

Corporate Parenting Board

28 March 2019

Report title	The House Project	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Paul Sweet Children and Young People	
Wards affected	All wards	
Accountable director	Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services	
Originating service	Children's Services	
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Recommendations for action:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Receive information regarding a proposal for The House Project to be implemented in the City of Wolverhampton.

1.1 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to appraise the Corporate Parenting Board of the proposal to implement The House Project in the City of Wolverhampton.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The House Project takes a ground-breaking approach through its commitment to young people's ownership to enable young people leaving care to achieve successful independence. The Project was co-designed with young people from the start and works on cooperative principles through which adults and young people in and leaving care work together to refurbish properties that become their homes and build a long-term community of support.
- 2.2 Moving to independence from 16 and living alone from 18 as a care leaver is daunting. Doing this without the support of close family and at a much earlier age than the general population (average age of leaving home is 24) does not work for many young people. They have described their loneliness, fear and the feeling that they have been 'dropped off a cliff'.
- 2.3 The establishment of the first House Project was in Stoke-on-Trent. They recognised the energy, creativity and will to thrive of their young people. Through the House Project this potential was channelled by young people into managing the refurbishment of properties which became their homes and building a community of support to overcome the loneliness and fear they had described. The process focused on maximising young people's ownership of all aspects of the project, so they could feel proud of what they had developed and have confidence in themselves and their futures.
- 2.4 In its successful pilot phase, funded in 2015 by the Department for Education (Dfe), young people aged 16+ managed the refurbishment of void properties in Stoke-on-Trent, which they moved into and which became their homes for as long as they wanted.
- 2.5 A second phase of DfE Innovation funding in 2017 is enabling the development of new House Projects in five local authorities and the establishment of 'The National House Project' as a National Charity which will develop the model and provide the expertise and support to enable any group of young people and the adults working with them to apply to set up their own House Project in the future.
- 2.6 The House Project is seeing young people move to successful independence by transitioning to full council tenancies whilst maintaining contact with the project – an informal source of support that lasts as long as it needs to. For others, the project provided the confidence to get jobs and stay in college – aspirations that had previously seemed completely out of their reach.
- 2.7 The National House Project is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, established in August 2018 as part of phase two of the DfE Innovation Programme. It was established to support the development of House Projects in five local authorities (Islington, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, Rotherham and Doncaster) and create the evidence base, resources and financial modelling to enable roll out to interested local authorities post March 2020.

- 2.8 Interested local authorities will be supported to set up their own Local House Project via membership arrangements with the National House Project. With contracted support arrangements and a suite of resources the fidelity of the model will be assured.
- 2.9 Through a paid membership arrangement the National House Project provides direct support and guidance and develops and disseminates the framework.
- 2.10 Links are built with local housing providers which enables the House Project to lease properties. Links are built with companies and training providers engaged locally in building and associated trades. Through these connections, young people learn to project manage any works necessary to make their house a home.
- 2.11 Young people follow an induction and then apply to be House Project members. It's a challenge not a 'given'.
- 2.12 The House Project aims to ensure that all young people have a secure education, training and employment offer and pathway. Some will continue with their pre-House Project plans and work part time on the House Project, for others the House Project may be able to offer a full time accredited one-year study programme based on all the skills and knowledge they will acquire.
- 2.13 If successful on the programme and when they have refurbished their property, the care leavers become tenants of the House Project until they are ready to move to long term tenancy or even ownership. As excellent tenants, when they 'graduate' from the House Project, they retain the property that they have made into a home. They continue to be a member of the House Project community for as long as they wish.
- 2.14 This not-for-profit entrepreneurial approach saves money, allows a safer step down from residential care and stretches budgets to provide longer term support and better outcomes, or 'social capital'. Landlords get good tenants and local authorities have a long-term, sustainable housing solution to meet the needs of young people leaving the care system

3.0 Progress

- 3.1 The City of Wolverhampton is keen to develop a Local House Project to support care leavers in the City as it is believed it will complement and enhance the already successful supported housing accommodation offer that we have for our care leavers in the City.
- 3.2 Initial discussions have taken place with the National House Project to discuss possible proposals for implementation.
- 3.3 The National House Project will be visiting Wolverhampton over the next month to meet with the staff in the Transitions Team. More importantly, they will also be consulting with our care leavers and gaining their views about the proposed project.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.

4.2 Negotiations are currently taking place with a local business who have expressed an interest in supporting the funding a Local House Project in Wolverhampton.

4.3 If any financial implications arise from discussions due to take place then they will be the subject of a further report in the future.

[NM/13032019/T]

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the report.

Any implications that arise at a later stage will be the subject of a further report at a later date.

[TC/14032019/W]

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 This project will seek to offer additional support to a group of young people who are significantly disadvantaged in terms of outcomes.

7.0 Environmental implications

7.1 There are no environmental implications.

8.0 Human resources implications

8.1 There are no human resource implications.

9.0 Corporate Landlord implications

9.1 The project will need to acquire suitable accommodation for the care leavers involved.

10.0 Health and Wellbeing implications

10.1 Care leavers are a group of young people who are significantly disadvantaged in society in many areas of life including education, employment and health outcomes

10.2 The House Project seeks to support young people who are part of the project to achieve in education or employment, to reduce feelings of social isolation and improve self-esteem and emotional wellbeing.

11.0 Schedule of background papers

11.1 There are no relevant background papers.