



**Officer Key Decision
26 May 2021**

**Report to Strategic Director
Children and Young People**

AUTHORITY TO EXTEND A BLOCK CONTRACT FOR SEMI-INDEPENDENT LIVING FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AGED 16+ AND CARE LEAVERS AGED 18+

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key Decision
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	None
Background Papers¹:	None
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	<p>Shirley Parks Head of Forward Planning, Performance and Partnerships shirley.parks@brent.gov.uk 0208 937 4529</p> <p>Brian Grady Operational Director, Safeguarding, Partnerships and Strategy Brian.grady@brent.gov.uk 020 8937 4713</p>

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to a proposed extension to a block contract for the provision of Semi-independent Living for Looked After Children aged 16+ and Care Leavers aged 18+ with Centrepont Soho (Centrepont) for the period of 24 months in accordance with Contract Standing Order 112.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

That the Strategic Director of Children and Young People:

- 2.1 Approves the extension to the current contract with Centrepoint for a period of 24 months from 7 July 2021 to 6 July 2023.

3.1 Detail

- 3.1 In accordance with the Children Act 1989 and 2004 and the Children Leaving Care Act 2000, the Local Authority has a duty to assess and meet the needs of young people aged 16 and 17 who are in care and care leavers. The duties that local authorities have towards care leavers are set out in the statutory guidance "Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers". This can include the provision of accommodation. Irrespective of where the young person lives, the duty rests with the local authority to maintain contact with care leavers until they are at least 21. It is the local authority's responsibility to ensure every looked after child and care leaver is properly prepared to make the transition to adulthood in a planned and effective way to achieve the best possible outcomes for the individual young person. The provision of semi-independent living is seen as an effective method of assisting a smooth transition to adulthood for Looked After Children aged 16+ and Care Leavers aged 18+.
- 3.2 The Council currently has a block contract for the Provision of Semi-independent Living for Looked after Children aged 16+ and Care Leavers aged 18+ with Centrepoint. The contract period runs from 7 July 2018 – 6 July 2021, with an option to extend for a further 2 years.

The overarching aims of the contract are:

- To provide high quality accommodation, practical and emotional support, advice and guidance to young people in care and care leavers in making an effective transition to independent living;
- To provide support to young people in the accommodation as part of their professional network to enable them to achieve their potential and to be a positive member of the community;
- To support the Local Authority in increasing the number of looked after children and care leavers in education, employment and training.

The majority of the units provided for in the contract are predominantly to support young people with low to medium needs. The outcomes for this service are outlined below:

- Increasing placement stability for young people;
- Increasing young people's life skills to enable a successful move on to their own council tenancy or other long-term housing solution;
- Reducing the proportion of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET);

- Increasing the percentage of young people participating in learning;
- Quarterly emotional, wellbeing score responses (SDQ) are average or higher on the scoring matrix, indicating a positive trend;
- Increasing the percentage of young people participating in learning, activity and sport.

3.3 Centrepoint currently provide 20 units of accommodation. The current contract is for a period of three years with an option to extend for up to two additional years for up to 60 units. The current 20 units comprise:

- Five 24/7 high support units with 10 hours of key worker support
- Fifteen low to medium support units with 5 hours of key worker support per week

3.4 An additional 40 units were included in the contract, with proposals to phase their delivery from 1 December 2018 with Brent only paying for properties at the point that they became available for use. At the point of bidding for the contract, Centrepoint had identified potential properties for development that would have met this timescale. However, these original proposals did not come to fruition, as the landlord that Centrepoint was in communication with pulled out of the development. The Local Authority's preference continues to be for most of the accommodation delivered through this contract to be located within Brent and its surrounding areas, with the option for one property to be located out of the borough. Centrepoint has continued to pursue opportunities to source property in and around the London Borough of Brent. Officers and Centrepoint have explored a number of options over the course of the past 3 years to increase the number of units. It has, however, proved to be challenging to acquire properties on the market that could be developed to meet Centrepoint's tender price of £395 per bed due to the high cost of rents. A number of identified properties have been deemed not suitable after a profile assessment. Centrepoint has taken a number of steps to partner with registered providers, private landlords and with a Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) to increase their access to suitable properties. In 2020, officers supported a proposal brought forward by Centrepoint for a 13 bedded unit, but this did not progress. Centrepoint are committed to continuing to actively search for suitable properties during the period of the contract.

3.5 Between July 2018 and March 2021, 47 of the total number of 528 semi-independent placements by Brent were made at the Centrepoint provisions. Centrepoint carries out regular surveys of young people's satisfaction across the breadth of Centrepoint's delivery. A survey of young people in 2020 showed 100% satisfaction with rooms, the quality of accommodation, access to training, education and work and information on rights as a resident and information on how to sustain a tenancy. 77% of the young people are in education, employment or training (EET); 65% have started to achieve their desired educational aspirations; 89% have participated in cultural and faith activities and 12% participated in work or a work like activity placed with Centrepoint. A programme of quality assurance monitoring is carried out by officers that shows Centrepoint services and outcomes for young people are good.

