

Business Needs and Strategic Alignment

- 1.0 There are clear business needs and strategic alignment for implementing this strategy.
- 1.1 The council has statutory duties and responsibilities concerning individuals aged 16-25, as mandated by a range of laws, including but not limited to the Homelessness Reduction Act, Children Act 1989 (as amended), Housing Act 1996, Supported Accommodation Regulations 2023, Equality Act 2010, Human Rights Act 1998, Mental Health Act 1983, and Care Act 2014. Additional relevant legislation includes the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999, Immigration Act 2020, and Education Act 1996. Also, as part of the Local Government Act 1999 the council is required to achieve best value for their communities. This is particularly critical for young vulnerable people who often face significant inequalities.
- 1.2 The council's vision for 2030 is a fairer Islington where everyone thrives, regardless of background. However, data shows significant disparities for these vulnerable groups, i.e.:
 - Only 10% of care leavers achieve 5 good GCSEs compared to the national average of 40%
 - 41% of care leavers are NEET (not in education, employment, or training) at 19-21 compared to the national average of 10%
 - 60% of care leavers experience mental health issues
 - Care leavers are 4-5 times more likely to attempt suicide compared to their peers
 - Estimates suggest that around 25% of care leavers experience homelessness at some point in their lives
 - Care leavers are overrepresented in the criminal justice system, with estimates suggesting they are 7-10 times more likely to be incarcerated compared to their peers.
- 1.3 Islington's Children's Services needs 96 new supported housing units due to a high number of out-of-borough placements for care-experienced youth (aged 16-25). In addition, 355 out of 553 care-experienced youth are currently placed outside the borough on spot arrangements. This reliance on external spot placements disrupts their support networks and is costly for the council.
- 1.4 A review of the current contract and engagement with key stakeholders identified several challenges. The current supported housing provision falls short in meeting future demand and regulatory requirements, struggles with transitioning young people to independence, and lacks sufficient specialised support for specific needs. This lack of suitable options, combined with limited "step-down" and "move-on" housing, forces expensive "spot purchases" for temporary accommodation, straining budgets. Delays in processing asylum claims further extend the support needed. Additionally, concerns exist regarding the quality and condition of some supported housing properties. Finally, limited coordination between commissioned public health services, housing, and other adult and children's services hinders holistic support for young people, leading to missed opportunities for early intervention, prevention, and coordinated support.
- 1.5 Investing in supported housing units for vulnerable young people is a strategic approach that addresses multiple needs. It fulfils the council's duty to provide essential support, eliminates inefficient placements, and promotes a more prosperous Islington by empowering young people towards self-sufficiency. This targeted support tackles inequalities and ensures equal opportunities, building a fairer community for all.