

Cabinet

11 October 2022

Name of Cabinet Member: Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – Councilor P Seaman

Director approving submission of the report: Director of Childrens Services -J Gregg

Ward(s) affected:

None

Title: Request for approval of acceptance of funding received from the Department of Education to implement 'Staying Close' provision for our care leavers.

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive summary:

An expression of interest (EOI) application was submitted to the Department for Education in April 2022 on behalf of Coventry Children's Services to be included in a national rollout of 'Staying Close' arrangements. Staying Close arrangements are being implemented to support young people leaving care from residential Childrens homes with an aim to provide these young people with the same support and opportunities as those who are eligible to remain in their foster care placements under the statutory 'Staying Put' arrangements. The application submitted a bid to enable Coventry Children's Services to provide additional ongoing support to all children leaving residential care as care leavers, within Coventry up to the age of 21. The grant requested, over a 3-year period was for a total of £1,009,647.

On July 1st, 2022, we were informed by the DfE that our bid had been successful and Section 31 grant funding (Education Act 2002) agreed.

The DfE also informed us that the grant amounts awarded for financial years 23/24 and 24/25 are indicative. Section 31 agreements will need to be agreed between both parties each year.

22/23	23/24	24/25	Total
£323,127	£336,403	£350,117	£1,009,647

Recommendations:

The Cabinet is requested to:

1. Approve the acceptance of the DfE grant awarded in the sum of £1,009,647 to be utilised towards the proposal which will enable looked-after children living in residential care within the city to access our 'Staying Close' offer and ongoing support until the age of 21

2. Delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services following consultation with the Chief Operating Officer and Chief Legal Officer, to negotiate final terms and approve entry into the grant funding agreement to secure the DfE funding with the City Council acting as the Accountable Body for the funding as well as any other agreements required to bring into effect the recommendations set out in this report.

List of Appendices included:

None.

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

Application guidance & background information for Staying Close. Department for Education (2022)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1066354/SC_LA_guidance_form_-_April_2022.pdf

The Break Staying Close, Staying Connected Project: Evaluation report. Department for Education (2020)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/931987/Staying_Close_Break.pdf

The independent review of children's social care- Josh MacAlister (2022) Page 146 :
<https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/The-care-experience.pdf>

Residential Care in England- Sir Martin Narey-(2016)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/534560/Residential-Care-in-England-Sir-Martin-Narey-July-2016.pdf

Coventry City Council: Through Care Coventry- Local offer to Care Leavers
https://www.coventry.gov.uk/downloads/file/29100/through_care_local_offer.pdf

'Ready or not' – care leavers views of preparing to leave care- Department for Education (2022)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ready-or-not-care-leavers-views-of-preparing-to-leave-care/ready-or-not-care-leavers-views-of-preparing-to-leave-care#recommendations>

Has it or will it be considered by scrutiny?

No

Has it or will it be considered by any other council committee, advisory panel or other body?

No

However, the matter was considered by the Corporate Parenting Board on 28th April 2022. Approval was granted to submit an expression of interest application.

Update reports to be submitted to Corporate Parenting board on a quarterly basis.

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Staying Close- Grant funding from Department for Education.

