



AGMA
ASSOCIATION OF
GREATER MANCHESTER
AUTHORITIES

GM Planning and Housing Commission

Date: **31 October 2023**

Subject: **Care Leavers Housing Action Research report and action plan**

Report of: **Mary Gogarty, Principal for Housing Strategy, Greater Manchester Combined Authority**

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Purpose of Report

To share the findings and recommendations of the GM Care Leavers Housing Access research project.

Recommendations:

Members are requested to:

1. To note the findings of this research at section 3 of the report.
2. To support the recommendations of this research at section 4 of the report.
3. To note the draft action plan at section 5 of this report, and provide input into its development.

Contact Officers

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1. Introduction and context

Housing Access workstream

- 1.1 Improving access to social housing for those who need it is a key workstream of the Greater Manchester Housing Strategy, published in 2019.¹ This workstream is set in the context of a social housing sector in Greater Manchester that has been reducing in size for many years. In 1981 there were 330,000 households in social rented homes, as opposed to 243,000 in 2021. More than 95,000 social rented homes have been purchased at a discount through Right to Buy since the 1980s, many subsequently finding their way into the private rented sector.
- 1.2 With social housing an increasingly scarce resource, the systems used to allocate the homes that become available have been subject to additional scrutiny to ensure they are fair and effective. Research into the allocation policies and processes operating around Greater Manchester was undertaken in 2018, to support the exploration of the benefits of a coordinated Greater Manchester housing allocations framework as one way to improve the accessibility and availability of social housing.
- 1.3 This research formed the basis of the development of the GM Housing Access Steering Group which met throughout 2020 and 2021. This group identified that there is much variation in policies and process related to allocations, but an area that may prove to be fruitful for greater cohesion across GM could be in access to social housing for people with a particular need, including care leavers.

Care leavers access to housing and tenancy support

- 1.4 In Greater Manchester, around 1,000 young people per year will leave local authority care, usually at the age of 18, although there are occasions where the transition from being a looked after child to a care leaver happens sooner.² Many of these young people require support to access housing and maintain a

¹ [Housing Strategy - Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/housing-strategy)

² For more details, see [Leaving care support – lawstuff.org.uk](https://www.lawstuff.org.uk/leaving-care-support)

tenancy, as well as wider support for example with access to employment or education. There are a number of ways in which local authorities and partners currently support care leavers across Greater Manchester.

- 1.5 All Greater Manchester local authorities ensure that care leavers that have been in the care of that authority receive priority for social housing. However what this means in terms of contents of allocations policies, registering with local authority housing teams, bidding on and moving into properties varies across the local authorities. This was explored during the aforementioned 2018 research project, and a breakdown of this can be found at appendix 1.
- 1.6 The Greater Manchester Care Leaver Guarantee aims to provide support and opportunities to care leavers across Greater Manchester.³ GMCA and Local Authorities have worked with a range of partners to create a series of entitlements and offers to help care leavers have happy and healthy lives and to achieve their goals. The Bee Connected app brings together these offers and incentives in one place to ensure care leavers are able to access everything they are entitled to, including free bus travel for care leavers aged 18-21.
- 1.7 The GM Housing Providers Partnership (GMHP)⁴ developed the Care Leaver Pledge in 2020, to support care leavers entering their tenancies to move forward positively in their lives.⁵ The pledge covers three themes: a range of homes, life skills and mentoring, and employment and skills. The pledge commits housing providers to offer quality, stable homes to care leavers, alongside employment and skills opportunities, mentoring, and wider support in the transition from care to living independently. Support care leavers receive includes advice on money management, repairs rights advice, and life skills.

³ [Care Leavers - Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)

⁴ [Home - GMHP \(gmhousing.co.uk\)](https://www.gmhousing.co.uk)

⁵ [Care Leavers Pledge - GMHP \(gmhousing.co.uk\)](https://www.gmhousing.co.uk)

