

New children's home for Richmond upon Thames

Currently, there are around 120 children from Richmond upon Thames in the care of the Council. That means that the Council are the 'Corporate Parent' and are responsible for their safety and wellbeing.

Foster care

Children enter the foster care system for many reasons. Sadly, some have been victims of physical or sexual abuse, neglect, medical neglect, abandonment, or have suffered the death of a family member.

We are able to find suitable foster families in the local community for many children in our care. However, fostering is not appropriate for some young people. For those children, we look at children's home placements.

Children's homes

Currently there are no children's homes in the borough. This means that children are placed out of borough - sometimes as far afield as Cumbria. They are separated from their family and friends, and have to move school, causing further disruption in their lives.

We believe that this is not in the best interests of many of the children and staying in the community they are familiar with will help them rebuild their lives.

The Council's responsibility

Every member and employee of the local authority has the statutory responsibility to act as a 'Corporate Parent' for these children. Acting in the same way that a good parent would act.

We have a moral and legal responsibility to enable the children in our care to experience happy and fulfilling lives. Every good parent wants the best for their child, to enable them to be healthy, happy, do well at school, and to enjoy good relationships with others.

Like all parents, we want our children to enjoy leisure activities, have hobbies and interests, and to grow towards adulthood equipped to lead independent and successful lives.



105 Queen's Road, Teddington

Children in Care in Richmond upon Thames

The below are example profiles of children who are in the care system. They are not local children, but many of the reasons they are in care are relevant in Richmond upon Thames

Dhillion

A 14 year old who is studying for his GCSEs at a local secondary school. Dhillion had been suffering from neglect within the home of his birth family, and was taken into care after his parent's drug and alcohol addiction began to lead to frequent instances of domestic violence, many of which he witnessed. He is now in a home where not only is he safe, but the support of two exemplary adult role models is helping him improve his own behaviour.

Laura

A 16 year old girl who had been physically abused by her father. Laura's experiences have caused her to be critical of others and she struggles with trust and respect. She has been successfully placed in a home where she is provided with the love, understanding and support she needs to complete her studies at a local college.

Callum and Chloe

Fifteen year old siblings who share a very close, loving and supportive relationship. Their mother was a single parent who tragically died after a battle with cancer three years ago. Callum and Chloe had no other family who lived locally, and during their mother's illness they were regularly left to care for themselves, often relying on each other for the love and support they needed during that difficult time. Their grandparents were too frail to look after them after their mother died, and so they were taken into care.

Richmond Children in Care Council

Achieving for Children (AfC) supports the Richmond and Kingston Children in Care Council which is the main mechanism for young people who are looked after by the local authority to have their voices heard and issues recognised.

The Council (CiCC) meets on a regular basis to discuss and plan events and projects, as well as undertakes peer research into young people's issues. The young people meet quarterly with AfC directors, lead elected members, senior managers and foster carers to monitor the progress of support for children in care in both boroughs.

They have three objectives

- To understand, raise awareness of, and challenge the stigma around mental health issues for young people in care.
- To increase the number of young people involved in the Children in Care Council (CICC) by working together to build relationships with, as well as promote the CICC to young people and foster carers.
- CICC will support the promotion of education choices through better sharing and publicising of information.

Who are the Council?



William Cole - Chair of the Children in Care Council

My role in the Children in Care Council is to organise meetings and ensure they run according to plan. I also prepare and present what the CiCC does at various meetings. For example the Corporate Parenting Panel and managers meetings.

I work with young people with disabilities and I also work as an apprentice bricklayer. I listen to what people say and deliver their views to managers and staff members alike. My pet hate is when people say something and they are not listened to or even allowed to talk. I like to stand by a motto where everyone has the right to talk and the right to an opinion.