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1. Young people leaving residential care do not have the same opportunity to stay put as those in foster care do. Many young people leaving residential care have experienced early trauma and separation and multiple placement moves, so may not have access to support networks and sustained long-term supportive and meaningful relationships.
- 1.2. Coventry City Council has 4 homes for up to 16 children in care and offers medium to long-term care for children who are unable to safely live with their families. Alongside this we also commission placements for 12 children within the city with private providers.
- 1.3. Young people are offered informal ongoing support, from their previous carers within the homes where they lived.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1. Building upon our current Local offer to Care Leavers, we will ensure that all of our children living within a residential children's home in the city have access to Lifelong links, the House Project and Training Flat and are enabled to maintain relationships with a trusted carer, through outreach and ongoing support up until the age of 21.
- 2.2. The funding for the project will create 6.5 additional posts, over a period of 3 years and offer support to approximately 26 young people. A measure of success of the project will relate to enabling young people to move to independence with additional support, sooner than may have previously been viable. In turn this will create a cost saving against the budget and it is hoped, fund the project going forward.
- 2.3. As children approach adulthood they are supported to have an experience of living independently in the Training Flat. This enables the young person and their carers to identify areas to focus on to enable them to live safely and independently as they become adults. By creating 4 additional senior residential children's workers, we can ensure this support remains ongoing once they have moved on.
- 2.4. Lifelong Links, enables young people to identify adults, which may include family members that they wish to establish a long-term supportive relationship with. Through this, young people are empowered to build an ongoing network of support, which can include carers from the home they live in.
- 2.5. The House Project is currently set up to have 2 cohorts of 12 young people per year. By creating an additional House Project Personal advisor, Team Manager and professional support, alongside the senior RCW's we are able to increase the number of cohorts, with an additional cohort being identified for October 2022.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1. Our children living within our children's homes and our care leavers tell us that they want to stay in touch with the key people involved in their lives and maintain relationships. Informally our residential staff offer ongoing support but have told us they wish they could do more to support the young people when they leave.

- 3.2. All of the residential staff involved in a 'Staying Close' workshop told us it was the 'right thing to do' and felt positive about the ongoing support they could offer. They felt that maintaining their relationships with our care leavers was a vital part of them continuing to feel cared for.
- 3.3. When some children living in our homes were asked about moving onto independence, they told us they would really want their carers to keep in touch and carry on helping them. One young person said, 'they already know me, I can talk to them about anything'.
- 3.4. The key messages and analysis of a national consultation with children in care and care leavers 'Ready or not' published by the DfE in 2022 found:

Many care leavers felt 'alone' or isolated when they left care and did not know how to get help with their mental health or emotional well-being. Many care leavers had no one they could talk to about how they were feeling or who would look out for them.

Care leavers needed someone they could rely on for help when they felt scared or worried

Care leavers valued being able to stay in touch with social workers, children's home staff and other professionals

One young person said: My children's home helped me the most; they still stay very close'.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1. Funding awarded from the grant will be paid on an annual basis, and subject to review in partnership with the DfE. We would aim to launch our Staying Close offer in October 2022.
- 4.2. Monthly Staying Close project meetings will be undertaken to review progress, update plans and a risk register. Project board members include colleagues from finance, House Project, Through Care, Residential Services and led by the Strategic Lead for Looked after children (corporate parenting).
- 4.3. There is a requirement to submit quarterly reports to the DfE with performance indicators, which will also be shared and reviewed by CSLT and within Corporate Parenting Board. The project members will also engage with 'What Works in Children's Social Care (WWCSC) research to evidence improved outcomes and continuously seek feedback from the young people involved to improve the project delivery.

5. Comments from Chief Operating Officer (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Governance

5.1. Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 This grant will cover staff as outlined below, to support young people leaving residential care and enable them to access the same level of support as young people leaving fostering placements. These contracts will be fixed term in line with the grant award.

Area of spend	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
Team Manager (1 x G9)	£65,139	£67,275	£69,590	£202,004
Residential staff (4 x G6)	£167,637	£175,305	£183,115	£526,057
House Project staff (1 x G5)	£34,867	£36,124	£37,425	£108,416
Admin support (1 x G3)	£13,337	£13,820	£14,320	£41,477
Overheads (15%)	£42,147	£43,879	£45,667	£131,693
Total	£323,127	£336,403	£350,117	£1,009,647

5.1.2 The initial cohort of existing 16-17year olds within residential provision within the city has been identified and the current cost of these placements is £2.5m per annum. If these young people can be supported into independence at an earlier stage, then these placement costs can be reduced.