2. Research Methodology

Research development

- 2.1 Initial discussions with stakeholders to explore housing access issues relating to care leavers began at the end of 2021, with a series of engagement sessions.
- 2.2 The GMHP Care Leavers' Group highlighted issues such as Choice Based Lettings, the need to support care leavers earlier in the bidding process, early registration of care leavers, offers around furnished tenancies, and moves out of area and local connection.
- 2.3 It was agreed that GMCA and GMHP would work with the Greater Manchester Youth Network (GMYN) to co-produce a workshop on housing access. A discussion with GMYN in March 2022 highlighted the following issues which the Care Experienced Ambassadors Group have raised in relation to housing:
 - Support - a dedicated support channel for care leavers is needed to help them to navigate the system, including peer support
 - Help with transitions from care to independent living and furnishing are key issues
 - Moving out of borough or area can be beneficial but difficult to do.
- 2.4 Further discussions with GMYN Care Experienced Ambassadors Group made it clear that a workshop would not be the right approach to working with care leavers, and led to the production of a workplan on housing. In order to ensure the workplan was catering to the needs of care leavers across GM, it was agreed that GMCA should undertake qualitative research with a wider range of care leavers in GM, in order to understand a wide range of experiences of housing access for care leavers across the conurbation.

2.5 In developing the research plan, further informal engagement with the Ambassadors Group took place through 2022, as well as with a wider group of care leavers at the GM Care Leaver event in October 2022.

Research plan and delivery

2.6 A research plan was developed by the GMCA Research Team in summer 2022, focused on qualitative research to understand the experiences of care leavers in accessing social housing. The full research plan can be found at appendix 3.

Figure 1: Research Plan summary



2.7 The literature review, completed in summer 2022, identified key themes related to housing, including the increased risk of homelessness for care experienced young people, unregulated accommodation, the need for financial support, and the overall impact that housing (or the lack thereof) has on the outcomes and life chances of care leavers.

2.8 These themes were incorporated into the research plan, along with those raised by GMYN Care Experienced Ambassadors, namely around safety and security and making a house a home.

2.9 The practitioner focus group to support the mapping of the ideal pathway took place in January 2023, with professionals from housing and leaving care teams represented, as well as housing strategy professionals, and those working on specific projects, such as the House Project and the GM Youth Homelessness Pathfinder. Following this, a discussion guide based on the pathway identified was developed to work through with care leaver focus group participants.

- 2.10 For the project to capture primary research four semi-structured focus groups were employed, which involved care leavers and care experienced young people, and supporting practitioners. It was determined, following feedback from care leavers, that these focus groups would be most effective as in-person sessions. It was also agreed that the research would look to connect in with existing groups with relationships with care leavers, for example the GM Youth Network and GM Participation Network Group. The focus groups included 21 care leaver participants, and a full list of engagement sessions can be found at appendix 2.
- 2.11 The delivery of these sessions was built around three core themes, which were designed to best capture the journey for young people accessing social housing in Greater Manchester: 1. Pre-Application Process; 2. Bidding and 3. Moving In/ Starting Tenancy. The design was such that the focus groups were flexible enough to capture the input from participants, but also provided initial prompts to help stimulate discussion.
- 2.12 Both practitioners and care leavers were provided with consent forms made available before the sessions, which clarified how their contributions would be used in the research, and giving participants the option to decline to take part if they were not happy with this. Throughout the session, insights and themes were recorded through note taking, and have been developed into the findings and recommendations of this project. No identifiable information was included as part of this project, which was again outlined as part of the consent for participants, and the wider ethics process underpinning this research.

3. Findings

- 3.1 The research project has, through focus groups and participant engagement, sought to better understand the current housing access processes across Greater Manchester. The qualitative approach has drawn together examples of positive and effective approaches, whilst acknowledging the obstacles that exist currently within the system, and looking at the opportunities to overcome these.
- 3.2 It should be stressed that these findings are designed to be read with the understanding of the context laid out above: access to housing in GM is an area of challenge, for care leavers and beyond, which is far outside the control of local authorities and reflects national pressures. Therefore, this research is acutely aware of the pressure which is already on services and teams to deliver positive outcomes for care leavers and has sought to frame these findings accordingly.
- 3.3 When discussing with care leavers their experiences of accessing housing, and broadly their experience of the process holistically, one of the continuously emerging insights was the disparity of the offer between localities across the city-region. This element was only further underlined through the research's engagement in pan-GM groups, as for example was observed through the Greater Manchester Participation Network (GMPN). Participants highlighted the relative 'unfairness' of the differing levels of support offered by both local authorities and housing providers in terms of the post-tenancy offer. The benefit of having a consistent approach across GM, which would seek to close this level of disparity, was repeatedly stressed throughout consultation.
- 3.4 In part, this research project has sought to understand what an 'ideal' pathway for care leavers would look like, and how this would operate in the context of Greater Manchester. The research developed a thematic summary of the core stages of this pathway.