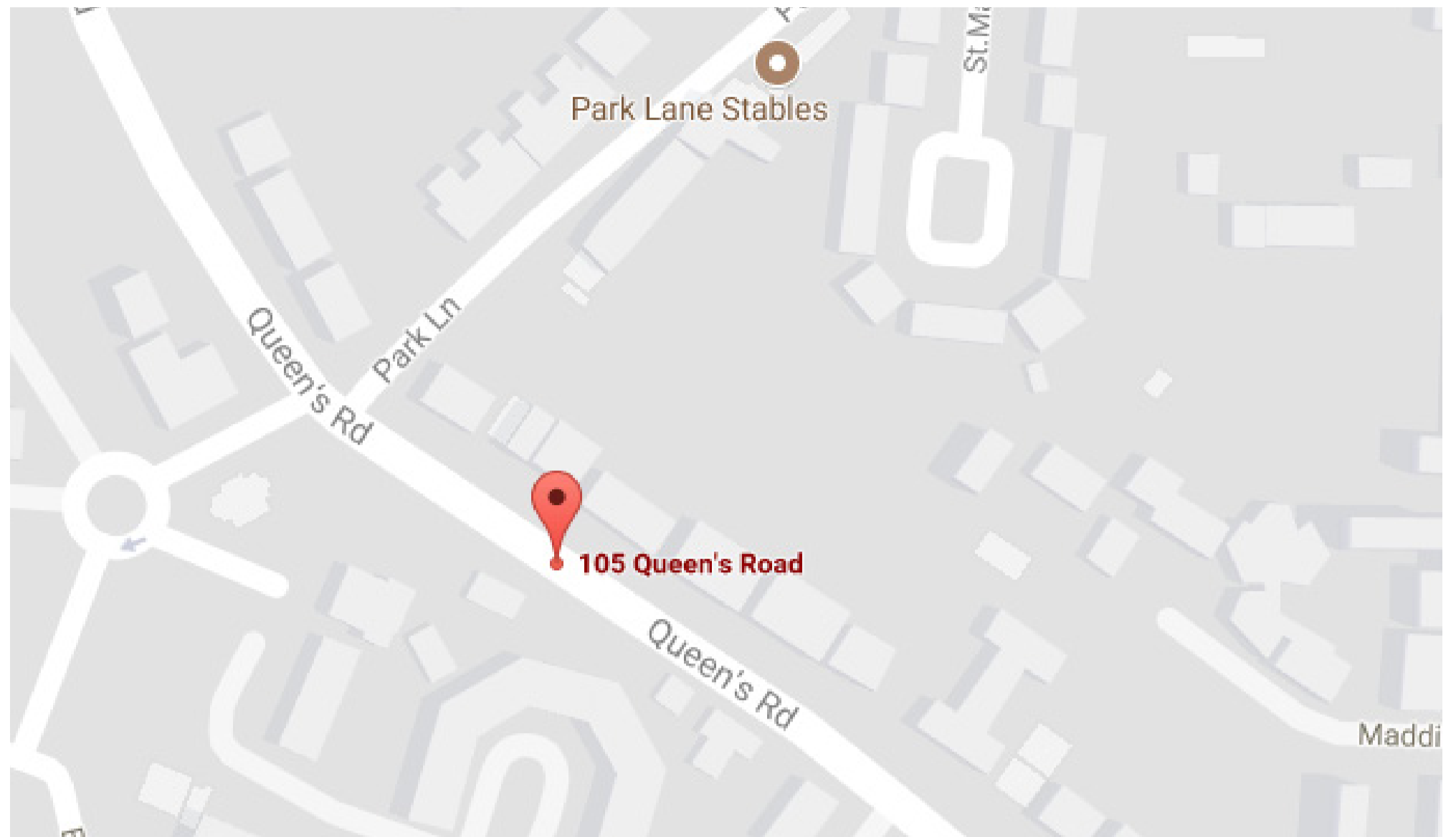


Tim Blackburn - Deputy Chair of the Children in Care Council

My role is to work with all members of the Council to find out what young people care about and what's important to them. I make sure that Social Workers and managers listen to young people in care. My passion is making music. My pet-hate are those who prejudice young people in care.

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The proposal



It is proposed to build the new children's home at 105 Queen's Road in Teddington. This is the site of a bungalow which until recently was owned by Richmond Housing Partnership (RHP). It has been empty for several years and is in a bad condition.

About the new home

It is proposed to build a new property on the site. This will involve a planning application which would be submitted later this year.

Subject to permissions (including planning), it is hoped that the home would open in 2019.

The new property will have six bedrooms - bedrooms for five children and one room for staff accommodation.

Decision making process

No decision has been made on the location of the home.

An initial report was submitted to Cabinet in November 2016 proposing to build the home elsewhere in the borough. However, following further feasibility work, this location will not deliver the home in time, and on the 20 July, Cabinet considered new proposals for the Queen's Road site.

A decision was not made at the meeting. It was delegated to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People (Cllr Susan Chappell) and the Cabinet Member for Environment, Business and Community (Cllr Pamela Fleming) following engagement with the community.

A decision is expected later in September.



Community involvement

Many members of the local community have already said that they would like to play an active role in supporting the young people living in the home, should it be established. People have cited a desire to support those who have had a less fortunate start to their lives than themselves.

The views and ideas of the community can help shape the proposals. As the proposal progresses, a range of involvement is possible, including mentoring young people, supporting with educational study outside of school, and acting as a positive adult role model.

To be added to the growing database of people in the community who would like to be involved please [contact info@achievingforchildren.org.uk](mailto:info@achievingforchildren.org.uk).

105 Queen's Road, Teddington

Why this site?

