

Corporate Parenting Board

21 April 2016

Report title	New Belongings Update	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Young people	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Emma Bennett, Children and Young People	
Originating service	Looked After Children	
Accountable employee(s)	Alison Hinds Tel Email	Head of Service, Looked After Children 01902 553035 Alison.hinds@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by		

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

Review the update of New Belongings project

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update the Corporate Parenting Board on the progress being made in relation to the implementation of New Belongings and the impact of this on Care Leavers of the City of Wolverhampton Council (CoWC).

2.0 Background

- 2.1 New Belongings is an innovative and ambitious initiative aiming to raise expectation and aspiration for Care Leavers. The initial national 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 national Care Leavers group who meet regularly with the Minister for Children and was the third in a series of initiatives which produced the principles and concepts of Access All Areas and the Charter for Care Leavers. The aim is to embed these initiatives 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, mental health service users, and chronically lower paid or unemployed.
- 2.4 The City of Wolverhampton Council was successful in its bid to partake in The New Belongings project. A Care Leaver survey was completed which informed the action plan to improve overall service delivery for Wolverhampton Care Leavers.
- 2.5 To meet the New Belongings criteria it was necessary for CoWC to:
 - Sign up to the Government's Care Leavers Charter.

- Have the personal support of the Managing Director, who will ensure co-operation across the Local Authority and its partners to achieve the priorities of the project.
- 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 Governments Care Leavers' strategy; that will be delivered by a designated project lead, and 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.

2.6 It was anticipated that by participating, CoWC would be able to set the foundation for an effective relationship between the Local Authority and Care Leavers so that trust between the two can be further developed.

3.0 Progress, options, discussion, etc.

3.1 Having launched formally the implementation of the project in Care Leaver's week in October 2015, CoWC has made excellent progress in implementation and all of the criteria described in paragraph 2.5 have been achieved.

3.2 In addition to the essential criteria, through New Belongings, the CoWC has implemented additional actions which have supported improved outcomes for Care Leavers.

3.3 **Increase communication and participation with Care Leavers:**

- Monthly Care Leavers' forums have taken place since September 2015 on the first Wednesday of every month at the Youth Zone. This has provided opportunities for positive activities and partnership working.
- A regular Care Leavers' newsletter is formulated by the assistant Corporate Parenting Officer (occupied by a Care Leaver) and distributed via a Young Persons Advisor (YPA) on Facebook and the Care Leaver's webpage.
- All Care Leavers are being added to a confidential Facebook page. A Family Support Worker and Education Employment and Training officer access this page daily to support increased communication with Care Leavers'. There is also a generic Facebook page for all Care Leavers', which is non-confidential, where information can be posted regarding activities and events. The Looked after Children's website has a Care Leaver tab which the team can edit to provide information to young people regarding services, activities and the Care Leavers' forum.
- Representatives of the Care Leavers' forum attend the steering group for New Belongings, and members of the forum are consulted regarding changes to policy and procedures.
- An updated Care Leaver pack has been created which includes useful information, policies, and telephone numbers to support young people post 16.

3.4 Introduction of Outcome Star:

- The Transitions team have all been trained on the implementation of Outcome Star which is the tool that will be used with young people to measure progress, and the impact of the support offered to care leavers.

3.5 Increase support for Care Leavers in regards to their independence skills:

- Mandatory training for foster carers will be increased to bi-monthly workshops to ensure all foster carers are trained in the Getting Ready for Adult Life (GRAL) pack. Initially training will target foster carers who have a teenager in placement. The training will also focus on Staying Put arrangements.
- Fostering Supervising Social Workers and Young Persons Advisor's check the GRAL pack during supervision and Pathway Plan reviews to ensure the young people are being supported appropriately.
- The training flat provision has been embedded since July 2015. This gives young people who are considering their independence and transition options to undertake a supported trial period living on their own in their own accommodation. This opportunity has been well utilised and has proved to be an effective way of helping young people consider what options are available to them. It also gives opportunity for the young person's social worker and the Housing Support team to assess the level of support which will be required by the young person should they move into their own accommodation.
- The accommodation support offer has been recently increased. On-going partnership working with Wolverhampton Homes has enabled an increase in the accommodation portfolio for young people from 15 to 30 flats across Wolverhampton. In addition eight extra Housing Support workers are being recruited to offer bespoke packages of support to young people living independently. This will enable more young people to live in Wolverhampton with the appropriate level of support to enable them to live successful independent lives.

3.6 Reduce number of Care Leavers who are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET)

- Weekly Education Employment Training (EET) drop-ins began in September 2015. There has been a mixed response, but staff are incentivising young people to attend in order that appropriate support can be offered to support young people into education, employment and training.

- There are currently 75% of Care Leavers classified as EET. This is an increase from 51.5% in September 2015. (This figure does not include young people who are not available for the labour market).
- The Transitions Team are currently completing EET profiles for each Care Leaver. This will identify which young people need mentoring, work experience and/or employment, and will enable provision of appropriate support to move more young people into Employment, Education and Training.
- All post 18 NEET Care Leavers are now being referred to Talent Match. This is a Lottery funded ,voluntary organisation that are targeting supporting vulnerable groups of 18-25 year olds into education employment or training. They offer varied levels of support depending on the needs of each young person.
- The EET action planning group, attended by representatives of CoWC and its partners is addressing this agenda. The key outcomes to date are:
 - Inclusion of Looked after Children (LAC) and Care Leaver (CL) opportunities in Procurement contracts of £170,000 plus.
 - CL and LAC specific features in the Wolverhampton skills model of delivery for Local Authority work experiences, apprenticeships, traineeships and internships.
 - Packages of support for employers, educators, and trainers are now being developed ready for the young people taking up these opportunities.
 - A prepare to work support directory for LAC and CL is also being devised.
 - Six extra work experience opportunities will be available for Looked after Children and Care Leavers in 2016.

3.7 Increase health and leisure opportunities for Care Leavers:

- Care Leavers will have their membership of the Youth Zone paid for by the Transition Service to support opportunities to take part in services offered there. In addition the Care Leavers' forum takes place at Youth Zone every first Wednesday of the month and young people can utilise all senior sessions for 50 pence following the forum meeting.
- A 12 week independence programme for Care Leavers takes place each Friday afternoon facilitated by youth zone staff.
- An allotment for Care Leavers has been sourced and agreed. Tools and equipment have been purchased.

3.8 Improve partnership with services that support the most vulnerable group of Care Leavers:

- Update to electronic recording system to identify vulnerable groups of Care Leavers is now in place.
- A programme has been developed in conjunction with the Youth Zone to be delivered to young parents and expectant parents. This is due to be implemented.
- A joint Local Authority and Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) protocol has been developed to enable Care Leavers to apply for benefits, where this is necessary, six weeks prior to their 18 birthday. This will avoid any delay in payment when the young person is 18.

3.9 It is expected that the combined efforts of all partners to support the above actions will decrease barriers for Care Leavers in the community. Increasing 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 will promote aspirations and opportunities for 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.

4.0 Financial implications

4.1 The Council has not attracted any additional funding directly for the New Belongings Project.

4.2 Any costs to date that have been incurred on implementing the project have been contained within existing Children and Young People's approved budgets.

(NM/14042016/V)

5.0 Legal implications

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

(TC/13042016/E)

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 There are no equalities implications as The New Belongings programme is supporting improving outcomes for one of the most vulnerable group of young outcomes

7.0 Environmental implications

7.1 There are no environmental implications.

8.0 Human resources implications

8.1 There are no human resources implications.

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

9.1 There are no corporate landlord implications.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

10.1 There are no background papers.