Figure 2: The ideal pathway through the housing system



3.5 Discussions around these core areas highlighted a series of strong examples of where good practice was already taking place across GM. Broadly however, these findings do suggest that whilst there remain challenges for care leavers, there are approaches which participants cited as successful, and catered for the level of flexibility and independence some were striving for.

3.6 Specific examples of good practice highlighted in the ideal pathway include:

Application Stage

- Starting applications at the age of 16 or 17, ready to 'go live' at 18
- Gathering documents and ID ready for application before the age of 18
- Named officer that works with care leavers through whole process
- Support with budgeting, roles and responsibilities of tenancies
- Managing care leavers' expectations and showing them the reality of the process (e.g. sharing photographs of 'ready to let' properties)

Getting ready to move in and early tenancy support

- Benchmarking furniture packages/ other offers from local authorities and housing providers
- Keeping carpets/ curtains from previous lets where possible

- Peer support models for care leavers
- Regular check ins or visits from Personal Advisors (lead practitioners for care leavers, replacing social workers in that role)
- Strong housing officer relationship
- Support in tenancy from housing providers, with a flag for care leaver on the tenancy
- Neighbourhood support models, including check ins from housing officers and peer support groups
- Providing Ring doorbells to support care leavers to feel safe in their home

3.7 However, whilst the research did find real positives in current processes, there were also observable barriers. Participants repeatedly raised the obstacle of communication with services: discussions between housing providers, children's services and housing colleagues lead to care leavers having to repeat themselves, whilst also having the additional negative impact of leaving them unaware of progress in the application, bidding and move in process.

3.8 The pressure that teams, and therefore by extension care leavers themselves, were being placed under to expedite the process to ensure care leavers are moved to properties quickly was seen as having a negative impact. Participants highlighted this as creating anxiety and left some feeling that their voice wasn't being heard throughout the process and left them feeling disenfranchised.

3.9 Underlining these points was that of the importance of building relationships between care leavers and practitioners. Throughout the research, reference was made by care leavers and practitioners to the significance of feeling comfortable with practitioners and the move away from face-to-face contact by housing providers, accelerated by the pandemic, had further damaged this, which is a clear barrier to providing the best support in this area.

- 3.10 Housing and leaving care team professionals raised the issue of difficulties of care leavers moving between local authority areas in Greater Manchester. All of the authorities give priority to care leavers from their own borough, however some practitioners raised examples of care leavers that due to out of area placements were not familiar with their 'home' borough when looking to move to their own accommodation. Additionally, some practitioners raised instances of safeguarding concerns regarding care leavers living in their home borough.
- 3.11 In addition, as part of this research project focus groups were undertaken with care leavers who would not be considered as part of the pathway outlined above, and therefore there were findings linked to some of the experiences of other parallel projects, which raised wider points regarding access to housing.
- 3.12 Examples of this came through the House Project providing direct social housing lettings, an approach underpinned through strong and robust relationships between local authorities and Housing Providers.
- 3.13 The research also included care leavers that are part of the GM Youth Homelessness Pathfinder. Some of their experiences were outside of the 'ideal' pathway that was developed through the research (i.e. they did not access rehousing pathways that are set up for those leaving care for the first time, usually at age 18), and so these care leavers may be out of scope of some of the recommendations of this report, given their acute needs. However, these discussions provided useful insights, such as that as care leavers got older and lost touch with leaving care teams it became difficult for them to rejoin a housing pathway, and as a result they had found themselves homeless or at risk of homelessness.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Supporting the housing system to implement the ideal pathway for care leavers

The ideal pathway identified above is largely based on existing good practice taking place throughout GM, often in terms of processes that councils and housing providers have implemented, rather than the detailed allocations policies themselves.

It is therefore suggested that peer learning and sharing of best practice be used to support the implementation of good practice where possible. For example, this could be in adjusting the use of existing resource within teams, building soft skills, improving communication between leaving care teams, housing teams and care leavers themselves, and engagement with young people. This would help to address the disparity of outcomes for care leavers via processes rather than through time consuming policy changes.