Ownership of the property in Queen's Road transferred to Richmond Housing Partnership in 2000 as part of Richmond Council's transfer of housing stock. The Council repurchased the property on 20 June 2017.

Reasons for choosing this property

The proposal to open a local children's home for Richmond upon Thames was discussed at the Scrutiny Review Panel on 12 September 2016, the minutes of which were published within the public reports pack for the Residential Children's Home item considered at Cabinet on 17 November 2016. The three options considered were:

1. Use an existing council building
2. Build on council-owned land
3. Buy a house not currently owned by the council

Buying a house was deemed to be poor value for money compared to building a new property on council-owned land. Not only would stamp duty tax be significant, but the properties exactly matching the requirements of the home are rare and might need additional adaptations after purchase.

The Council originally decided that building the home on the Mereway site was the preferred option. However, following a review, it became apparent that the timescales for delivering this option were too long and other options were explored.

Although not owned by the Council, it had an option to acquire it and a children's home could be delivered on this site within the required timescale.

The property at 105 Queens Road can be delivered more quickly than the Mereway site. There are a number of reasons for this, including Mereway presenting greater planning challenges and a more complicated procurement and construction because the site would need to support two simultaneous developments - new housing and the children's home.

The costs of construction on either Mereway or 105 Queens Road are similar as are the sites' values.

Site suitability

The Council is trying to create a loving home environment for some of the borough's most vulnerable children. So, like any other family home, we need enough bedrooms, a large living room and kitchen, bathrooms and outdoor space. The property needs to have good transport links so children can get to school. And, as with any other property purchase, the site needs to be affordable. There are two key issues in the assessment of location suitability, namely access to local services and safeguarding concerns.

Access to local services

The Department for Education specify that location assessments for children's homes should "take into account any positive features in a local community that would offer benefits to children living in a children's home. For example, assessments could include evidence about opportunities for children to participate in leisure, sporting or cultural activities, or links with services that could support the child's ethnic or religious identity".

Examples of these in the vicinity of 105 Queen's Road include:

- Landmark Arts Centre
- Bushy Park - sport
- The Thames at Teddington
- National Physics Laboratory Sports Club
- Hampton Pool
- Scouts and Air Scouts Groups
- Teddington Sports Centre
- Park Lane Stables

Safeguarding considerations

Location assessments must also consider risks to the children of locating a children's home in a certain area. The area around 105 Queen's Road has been assessed as being acceptable also from this perspective.

The time needed to open the home is also a factor when considering the site. The Council wishes to open the children's home as quickly as possible, so that the quality of experience and care being provided for this cohort of children can be improved as quickly as possible. Ultimately, even if the lead Cabinet Members approve the proposal, both the planning process and the Ofsted children's home registration process will judge whether this site is suitable for a home of this size and nature.

Lane at the back of the property

The lane accessed from St Mary's Avenue does not have a direct boundary with the garden of 105 Queen's Road, but does with more than 15 other properties. We do not believe that the lane is a prohibitive issue. The garden of 105 Queen's Road would be well-maintained, fenced and secured in the same way as most other gardens in the area.

Costs

The site's private sale value is estimated to be £750,000 and estimated development costs are £985,000. If it were sold for affordable housing, the value would be significantly less.

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Management of the children's home

The site and building would remain under the ownership of Richmond Council, and would be operated by Achieving for Children (AfC) under a license or lease arrangement. Achieving for Children is a social enterprise company created by the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and Richmond Council. They were recently joined by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The company provides children's services across all three boroughs.

Staffing

All staff would be committed and well trained residential children's home professionals. The home would be registered and monitored by Ofsted.

The Department for Education (Government) stipulates that the registered manager has a Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Residential Childcare or equivalent and staff have a Level 3 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Residential Childcare or equivalent. Some staff may have additional qualifications, for example in social and youth work and education.

Experience of running children's homes

Although no children's homes currently exist in Richmond upon Thames, many people currently employed by AfC have experience of working within the children's residential care sector. The Director of Children's Services and the Director for Children's Social Care have experience of working in a children's residential facility and of inspecting children's residential care facilities on behalf of a local authority respectively.

Staff supervision

If children are in residence there would be at least two residential care staff, working shift patterns to provide 24 hour coverage. Other adult professionals would also visit, for example, a social worker might visit a child after school.

Behaviour and supervision

As the Corporate Parent, it is the collective responsibility of the Council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies to support the children and young people, ensuring they are responsible for their own behaviour.

Daily routines

The home will function in a very similar fashion to other family homes in Teddington, apart from the fact that adults will be staff rather than biological or step parents of the children. Meals will be prepared and eaten together, evenings will include collective television watching, and the adults will encourage the children to have breakfast before school, do their homework and go to bed on time.

