


## SIA Provider Forum Notes 10.12.2024

Thank you to everyone who was able to attend today's session and join the discussion about key topics. It was a fantastic turn out with contributions from you all which will help to inform some of our processes moving forward.

Here is a copy of the slides:

 SIA Provider Forum 2024

Some additional notes:

### Priorities and Challenges in Placements

- Mental health. We are seeing an increase in the number of children and young people presenting with quite significant mental health challenges, which do not meet threshold for Tier 4 NHS intervention. Knowledge and skills to support in this area. Links with health services. Ideas welcomed!
- Impact of Artificial Intelligence. GDPR issues. Please be mindful and review your GDPR and IT policies.
- Care vs support. Some support packages are being submitted with very high hours, which could be interpreted as care by Ofsted.

### LB Sutton Ofsted inspection

- Our Children's Services are anticipating an inspection by Ofsted at any time.
- We are preparing by pulling together examples of good practice across all areas.
- *If you have any examples of great practice working with our young people and LB Sutton, please share these with Lynda. Thank you to those who have already shared!*

### Housing related benefits when a young person turns 18

Response to changes being implemented from 1st April 2025:

- Multiple examples shared of conflicting advice from DWP when applying for Universal Credit. Most notably being told that a claim cannot be started before turning 18, and not being eligible for Universal Credit due to the type of accommodation.
- We have dedicated contacts within both Housing Benefit and DWP for our Care Leavers. All queries or challenges should be directed to them, and we have an excellent working relationship with both departments.
- We introduced our Leaving Care Support Officer, Mehwish Aftab [mehwish.aftab@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:mehwish.aftab@sutton.gov.uk). Mehwish oversees all payments relating to care leavers over the age of 18, and she can be contacted with any queries or issues regarding housing related benefits.
- We have also developed Standards and Guidance for Professionals; Supporting Care Leavers to Confidently Manage their Rent and Service Charges, which we have attached to this email. Please familiarise yourselves with this document as it contains lots of really useful information, including the key contacts for UC/HB.

- We will also invite the key contacts to the next provider forum to deliver key messages and for you to raise any further challenges.

### Rent contributions for young people who are in employment

This was a really engaging section, so a big thank you for your input! As discussed, we are looking to develop a consistent approach for rent contributions where a young person is working. We recognise that housing costs are significantly higher in Semi-independent accommodation compared to independent living options, therefore we would not expect our young people to meet the full cost. It is also important for our young people to learn how to manage a rent account as part of their preparation to live independently.

Feedback from the session included:

- Young people often work 0 hour contracts and have fluctuating incomes, which can make it really challenging to anticipate the shortfall in housing related benefits.
- Once UC/HB is notified of employment it can take some time for it to be processed and arrears can build up in the meantime.
- Some young people have had to pay almost all of their salary to cover their housing costs, which is demotivating and can lead to them reducing or stopping their employment.
- Another LA had refused to pay the shortfall, which left the provider operating at a loss.

Good practice examples:

- Good support, including a dedicated UC Officer, has a huge positive impact especially in helping young people to understand the system, and to deal with fluctuations
- Close working relationships with key workers
- Some LAs have Housing Agreements directly with the young people, so that the LA receives the HB/UC

Council Tax was raised as a challenge, with examples given of care leavers not being recognised as exempt (LB Sutton commitment)

- We will follow this up and update you as soon as possible

### **Q & A**

1. Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS). Once providers have registered with the system and pass evaluation, they are added to the list of Providers that LBS uses as first choice when it seeks availability. The process is as usual with contact from the placement team when a placement is required.

If you want to apply for the Dynamic Purchasing System:

**Sutton Council is expanding its care placement offer for 0 to 25 year olds. We are seeking providers in or close to Sutton, who can provide the right home, with the right skills and location for our children. Register free at:**  
[procontract.due-north.com/Register](http://procontract.due-north.com/Register)

2. Wherever possible the placement team will co-ordinate a pre placement meeting with professionals to discuss a management plan where there are exploitation concerns  
 As a provider of services supporting LB Sutton young people, you are able to access

the council's Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Training programme which can be accessed here: <https://suttontraining.event-booking.org/events-list>. You and your staff will need to register an account to book onto any courses.

3. Future topics for Provider Forums are:

- Exploitation and gangs, both criminal and sexual; helping key workers on the ground understand it and prevent harm.
- Step Down Options; what is available & how can providers support the transition for YP and the process
- Universal Credit / Housing Benefit

**You can view these notes and much more on the Sutton Care Hub**

**Ask Ashleigh to add link**

Next forum (on-line) will be:

**Tuesday 18th March 2025**

We hope to see you there!