4.2 Working with care leavers to understand the key areas of consistency to tackle the disparity between boroughs

This research report has highlighted that there are areas of disparity between the experiences and offer for care leavers in GM boroughs. Utilising the links built through this research project, it is recommended that engagement continues with care leavers to understand the areas of the housing access experience that would most benefit from consistency across GM. This links to the recommendation above in that the review of the GMHP Care Leaver Pledge will include consultation with care leavers on what is important to them.

4.3 Scoping out of borough moves for care leavers in certain circumstances

Moving between GM boroughs was raised as a barrier by professionals that were engaged in the research. It is recommended that work be done to scope the possibility of a protocol to facilitate moves between Greater Manchester

boroughs for those who need to move. Moves to and from boroughs outside of GM would not be in scope of this exercise, and it is envisaged that any protocol would be utilised on a case-by-case basis, to facilitate the best outcomes for the individual care leaver.

It is recommended that a group of housing and leaving care professionals meet as a task and finish group to work through the implications of such a protocol, reporting back to the Care Leaver Trust Board, GM Strategic Housing Group, GM Allocations Network and others in due course.

4.4 Supporting and informing the GMHP review of the Care Leaver Pledge

The themes covered by the Care Leaver Pledge were raised as issues for care leavers throughout the research, in particular in terms of accessing a range of homes, and support with life skills and mentoring. GMHP have committed to a review of the Care Leaver Pledges, and the findings from this research will feed into the review process, to ensure that the best outcomes for care leavers are achieved. GMHP are holding a consultation session with care leavers in September 2022 to progress the review.

4.5 Training for housing professionals around stigma and judgement

Engagement with the GM Youth Network led to the development of a housing workplan, which included a theme of training for housing professionals on overcoming stigma and judgement. The GM Youth Network Care Experienced Ambassadors have previously developed training around stigma and judgement for professionals working in other sectors, and it is recommended that GMCA and GMHP co-produce housing specific training with GMYN and support the roll out of this across teams within housing providers and local authorities.

4.6 Explore further work with Care Leavers on homelessness programmes and older care leavers

As discussed in the findings section, there are some care leavers that are not catered for through the 'traditional' or 'ideal' housing pathway developed through this project, in particular older care leavers. It is recommended that further work is explored with the GM Youth Homelessness Pathfinder to unpick the specific issues relating to older care leavers and look to recommend alternative pathways and promote best practice across GM.

5. Action plan

- 5.1 Based on the recommendations in this report, the following draft action plan has been developed to outline initial activity to move forward with the care leavers housing access project, subject to input from partners.
- 5.2 This action plan covers the period September 2023 to March 2024, to reflect the need to develop the project further. More scoping is required to assign leads, timescales and outcomes to the activity, however this draft shows the breadth of work and partners involved in taking this project forward.

Table 1: Care Leaver housing access action plan, September 2023- March 2024

| Recommendation | Activity | Partners involved |
|--|--|---|
| 1. Supporting the housing system to implement the ideal pathway for care leavers | Disseminate care leaver housing access research to groups across system | GMCA |
| 1. Supporting the housing system to implement the ideal pathway for care leavers | Work with existing groups to identify mechanisms to share best practice | - GM Youth Network (GMYN) Care Experienced Forum - GM Housing Providers (GMHP) Care Leaver Group |
| 2. Working with care leavers to understand the key areas of consistency to tackle the disparity between boroughs | Continue engagement with GM Participation Network, GM Youth Network Ambassadors and local care leaver groups to understand their priority areas for action-using recommendations and GMYN work plan themes (accessing information, accessing support, budgeting, training and development for professionals) as a starting point | GMCA |
| 2. Working with care leavers to understand the key areas of consistency to tackle the disparity between boroughs | Review of GMYN Care Leaver Ambassador workplan to ensure alignment with research recommendations | - GMCA - GMYN Care Leaver Ambassador Group |

