

<b>Report title</b>	Update on Local Authority Children's Home Provision	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Beverley Momenabadi Children and Young People	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Emma Bennett, Executive Director of Families	
<b>Originating service</b>	Specialist Support	
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Rachel King email	Head of Specialist Support <a href="mailto:Rachel.king@wolverhampton.gov.uk">Rachel.king@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a>
<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Children's Social Care Leadership Team	9 September 2021

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**Recommendations for action:**

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Receive the update regarding local authority children's home provision
2. Endorse the plans to undertake a review of residential provision to ensure the needs of children and young people in care can be met.

**Recommendations for noting:**

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to note:

1. The recent decision to close Key to Inspiration Children's Home

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 To update Corporate Parenting Board on the local authority children's home residential provision.
- 1.2 To update Corporate Parenting Board on the recent decision to close Key to Inspiration and share the rationale behind this decision.
- 1.3 To inform Corporate Parenting Board of the local authority's intention to undertake an ongoing review of residential provision to better understand the needs within the City and ensure that there is adequate provision to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and complex young people.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 In 2015, Upper Pendeford Farm (UPF) Children's Home opened as a short break respite centre. UPF was set up to support young people on the edge of care in order to prevent family breakdown and also to support children in care at risk of placement breakdown to improve placement stability.
- 2.2 Since the short break service commenced in 2015, it has successfully contributed to an ongoing reduction in the number of children in care and improved placement stability for children in care. Feedback from young people and families accessing the service has been consistently positive.
- 2.3 In 2018 it was agreed to open another local authority run Children's Home. The Council already had a home which was being run by a private sector company (Cambian Care). The contract with Cambian Care was ended and the four-bedded home was opened as a local authority provision called Key to Inspiration (K2I).
- 2.4 The rationale for opening K2I was to bring some of the externally placed young people back into Wolverhampton and also to increase placement options for young people experiencing numerous placement breakdown. Between April 2018 and July 2019, the new in-house provision was developed and K2I admitted its first young person in July 2019.
- 2.5 Between July 2019 and July 2021, a number of extremely complex and vulnerable young people were referred to K2I. This contributed to issues around risk management and it became evident that it was not possible for K2I to meet the complex needs of young people due to more specialist, therapeutic provision being required. As a four-bedded unit, the matching of young people to ensure they were compatible with each other was problematic. This resulted in K2I operating with only two young people between June – December 2020 and April – July 2021.

### **3.0 Progress**

- 3.1 Since 2015, the Children and Young People's Service have been changing the way that services are delivered to children and families to ensure families are supported at the earliest opportunity so that only those children that need to come into care become looked after. This has resulted in a year on year decrease in the number of children and young people in care.
- 3.2 Alongside there has been a focus on ensuring that children in the City live in a family environment wherever this is possible and in their best interests. Children are supported to continue to live within their own or their extended family, but where this is not possible, family-based care through fostering is prioritised above residential care. This has meant that the total number of young people living in children's residential homes has reduced. The young people who currently live in residential homes are those with the most complex needs.
- 3.3 Since K2I opened in July 2019, it has become apparent that the needs of the young people requiring residential care in the City are becoming more complex. It is now unusual for residential children's homes nationally and locally to be more than two bedded homes for young people's compatibility of needs to be managed safely with the right staffing ratio.
- 3.4 When the home was opened the budget was calculated on four young people living in the home together. With only two young people being able to be placed there, this increased the weekly unit costs to approximately £8,000 compared to a good quality, external placement for £4,000- £5,000.
- 3.5 The style and location of K2I has become a concern over recent years. It is not conducive to working with highly complex and vulnerable young people. The home was purpose built and does not have a homely feel. It is located close to the City centre, close to a main road and in an area where there are issues that could place young people at increased risk of gangs and exploitation. Young people who have lived at K2I have also provided feedback about the building not feeling like home.
- 3.6 Following consideration of the placements and support available at K2I; the needs of young people; and the financial viability of the home, discussions commenced around the future of the provision in the City. In July 2021, the two long-standing residents moved onto other placements which provided an opportunity to explore the closure of K2I. On 22 July 2021, Senior Executive Board approved the closure of the home.
- 3.7 The short break provision at UPF continues to be available to families to prevent family and placement breakdown. This support is a key element of the work aimed at ensuring young people get the opportunity to remain living in a family environment,
- 3.8 As part of ongoing sufficiency planning, residential placement requirements for our children and young people in care are subject to continuous review.

#### **4.0 Financial implications**

- 4.1 The current approved budget for Key to Inspiration is £834,000 per annum. Once the home is closed the budget will be re-purposed to support external placement costs. If the home were to continue to accommodate 2 individuals, the cost per week is in the region of £8,000 per placement. The average cost of an external placement is currently £4,400 with the highest weekly single local authority funded rate £7,400 so it is likely the overall cost will be less once the home is closed.

[JB/06092021/N]

#### **5.0 Legal implications**

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this decision. The local authority continues to have legal obligations to meet its duties towards Children in Care.

[TC/01092021/A]

#### **6.0 Equalities implications**

Children in care, due to their early life experience and trauma, are often faced with increased disadvantage in many areas of their life as they progress to adulthood. A secure and stable placement that meets their needs can reduce this disadvantage and improve outcomes. In order for children in care to experience the care, support, stability and safety required, the most positive option is to place them within a family setting. The majority of children in care are placed within such an environment. However, for some young people, their level of need requires that they are placed in a residential children's home. For these young people, it is essential that the homes are able to provide security, safety and stability in order to reduce disadvantage and optimise opportunity.

#### **7.0 All other Implications**

##### **Corporate landlord implications**

- 7.1 K2I ceased as a Children's Home on 27 August 2021. However, staff are still working from the home during their notice period.

##### **Human resources implications**

- 7.2 Following the approval from Senior Executive Board to close K2I, work has been undertaken to ensure all relevant HR processes are followed.