At weekends and in school holidays their routines would be different and again reflect the movements of a typical teenager - leaving the property to visit friends, attend clubs, etc and returning to the house to sleep.

Shopping and cooking

Managing food would be the responsibility of staff, although like any home, the children would be encouraged to play an active role in this, whether this would be by visiting shops or booking online deliveries. Meals would be prepared by any of staff members with broader responsibilities, a dedicated cook, or the children themselves.

Leisure activities and school holidays

During all school holidays, and indeed, at weekends, a range of activities would be arranged. In the summer holidays, this would include an extended trip away from the home for example for two weeks for the children accompanied by staff.

Visits to residents

Friends and family of the children and young people would also visit the home from time to time. The travel plan/traffic impact of the home would be a key aspect of the planning application should the proposal progress, and visits would be proactively managed to prevent excessive peaks in visitor numbers at any one time.

Layout of the house

The interior of the children's home will closely resemble the interior of other detached family houses of a similar size in Teddington - there would be bedrooms, a kitchen/diner, living area and bathrooms.

Transport

It is very unlikely that any children would have cars, although theoretically possible if over 17. The home would have its own vehicle, likely to be a seven seat MPV. This car would be used for occasional use only, including going on holiday, weekend activities. The children would be encouraged to travel independently to school (for example, on foot, cycling or public transport).

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Residents of the home

Up to five children would be living at the home.

Age range

The expected age range is 14 to 17. However, there could be times when children are as young as 13 years old, and live in the home until they are old enough to live alone. This might be when they have finished education. The longest a child would live at the property is about six years. Ages would need to be specified in the Ofsted registration should the proposal proceed.

Gender

Based on the needs of the current cohort (and this may change by 2019), the likely residents would be three girls and two boys, ranging from 13 to 18 years.

Depending on that need, the home could be single sex or mixed. This will need to be specified in the Ofsted registration. There are examples of well-managed single sex and mixed homes around the country that residents could request to visit if they wish.

Children from other boroughs

It is anticipated that the majority of young people living in the children's home in Richmond would be from Richmond. However, the operating model proposed by Richmond Council and AfC includes some flexibility to potentially accommodate a child from a different borough if there was no Richmond child that could be placed at the home.

Backgrounds of the children

The backgrounds of the children and young people could be as diverse as in other areas of society in modern Britain. A common factor will be that experiences within their birth family had combined to make growing up there untenable, and they would have been taken into the care of their local authority (usually Richmond Council).

Children who could move into this home in 2019 could currently be in residential care outside the borough, in the care of a foster family, or indeed still be with their borough birth family.

Criminal records

Based on past and existing cohorts of Richmond upon Thames children living in this type of home, it is very unlikely any of the children would have criminal records. However, the particular children who would live in the home are not known at this stage, so this cannot be confirmed.

Schooling

With regard to access to local school places, it is important to keep the number of children involved in context - the proposal is a home for five young people of secondary school or sixth form age. This small number of children would not have a material impact on the availability of local school or college places for the wider community.

Whilst most of the children would attend schools or colleges, it is possible that the older ones would pursue a more vocational pathway, for example an apprenticeship, once they had passed statutory school leaving age.



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Planning and next steps

If we decide to proceed with the proposal, a planning application is likely to be submitted in the autumn.

Access and parking

Access and parking will be considered as a standard part of the planning process. Other topics to be considered as part of the planning process include traffic, travel planning, siting and design, impact on residential amenities (such as privacy, light, noise, and visual impact - trees).

Village planning

The Village Planning Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Teddington focuses on the character and vision for the local area. It only identifies in the section on 'Development guidance' the site allocations being proposed in the Local Plan.

These are the key sites in the borough that are needed to deliver future 'needs' such as employment, retail or social infrastructure. A single household property, or a site of limited scale, would not be identified within the plan.

However, during the planning process, the design of any proposed building would be expected to take into account the character of the local area as set out in the SPD.

Next steps

Following on from the public meeting in July, residents in the immediate community around 105 Queen's Road have been invited to the drop-in session on the 11 September to find out more about the proposals.

At this drop-in session, officers from the Council and Achieving for Children will be attending as will Cabinet Members.

Attendees are invited to give their views by using one of the feedback cards at the event. Cllr Susan Chappell (Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Schools) and Cllr Pamela Fleming (Cabinet Member for Environment, Business and Community) will consider all the feedback before making a decision.

The deadline for feedback is noon on the Monday 18 September 2017. Following a review by Cabinet Members, a decision on whether the proposal will proceed to the Planning Application stage will be published on approximately Friday 22 September 2017.

Following the event, residents who wish to make further representations can do so by emailing: info@achievingforchildren.org.uk.



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