| Recommendation | Activity | Partners involved |
|---|---|--|
| 3. Scoping out of borough moves for care leavers in certain circumstances | Call out to professionals across LA housing and children's services teams, GMHP, other programmes to join task and finish group to develop proposals | GMCA |
| 3. Scoping out of borough moves for care leavers in certain circumstances | Undertake a desktop exercise to establish the scale of the issue (i.e. how many care leavers have wanted/made out of borough moves, from and to where) to inform approach | Task and Finish Group |
| 3. Scoping out of borough moves for care leavers in certain circumstances | Explore case studies where OOB moves have been made (e.g. on GM House Project) and where young people may need to use to understand the best approaches to use in these circumstances | Task and Finish Group |
| 4. Supporting and informing the GMHP review of the Care Leaver Pledge | GMHP Care Leaver Pledge review session taking place 27th September- support GMHP | - GMHP - GMCA |
| 5. Training and development for housing professionals | Work with GMYN Care Leaver Ambassadors to tailor existing training that has been developed for delivery to housing professionals | - GMCA - GMYN |
| 5. Training and development for housing professionals | Support the organisation and delivery of training, including identifying any resource needed | - GMYN - GMHP - GMCA |
| 6. Explore further work with Care Leavers on homelessness programmes and older care leavers | Engage with GM Youth Homelessness Pathfinder colleagues to develop plan to explore issues specific to this cohort of care leavers | - GMCA - GM Youth Homelessness Pathfinder |

Annex A

Summary of banding for care leavers across GM Allocations Policies

| Local Authority | Summary of banding | Date of policy or amended policy |
|-------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Bolton ⁶ | High/urgent need band: Care leaves up to age 21. Continued support/involvement being actively promoted by Leave Care Team. Young person is a suitable tenant Pathway plans made available by LCT | Jul-18 |
| Bury ⁷ | | |
| Manchester ⁸ | Band 1: reasonable preference and additional preference Applicants must be a former “Relevant Child” as defined by the Children Leaving Care Act 2002 and be a young person at risk of homelessness. The evidence to support this award will be provided by the council’s leaving care service and will consist of confirmation that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The care leaver is ready to move to independent settled housing and is genuinely prepared for a move to independent living. - The care leaver possesses the life skills to manage a tenancy including managing a rent account. - The care leaver has either long term or medium term tenancy support arranged, as required. - Ongoing support needs have been assessed and, where appropriate, a support plan is in place | Feb-23 |
| Oldham ⁹ | Band 1: Reasonable Preference Plus Additional Preference The criteria for an award of Reasonable Preference include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A care leaver is ready to move to independent settled housing and is genuinely prepared for a move to independent living - They possess the life skills necessary to manage a tenancy, including managing a rent account - They need at least a medium term support package - The support needs have been assessed and the support package is in place - The applicant’s vulnerability is such that accommodation in the private rented sector would through its short term nature have a detrimental effect on their vulnerability | Apr-21 |
| Rochdale ¹⁰ | Band A: 16/17 owed duty and leaving care Band A: 18-21 homeless and 'former relevant child' | Apr-18 |

⁶ [Microsoft Word - HfB_AllocationLettingPolicy_May2014_updated_27July18 \(bolton.gov.uk\)](#)

⁷ [Housing Allocation policy - Bury Council](#)

⁸ [Our rehousing rules: the allocations scheme | Rehousing policy | Manchester City Council](#)

⁹ [Oldham Allocations Scheme February 2019 \(amended April 2021\) | Oldham Council](#)

¹⁰ [Housing Allocation Policy | Rochdale Borough Council](#)

| Local Authority | Summary of banding | Date of policy or amended policy |
|-------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Salford ¹¹ | General housing needs category; care leavers being supported by the Next Steps team may be made a direct offer of accommodation. The council seeks agreement from RPs to exclude care leavers from Local Lettings Policies | Mar-19 |
| Stockport ¹² | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •20 housing need points- aged under 25 having been looked after child and in urgent housing need •additional preference added to applicants under 25 looked after and have 25 housing need points or more | Jan-21 |
| Tameside ¹³ | Band 2: Care leavers who have been assessed by the council's Leaving Care Team as being ready to move into an independent tenancy and who have a support package in place to assist their transition. | Aug-13 |
| Trafford ¹⁴ | <p>Band 1: Applicants are awarded this category in accordance with protocols between Trafford Council's Children, Families & Wellbeing (CFW) Service and HOST.</p> <p>Applicants must have vulnerability and an urgent housing need that is best met by the provision of long term settled housing. All other cases will not be owed reasonable preference under this category and will be expected to be assisted by the CFW with support from HOST to move on to private rented sector or other suitable accommodation.</p> <p>The criteria for an award of reasonable preference will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A care leaver is ready to move to independent settled housing and is genuinely prepared for a move to independent living. - They possess the life skills to manage a tenancy including managing a rent account. - The care leaver is in need of either a long term or medium term tenancy support. - That support package has been assessed and is in place. - Their needs mean accommodation in the private rented sector would have a detrimental effect on their transition to independent living. | 2018 |
| Wigan ¹⁵ | Group A- have been 'looked after' by Wigan Council, due to leave their care home or foster home. Rehousing and support plan may be agreed with the young person, and may include stay in supported accommodation. Application pending until Care Leavers Team confirm young person is ready for independent living. May be retained for up to 12 months | Nov-13 |