The costs avoided as a result of this initiative will be monitored during the monthly project meetings and a decision will be taken in year 2024-25 to assess whether the savings achieved could support this initiative on an ongoing basis beyond the grant funding.

5.1.3 There are no capital implications.

5.2. Legal Implications

5.2.1 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 permits a Council to do anything that an individual may do, whether or not normally undertaken by a local authority (the General Power of Competence). If successful, the Council will be accepting a grant for the delivery of the outcomes specified and compliance with any funding criteria and requirements. The Council would be the accountable body for the funding.

5.2.2 As the accountable body, it is anticipated that the Council will be required to enter into a grant funding agreement with the DFE to govern the terms and conditions of the grant funding. Legal advice will be sought on the terms and conditions of the grant agreement to minimise any risks.

5.2.3 Any procurement will be conducted in compliance with the Council's policy and legal obligations, specifically in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and Subsidy Control Rules and supported by relevant officers.

5.2.4 The acceptance of the grant set out in this report will also support the Council's ability to discharge the following statutory duties:

- Section 23C Children Act 1989 – duties to former relevant children (those who were looked after by the Local Authority)
- Section 23 CZA Children act 1989 (as inserted by Children and Families Act 2014, part 5 (98),) local authorities are required to facilitate, monitor, and support young people in

foster care 'staying put' arrangements until they reach 21 years of age, where this is what they and their foster carers want.

- 5.2.5 Section 2 Children and Social Work Act 2017 provides a requirement for each Local Authority in England to publish a 'Local Offer for Care Leavers'. The Local Offer must contain information about services offered by the Local Authority for care leavers, under the Children Act 1989; and/or made available to assist in or prepare for adulthood and independent living. Coventry's Local Offer will need to be updated if approval is given to accept the grant which will implement the Staying Close Provisions.

6. Other implications

6.1. How will this contribute to the Council Plan (www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/)?

The project supports several elements of the Councils Plan, including ensuring young people are safe, improving health and wellbeing, enhancing our duties as Corporate Parents and building upon our Care Leavers offer. It also enables young people leaving residential care to be afforded similar opportunities to those who have the option to 'stay put' with former foster carers.

6.2. How is risk being managed?

Project governance is in place. A project risk register is subject to monthly review, identifying mitigations and actions needed to reduce risks. A key risk identified at the start of the project is sufficient housing offers for young people through the House project, which will impact on the sustainability of the offer beyond the 3-year grant and success of the project. To mitigate this, young people will have the option to move to supported accommodation until a property can be identified, however this creates a further move for them.

6.3. What is the impact on the organisation?

Through the creation of the 4 senior residential workers posts, we are enabled to offer a further tier of career progression to our employees and strengthen our residential workforce and offer. Staying Close, happens informally currently, the offer will ensure we are proactively supporting our young people, strengthening our Care Leavers Offer and is in line with our Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

6.4. Equalities / EIA?

An equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed. The outcome identified that by implementing a 'Staying Close' offer to children leaving residential care as care leavers, we are affording them similar opportunities to children who live in foster care and are able to 'stay put' post 18. The offer is made to all of Coventry's looked after children who live in a residential children's home in Coventry, aged 16+, irrespective of whether they live in a home run by the council or through a commissioned placement.

We are also ensuring that our care leavers are enabled to maintain positive relationships with their carer's, as a child leaving home at 18 may do with their parents/ families.

6.5. Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment?

There are no apparent negative impacts on environmental/ climate change or the carbon footprint because of this project. Young people will be supported to recycle, understand energy efficiency and conserving water.

6.6. Implications for partner organisations?

By proactively offering additional support to our carer leavers moving on from a residential children's home, we will aspire to reduce the impact on other agencies by enabling young people to make positive life choices, access education and employment, maintain their tenancies, be positive members of their communities and support them in meeting their health and emotional wellbeing needs.

Young people will be signposted to relevant agencies for support as appropriate.

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Members: Councillor P Seaman	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People		27/09/2022	27/09/2022

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