

<b>Report title</b>	The Wolverhampton House Project Annual Report – One year On.	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor John Reynolds Children and Young People	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Emma Bennett, Director of Children’s Services	
<b>Originating service</b>	Children and Young People in Care	
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<b>Report to be considered by</b>	Corporate Parenting Board	19 November 2020

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**Recommendation for action:**

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Receive the annual update report on the Wolverhampton Local House Project.

**Recommendations for noting:**

The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to note:

1. The progress of the Wolverhampton House Project within the first twelve months.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the reader of the progress of the House Project as it reaches the milestone of the 12 months.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The City of Wolverhampton Council was approached by the National House Project with a view to delivering a local House Project in Wolverhampton supported by a local funder. In July 2019, cabinet endorsed the recommendation to implement a local House Project for Care Leavers within the City of Wolverhampton. The House Project framework gives greater placement choice for young people to be supported into independence and gives the additionality of peer support contributing to reducing feeling of loneliness and isolation. The theory of change that underpins the project is based upon improving young people's outcomes and wellbeing, supporting positive changes to enable care leavers to live successful healthy adult lives.
- 2.2 The successful implementation of a local House Project compliments the existing accommodation options available to the care leavers within Wolverhampton. The Wolverhampton House Project was officially launched on 28 October 2019, during National Care Leaver week. Relevant stakeholders, the young people identified, their carers and Social Workers were invited to learn more about the project and to celebrate the launch. Young People from other House Projects also attended to provide encouragement and open discussions with young people from Wolverhampton to inform them of the success of their projects and the benefits from participating. The launch was a huge success and attended by most young people that were invited. Ten young people who applied to be on the project were successful in being offered a place.

## **3.0 Progress**

### **Young People**

- 3.1 Despite the challenges faced with Covid-19, the young people have progressed extremely well. The ethos of the House Project is around promoting a sense of community and working in a group is instrumental in this. The House Project staff have worked tirelessly to continue to develop this sense of community by holding virtual meetings, and meeting with young people face to face to support them to develop the skills they need to progress.
- 3.2 At the time of writing this report, we have five young people now moved into their homes, two waiting for their keys, and another is actively sourcing a property in the area of her choice. We have recognised that two of our young people are not ready to progress into independence and still need support to develop their independence skills and their ability to keep safe, so they will be progressed at their own pace and will be invited to be part of the next cohort of young people. It is important to note that this is not seen as a failure but more a commitment to our young people and an acceptance of the diverse needs of our young people, and the support offered from the House Project will continue until they are ready.

### **Partnership Working**

- 3.3 Partnership working has been instrumental towards the success of the first twelve months of the project:

#### **Wolverhampton Homes (WH)**

- 3.4 Wolverhampton Homes is one of the main partners that have shown their full commitment to the project and are active members of the House Project Steering Group. More recently they participated in virtual meetings with the young people, acknowledged and understood their needs, and sourced properties in the areas that are important to them, which has enabled them to access their support networks.

#### **Reconomy**

- 3.5 Reconomy, as with Wolverhampton Homes, have shown their full commitment to the project and again are active members of the House Project Steering Group. Despite the challenges faced with Covid-19 and key staff members being furloughed, they have continued to support the project. More recently they have committed to offering apprenticeships to all young people participating in the House Project.

#### **The next steps**

- 3.6 The House Project will continue to support the young people whilst they live in the own properties, this support will continue for as long as the young people feel they need it.
- 3.7 A virtual event was held on 23 September 2020 with young people inviting them to be part of the second cohort of the project. The event was well received and there are already 7 young people interested. The team are currently in the process of supporting the young people to complete their application forms.

The House Project is also already identifying young people for the third cohort.

### **4.0 Financial implications**

- 4.1 The House Project was funded in its first year by troubled families, due to an underspend during this year, £25,000 was carried forward into year 2.

The financial model of the House Project is based on supporting young people to step down from regulated placements (internal and purchased foster care and residential care) in to House Project (HP) properties. The Covid-19 pandemic has delayed young people from leaving care and move on through the House Project. Finance have projected that the annual savings for the Project up to 31 March 2021 are estimated at approximately £109,000.

[JD/16112020/A]

## **5.0 Legal implications**

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

The contract with the National House Project has been signed and sealed via the City of Wolverhampton's legal services.

[SB/13112020/P]

## **6.0 Equalities implications**

6.1 An equalities analysis has been completed and is regularly reviewed via the House Project Steering Group. This has raised no concerns.

The young people accessing the House Project are already disadvantaged and outcomes for young people in care and leaving are generally poorer than their peers. Traumatic experiences before entry into care can also cause difficulties, which may affect a young person's behaviour, self-esteem or trust in authority figures. The Local House Project supports the ambition to improve opportunities and reduce the disadvantage that care leavers face in society, and the project provides ongoing support via peers and staff for as long the young people require. It is intended that the impact of this support will enable young people to transition into adulthood and independent living successfully.

## **7.0 Climate change and environmental implications**

7.1 There are no direct climate change and environmental implications arising from this report.

## **8.0 Human resources implications**

8.1 There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report.

The recruitment of an additional facilitator has been approved via the necessary processes.

## **9.0 Corporate Landlord implications**

9.1 There are no direct Corporate Landlord implications resulting from this report. A report was presented and approved via Cabinet, Children's Services (2 March 2020), Cabinet, Housing (3 March 2020) and Strategic Executive Board (10 March 2020) to make available properties for letting within the Housing Revenue Account.

## **10.0 Health and Wellbeing Implications**

10.1 The theory of change that underpins this project is based upon improving young people's wellbeing and outcomes, supporting positive changes to enable care leavers to live healthy, successful lives.

## **11.0 Covid-19 Implications**

11.1 There are no Covid-19 implications arising from the recommendation of this report.

## **12.0 Schedule of background papers**

12.1 There are no background papers.

## **12.0 Appendices**

12.1 Appendix 1: The Wolverhampton House Project Annual Report