¹¹ [Salfords Allocations Policy 2019.pdf](#)

¹² [smbc-allocations-policy-2021.pdf \(stockporthomes.org\)](#)

¹³ [TamesideHousingAllocationScheme.pdf](#)

¹⁴ [Housing-Allocation-Policy.pdf \(trafford.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁵ [Allocations policy \(wigan.gov.uk\)](#)

Annex B

List of engagement sessions for the care leaver housing access project

Research development and informal engagement

- GMHP Care Leavers group, 10th November 2021 - online
- GMYN Care Experienced Ambassadors Group, 9th March 2022, 4th May 2022, 29th June 2022 (online), 30th November 2022
- Care Leaver Event, 27th October 2022, MMU

Semi-structured focus groups

- Professionals focus group, 20th January 2023, GMCA offices
- GM Care Leaver Participation Network, 21st February 2023, Manchester Town Hall
- GM Youth Homelessness Pathfinder Project, 5th April 2023, 31st May 2023
- House Project Greater Manchester, 17th May 2023

Annex C

GM Care Leavers Research Plan

Care Leavers: Pathways and Experiences in accessing housing across Greater Manchester

Background

Care leavers are a priority group for social housing and the local authority as corporate parent has a responsibility to provide young people social housing. Care leavers are disproportionately represented in the homeless population and in criminal justice. This research seeks to understand the experiences of care leavers accessing social housing across Greater Manchester. The work develops the housing strategy housing access work and will provide evidence for those housing care-experienced young people on where there is best practice and areas for improvement. A mixed methods research approach will be undertaken with the majority of the research through focus groups and discussion.

We will speak to practitioners, partners and care experienced young people to understand what should happen (the ideal housing pathway) and what happens in practice. We will seek to understand the experiences of those who access a variety of housing forms including social housing, supported housing and private housing. The primary focus will be on accessing general needs social housing.

Our understanding of the pathway will be segmented into three core themes related to young people's journeys when accessing social housing: 1. Pre-Application Process; 2. Bidding and 3. Moving In/ Starting Tenancy. We want to take advantage of existing groups to build upon already developed relationships such as the GM Youth Network and GM Participation Network Group as examples.

Research Aims

The purpose of this project is to understand the ideal pathway for care leavers, across Greater Manchester, for accessing social housing and being supported/prepared to live independently. To develop this level of understanding, we aim to create as holistic a view as possible: bringing together the perspectives of practitioners, partners, and service users with regards to the housing pathways as exist currently, and what opportunities exist for improvements and the development of best practice across the city-wide region.

Through developing an understanding as to how the ideal pathway should operate, we also wish to understand how this compares to the lived experiences of young people, to better inform how the system operates. We want to provide the opportunity for open, honest conversations which illustrate some of the challenges and successes which are currently taking place across GM, and potentially gauge where sharing of best practice can lead to improvements in outcomes for care leavers.

While there is an acknowledgment that the changes we will recommend may not wholly meet the concerns of the current cohort, we believe that this insight will be invaluable in driving forward improvements within the system.

Research Objectives

- Build upon national literature with an enhanced understanding of the current GM picture in relation to care leavers' housing access.
- Provide stakeholders including children's social care teams, Housing Strategy teams, housing allocations teams, Registered Providers of social housing (RPs) with a rounded view on the experience of care leavers accessing housing.
- Capture a summary of what care leavers highlight as important elements, both in terms of access to social housing, and in relation to wider outcomes.
- Develop a proposed 'ideal pathway' tool that factors in recommendations and insights from focus groups.

