk/en\\_US/housing/commissioning-homelessness-prevention-services](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/en_US/housing/commissioning-homelessness-prevention-services)

