



To: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)

Date: 8th December 2022

Subject: Support to Care Leavers and the House Project

1 Purpose of the note

- 1.1 This paper sets out the main changes in support offered to care leavers as a result of *The Children and Social Work Act 2017*. The paper focuses on one area of the Coventry Local Offer to care leavers which is the housing support for children in care and care leavers through the Coventry House Project.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) is recommended to:
- 1) Consider the content of the briefing note
 - 2) Identify any recommendations for the appropriate Cabinet Member

3 Changes brought about by The Children and Social Work Act 2017

- 3.1 *The Children and Social Work Act 2017* introduced a requirement for Councils to publish a Local Offer for care leavers. The Local Offer is a document that outlines the services and support that will be available to care leavers in the local area where they live when they leave care. It includes information about legal entitlements (rights) as well as any extra support that the Council might choose to give.
- 3.2 Section one of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 lists the corporate parenting responsibilities that local authorities must follow in supporting looked after children and care leavers. These are:
- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
 - To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
 - To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
 - To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
 - To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
 - For those children and young people to be safe, and to experience stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
 - To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.
- 3.3 These principles underpin Sections two and three of the Act. Section two of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires local authorities to consult on and publish a Local Offer

for their care leavers. The Coventry Local Offer was agreed by members in November 2018 https://www.coventry.gov.uk/downloads/file/29100/through_care_local_offer.pdf.

- 3.4 Section three of the Children & Social Work Act 2017 also introduced a new duty on local authorities, which requires it to offer Personal Adviser support to all care leavers up to the age of 25.
- 3.5 Both the local offer and extension of Personal Adviser support are now embedded in Children's Services. This is helping to ensure that care leavers get support required which was endorsed during recent Ofsted inspection.

4 Background and Information to the House Project

- 4.1 At a national level, the National House Project which started in 2018 has been working with 15 Local Authorities and this number is increasing. The project prides itself on a ground-breaking approach of support and its commitment to young people's ownership to enable young people leaving care to achieve successful independence.
- 4.2 The House Project programme enables children in care and care leavers to move into independence in a planned and supported way. The young people on the project work alongside adults in their life to refurbish their homes and they can take over the tenancy when aged 18. The aim of the project is to support young people with the feelings of loneliness and exclusion and create a peer network of support that is lifelong.
- 4.3 The House Project uses a trauma informed approach of support and follows a co designed 'ORCHIDS' framework/portfolio. The programme supports young people to work through the following domains: taking ownership of their home and local house project, safety and looking after others, building a community, managing their own home, emotional and financial support, sense of wellbeing, positive directions in life. The portfolio is then AQA accredited, and the young people receive a qualification upon completion.
- 4.4 The House Project in Coventry was launched on 16.07.2021 following a successful pitch by Coventry care leavers to the National House Project. The Coventry House Project was launched with key partners including, Independent Reviewing Officers, Social Work teams, Placements team, Health, Education providers, the Virtual School, and the Police. A steering group oversees the project, and this is well attended by members of the above organisations including Citizen housing association and Valpak who are partnered with the project.
- 4.5 The partnership with Citizen Housing Association is critical to the Coventry House Project. Citizen have so far pledged to provide properties to the young people on the project and they are also a steering group partner. Citizen and Coventry Childrens Services have a signed equitable tenancy agreement which is then transitioned into a starter tenancy when the young person turns 18 years of age. There is a process in place whereby the young person chooses 3 areas where they would like to reside and the House Project team work closely with Citizen to match the young person to a property of choice. There is also consideration during this matching process of the area and any safety concerns in relation to communities or buildings where young people will be residing.
- 4.6 There is also a close partnership with the organisation, Valpak. Valpak is a recycling and waste management company. The company became linked to Coventry via the National House Project. The Valpak organisation has made the decision to work in partnership with Coventry House Project. They have allocated a budget of £10,000 over the course of 2022 and have pledged to support with wellbeing seminars, careers days, recycling talks and support around waste as well as donating to activities the groups of young people are involved with.
- 4.7 The first cohort of the Coventry House Project consisted of 11 young people who were residing in either external residential homes, internal residential homes or fostering homes.

All these young people are now in their own one bedroomed home provided by Citizen Housing Association.

- 4.8 The Coventry House Project are now working with a second group of young people which consists of 11 young people, and they are working on the completion of their portfolio. To date, 3 young people from cohort 2 have been provided with properties. The remainder of the cohort plan to move between January 2023 and March 2023.
- 4.9 The third group of the Coventry House Project is currently being identified to begin in March 2023.
- 4.10 The Coventry House Project has helped create an intensive, supportive, and creative offer for children in care and care leavers of Coventry. The feedback from partners and the children and young people involved with the project has been positive. There is a great energy and creativity from the young people and practitioners and a real sense of community. The young people have created a peer network and have helped one another to refurbish their homes. There was recognition in the Ofsted Inspection for the sense of community and support/participation that the House Project has within Coventry.

5 Financial Impact

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
HP cost	152,000	298,730	298,730
Cohort 1 costs avoided (actual)	-	(195,002)	(38,080)
Cohort 2 costs avoided (expected)	-	(95,634)	(364,699)
Additional cost/(saving)	152,000	8,094	(104,048)

- 5.1 The financial model assesses the annual impact of the Coventry House Project.
- 5.2 In year one of the project, it was predicted that there would be no cost avoidance. The net position at the end of year one was £152k additional costs.
- 5.3 In year two the anticipated cost avoidance is £195k in relation to cohort 1 of the House Project and £96k in relation to cohort 2. This would result in £291k in total with a net position of £8k additional costs.
- 5.4 In year three with cohort 1 costs avoided, these total to £38k and a full year effect of cohort 2 is £364k. The net position is £104k saving.

6 Staying Close

- 6.1 Coventry Childrens Services have been successful in securing a grant of £1,009,647 from the Department for Education over 3 years. Year one total - £323,127, year two £336,403 and year three total £350,117.
- 6.2 The Department for Education aims for the funding were to improve access to education, training, and employment (EET), increase suitable and sustainable accommodation, decrease risk of homelessness, increase consistency of workers, decreased levels of offending and risk, improve emotional and mental wellbeing by building lifelong support networks.
- 6.3 The funding will be used to implement a Staying Close offer in Coventry to children in care and care leavers. The funding has allowed for the recruitment of a Team Manager/Project

Leader, Senior Residential Childrens Workers and an additional House Project Facilitator. The aims of the project are to meet the outcomes as set out by the DFE and to provide a Staying Close and House Project offer to all children in residential care residing in Coventry.

- 6.4 The Staying Close offer has created additional capacity of a Senior Residential Childrens Worker in each of the 4 residential children's homes in Coventry. The additional staff members will enable carers to engage in the House Project, Lifelong Links, and the Training Flat, but also ongoing support young people post 18.

7 Other considerations

- 7.1 The Coventry House Project model makes a difference to children's lives, and this is largely due to the partnership with Citizen housing association. If there was to be a change in their partnership or they withdrew from providing properties, then this would have a significant impact upon the success of the project. To mitigate this there have been discussions with the Strategic Lead for Housing and a plan to reapproach all housing providers in Coventry given the success from cohort 1 and 2 of the Coventry Project.

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