



Corporate Parenting Board

11 November 2015

Report title	New Belongings
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Families
Wards affected	All
Accountable director	Linda Sanders, Community
Originating service	Looked after Children's Service
Accountable employee(s)	Alison Hinds Head of Looked After Children 01902 553035
Report to be/has been considered by	Emma Bennet & Cllr Val Gibson People leadership Team Place Leadership Team SEB

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Support the implementation of the New Belongings Project across Wolverhampton City Council.

Recommendations for Reviewing, commenting and feedback:

The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to note:

1. The New Belongings Action Plan

1.0 Purpose

1. New Belongings aims to:
 - embed the principles of the Care Leavers Charter
 - join up services to care leavers, as outlined in the Access All Areas report. This report calls on central government departments to improve the support they offer to young people as they leave the care system and in their early years after leaving care. It examines how working across government is essential to improving the support care leavers receive and removing obstacles to their progress.
 - bring in the energy of local communities to support care leavers.

- 1.2 Historically Wolverhampton's Looked after Children's (LAC) Transitions Team has struggled to raise the profile of young people leaving care. It is hoped that this project will raise all Council employees/services and partners' awareness of care leavers, the issues they face, and the aspirations that the Wolverhampton City Council has for them.

- 1.3 The participation that other councils have had with this project has been very successful in highlighting the needs of their care leavers and identifying appropriate support services. As a result there has been an overall improvement in service delivery and improved outcomes for care leavers, an example of this is the Ofsted feedback provided to Trafford Council. It was noted that the New Belongings project contributed to the outstanding rating received by Trafford Council as participation in the project highlighted areas for improvement within the service, support the Local Authority to tailor its services to support care leavers enabling care leavers achieve better outcomes.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 New Belongings has been an innovative and ambitious initiative aiming to raise expectation and aspiration for care leavers. The project ran from May 2013 to October 2014 in nine Local Authority areas and has shown how attention to the care leavers' voice and a commitment to improving services can begin to create radical shifts in culture and belief.

- 2.2 The inspiration for New Belongings came from the care leavers group who meet regularly with the Minister for Children and was the third in a series of initiatives which produced and bring the principles and concepts of Access All Areas and the Charter for Care Leavers down to a local level. The aim is to embed these into local services and

communities and reduce the sense of long term isolation often expressed by care leavers.

- 2.3 New Belongings was needed to create a culture change in delivery of services for care leavers to address the continuing over-representation of this group in all the statistics of disadvantage and social exclusion including adult prisoners and mental health service users, and chronically lower paid or unemployed.
- 2.4 Wolverhampton have been successful in their bid to partake in New Belongings. Our care leaver survey has been completed which has informed our action plan in regards to improving overall service delivery for Wolverhampton care leavers.
- 2.5 To meet the New Belongings' criteria Wolverhampton City Council must;
- Sign up to the Government's Care Leavers' Charter
 - Have the personal support of the Chief Executive Officer/Managing Director, who will ensure co-operation across the Local Authority and its partners to achieve the priorities of the project. The Local Authority must have a commitment to meeting with the New Belongings Team at the mid-point of the project to review the project's progress
 - Have the personal support of the leader, who will engage with local groups and businesses that can offer opportunities and personal support to care leavers
 - Have a commitment to create a Care Leaver Forum which has real voice and influence
 - Have commitment to develop a basic plan for the project, reflecting the care leavers' survey and the Government's care leavers' strategy that will be delivered by a designated project lead, supported by sufficient resources including the Young Person Advisors. The Project Plan needs to be approved and support given to the action plan for embedding into the Transition Service. The Project is time-limited for 12 months and will be reported back to the Department for Education (DFE) and the Care Leavers' Foundation
- 2.7 It is hoped that by participating as an authority we will be able to set the foundation for an effective relationship between the Local Authority and our care leavers so that trust between the two can be further developed.
- 2.8 We expect that the combined efforts of the above points will decrease barriers for care leavers in the community, providing them with increased support and by engaging the abilities of the whole of the Local Authority, its key service partners, and the wider community. Creating an action plan that reflects the priorities that the Local Authority and its care leavers consider important to them, for example, increased participation, on-going education, training and employment opportunities, housing options and access to health and wellbeing services via our local services and partners, will raise the profile of care leavers. This should promote aspirations and opportunities for our care leavers so that they can be encouraged, supported and empowered to achieve better outcomes for their future. Breaking down these barriers will automatically improve our care leavers' experience of transition from childhood to adult life.

3.0 Progress, options, discussion, etc.

A care leaver survey has been carried out with Wolverhampton care leavers. The response rate for this was 16%, which was similar to other Local Authorities. The analysis of these results showed some common themes on what improvements are required from the Transition Team;

- Preparation of young people for independence – cooking and budgeting in particular
- Explanation of the roles within the team and options post 16/18
- Not answering the telephone
- Constant change of social worker
- Lack of apprenticeship and job opportunities
- Lack of involvement in participation
- Lack of involving young people in decision making
- Exceeded rate that young people are leaving care

3.2 The Action Plan (Appendix One) was formulated collating the information from the care leaver survey. This project will be evaluated independently by DfE to analyse and assess if the Action Plan and partnership process has led to improvements in services. It will identify positive outcomes/recommendations for dissemination to other Local Authorities.

3.3 In order to achieve the above, a Wolverhampton care leavers' forum will be established to lead on the project and the findings from the survey. The forum will ensure that Wolverhampton's care leavers are consulted on a regular basis regarding the New Belongings project and plans/changes for the LAC Transition Service. This forum will be used as a way of gathering care leavers' views on changes and service delivery, with the aim of making improvements which will further support young people to reach their potential and achieve their aspirations.

3.4 Quarterly meetings are being held with other Local Authorities within the Black Country cluster. These meetings are supported by the National Project Manager and a dedicated care leaver who is attached to each Local Authority to offer support and guidance throughout the project.

3.5 The project has been launched within Wolverhampton in our annual care leavers' week 26-31 October 2015. This will be followed by a Black Country cluster launch in December 2015.

3.6 There will also be networking events across the country with all other local authorities that are part of the project. The first one has recently taken place in October 2015 and the second is scheduled for March 2016.

4.0 Financial implications

4.1 The Council will not attract any additional funding for the New Belongings Project.

4.2 Any costs associated with the implementation of the project will be contained within existing approved budgets within the Children and Young People's Service area.

[NM/02112015/B]

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3 Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers places a statutory duty upon the Local Authority to ensure that looked after children and care leavers receive good quality advice alongside guidance and support, through the care planning and pathway planning process. This will support them to make informed choices regarding their future and allow them to make continuing progress in education, training and employment to ensure that they are empowered to reach their aspirations.

[JN/02112015/N]

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 Wolverhampton is a very diverse city with its demographics clearly documented nationally. The city suffers from high levels of child poverty, deprivation and worklessness. The number of issues that face the inner city authority increase and budgets decrease. It is therefore necessary to think differently when dealing with the most vulnerable young people in society.

6.2 There are 226 Care Leavers (16+) within Wolverhampton . The Transition Service works closely with all children's social work teams , with the disability team and adult services.

7.0 Environmental implications

7.1 There are no known environmental implications of the report or its proposals.

8.0 Human resources implications

8.1 There are no implications for Human Resources.

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

9.1 The report has no known implications for the Council's property portfolio.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

10.1 New Belongings Action Plan

10.0 Appendix

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