- Convert research findings into a series of practical recommendations to housing, children's social care and other stakeholders, at a strategic level, to inform potential improvements within the current system.

Research plan/activities

| Activity | Detail/ Breakdown | Estimated |
|---|--|---------------|
| Literature review | Review of previous national research undertaken on experiences of care experienced young people accessing housing. | Jul-22 |
| IG process | Complete IG process and get sign off via Dapian | Aug-22 |
| Review GM housing provider care leaver pledge | Review and summarise how the GMHP Care Leavers Pledge operates currently, and what it means for young people and care leavers. | Sep-22 |
| Ethics process | Undertake and sign off ethics process with David Ottiwell | Sep-22 |
| Bee Connected Focus Group - Initial Stages of mapping pathway | Discussion with GM social workers to being the process of initially mapping core aspects of the ideal pathway for care experienced young people accessing housing. This work will form the initial scoping of the pathway which will be used to set out the subsequent focus groups to test what should happen. Opportunity to undertake this as part of the GM Bee Connected Network Event in late October. | Oct-22 |
| Identify focus group participants | Identify focus group participants - care experienced young people, social workers, Personal Assistants, and housing providers. | Dec-22 |
| Focus group discussion guide | Develop a discussion guide for each focus group | Dec-22 |
| Practitioner focus group | Undertake focus groups with practitioners | Jan-23 |
| Mapping ideal pathway to access housing | As part of the initial practitioners focus group, and through developing the initial insights from the Bee Connected Focus Group session, map out overarching themes linked to the 'ideal pathway' for accessing housing. Draw a destination between current best practice, and aspiration aims/ areas for development, which can feed into the development of an illustrative 'tool'. | Jan-23 |
| Review of housing allocation policies concerning care | Review the 10 GM housing allocation policies approach to care experienced young people (Desktop Research) | Feb-23 |

| Activity | Detail/ Breakdown | Estimated |
|---|--|---------------|
| experienced young people | | |
| Develop a draft 'ideal pathway' tool. | The development, based on initial discussions and early flagged priorities, to act as an illustration on the potential 'ideal pathway', which can act as an early gauge of direction of travel, and a jumping off point for further discussion. | Feb-23 |
| Care experienced young people focus groups | Aim for 20 research participants – undertake 2 x focus groups with care experienced young people. Focus group to look at experience of accessing housing, use 'ideal pathway' to structure the discussion and understand whether this pathway is followed and the experiences at each point. | Feb-23 |
| GM Care Leaver Delivery Group focus group discussion | Opportunity to undertake focus groups with practitioners and young people and care leavers, due to additional engagement from the GM Participation Network. | Mar-23 |
| Develop Draft summary reports to be provided to GM Strategic boards to update on progress and next steps. | Provide indicative findings for our live piece of research work to partner boards to inform of progress, and canvass wider viewpoints from across partners | Mar-23 |

Roles and Responsibilities

Mary Gogarty – Lead Policy and Project Lead

Jack Bennett – Lead Analyst, Research Team, support for research project.

Lucy Woodbine – Principal, Research Team, Information Governance and Policy support.

David Ottiwell – Provide support for ethics process covering the Research Team.

Outputs and Dissemination Plan

It is planned that all research will be written up in a report format, approx. **6-7** pages in length. A short (1-2 page) Executive Summary will also be produced to ensure the high-level findings and recommendations are available in an accessible format for stakeholders.

There are multiple interested stakeholders for this research, and the dissemination planning needs to reflect this. Provisionally, the following groups have been identified for the purposes of sharing the report's findings and recommendations:

- **GM Strategic Housing Group** – as the main commissioner of the research, and owner of the outputs
- **GM Allocations Network** – to consider specific aspects of operational practice / associated recommendations.
- **GM Care Leaver Programme Delivery Group** – to connect into the governance of the GM Children and Young People programme, Stewart Tod to facilitate.
- **GM Youth Network** – a housing provider-led network, to ensure that care-experienced service users receive feedback on the research and its findings.
- **GM Participation Network Group** – a group whom we will undertake a focus group session with, who have previously expressed interest in feeding into some of the insights of the project.
- **GM Better Outcomes Partnership** – To support the session with young people/ care leavers, with their focus on the number of care leavers accessing homelessness provision, as part of the Better Outcomes Partnership project.