- 3.6 Brent has recently developed a new Quality Assurance Framework for semi-independent provision, which has been co-produced with young people and providers, including Centrepoint. As part of this work, a new best practice group has been established, the first meeting of which was held in March 2021. Building on the quality of the provision they offer, Centrepoint are playing a key role in this group, sharing the work that they do to support young people and helping the local authority to improve the quality of provision commissioned.
- 3.7 An area for development within the contract is the provision of same day emergency placements and officers will be working with Centrepoint to develop this offer. Where there is a need for an emergency semi-independent placement, the Commissioning and Resources Team will be approaching Centrepoint to request they consider the placement, with an expectation that the request will be supported if there is a void in the high support unit.
- 3.8 The value of the contract is £689,177 per annum for 20 units. This is compared to total expenditure on 18+ Semi-independent provision in 2020/21 of £3,960,126. Officers are seeking to exercise the option to extend the contract for a period of 24 months. If the bed number were to remain at 20 the value of the 2 year extension would be £1,378,181.
- 3.9 The 24 month extension would:
- provide sufficient time for officers to review future models of delivery
 - provide continuity for care leavers
 - retain provision that delivers a good service through a provider that has established strong links with the council.
- 3.10 Under section 3(b) of the table at paragraph 9.5 of Part 3 of the Constitution, Strategic Directors and Operational Directors are able to extend contracts and agreements without the need for Cabinet approval:
- (a) provided that the extension would not be in breach of the Procurement Legislation.
 - (b) provided that the extension does not substantially alter the terms and conditions of the contract.
 - (c) provided that there is sufficient existing budgetary provision.
 - (d) if the extension goes beyond the period of extension provided for in the contract (if any) or is otherwise not in accordance with the extension provisions in the contract:
 - (i) in the case of any contract, agreement, deed or other transaction with a life of not more than one year (including any possible extension provided for in the contract) the extension shall not exceed a period of six months; or
 - (ii) in the case of any contract, agreement, deed or other transaction with a life of more than one year (including any possible extension

provided for in the contract) the extension shall not exceed a period of one year.

- (e) the relevant cabinet member shall be consulted prior to a decision within (d) (i) or (ii) above and may request that the decision instead be referred to them.

3.11 It is considered that you have delegated authority to agree an extension as addressing the points detailed in paragraph 3.11(a) (b) (c) (d) and (e) above:

- (a) The contract when procured specifically allowed for an extension period of two years. The recommended extension is therefore in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015;
- (b) the extension will be under the same terms and conditions of the existing contract;
- (c) there is sufficient budgetary provision for the proposed extension;
- (d) the extension does not go beyond the extension period provided for in the contract.
- (e) this requirement is not applicable for the reasons detailed in (d) above.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 In 2020-21 Brent spent a total of £6.2m on Care Leavers. The Centrepoint contract cost for both accommodation and support is £1,096.95 per week for each of the 5 high need places and £515.49 per week for each of the 15 low to medium need places.

4.2 As of March 2021 average weekly costs for Looked After Children semi-independent placements in Brent are £863.42 (52 placed) and £661.41 for Care Leavers (134 placed). This places the Centrepoint placements at a favourable rate. Whilst the high need places are higher than the average LAC unit cost paid across the borough, the young people of greatest need are placed in these beds and they would be expected to carry greater cost wherever placed. The low and medium need Centrepoint placements are lower cost than comparable alternatives.

4.3 Analysis shows an average void rate of 2% for 2020/21 which did not materially affect the average costs of Centrepoint places and means that they still represented good financial value for the borough.

4.4 The value of the contract is £689,177 per annum for 20 units. Officers will continue to work with Centrepoint to expand the number of units. If the full 60 units identified in the block contract were available, the annual value of the contract would be £1,513,520 p.a. (based on £29,028.16 per week x 52.14).

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 Officers recommend the extension of the contract for the provision of Semi-independent Living for Looked After Children aged 16+ and Care Leavers aged 18+ with Centrepoint by 24 months from 7th July 2021.
- 5.2 The value of the original contract is such that it is subject to full application of the Public Contract Regulation 2015 (PCR 2015).
- 5.3 The contract contains express provision allowing for the extension as recommended and as such extension is permitted in accordance with the PCR 2015.
- 5.4 The Strategic Director is authorised pursuant to Paragraph 9.5 of Part 3 of the Constitution to extend contracts subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 3.11 above. As set out in paragraph 3.12 above, none of these conditions preclude the Strategic Director agreeing the recommended extension.

6.0 Equality Implications

- 6.1 The proposals in this report have been subject to screening and there are no adverse equality implications.

7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

- 7.1 The Lead Member for Children’s Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care has been consulted on the approach set out in this report.

8.0 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)

- 8.1 This service is currently provided by an external contractor and there are no implications for Council staff arising from extending the contract.

Report sign off:

**Brian Grady
Operational Director,
Safeguarding, Partnerships and
Strategy**