

Children & Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

The Housing Project - an update and proposals for a second project.

17 November 2020

Recommendation

That Members note the contents of this report.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The House Project is a highly successful, psychologically informed, programme offering support to cohorts of young people supporting them to become independent and move into their own property via an enhanced education; training and employment pathway. It is a sustainable 'invest to save' approach which improves outcomes for young people as they take their first steps into adulthood with core aims of: them becoming better tenants; reducing costs of tenancy breakdown and reducing poor outcomes for Care Leavers. The House Project encompasses a long-term holistic approach which uses resources effectively and sustains a young peoples' progress. Currently this project is only available to young people in the North of the county.
- 1.2 The House Project was established in Warwickshire in the North of the county in 2018. A key component of the success of the House Project is the support that young people receive from workers and from other young people who are part of the project. To date two cohorts of young people have been part of the House Project within Warwickshire.
- 1.3 Cohort 1: Eight young people were supported to move into their own properties. These young people still require light touch support such as check ins and help with any queries they may have. Cohort 1 are managing well in their accommodation, dealing with finances and their day to day lives with reduced intervention. Young People plan their own meetings with their support worker and drop into The House Project base at Portland House, Nuneaton, on an ad-hoc basis. There is also the option of attending a 2-weekly drop-in session.
- 1.4 Accommodation is as follows for Cohort 1;
 - Three young people residing in Social Housing provided by NBBC
 - Five young people privately renting

1.5 The House Project continue to support young people even when moving on from their House Project properties. One example is assisting a young person to relocate out of area in line with their wishes and another example is supporting a different young person to move in with their long term partner and new baby.

1.6 Cohort 2: Thirteen young people were shortlisted to be part of Cohort 2, twelve started the program 3 subsequently decided to leave the programme. Positively we were then able to recruit two new young people who were identified as being a potential match via the Children In Care process. Cohort 2 is proving to be successful despite the disruption of COVID-19. Prior to the pandemic we were able to start group inductions each Monday from 17:00 – 19:00. Young people have continued to be supported through the pandemic through virtual meetings, doorstep visits, provision of food hampers and continuation of an induction programme, House Project Learning Plans and the online AQA accreditation platform.

1.7 Accommodation is as follows for Cohort 2;

- Three young people are in Social Housing provided by NBBC
- One young person is in a property provided by Rugby Borough Council
- Two young people have property identified from Rugby Borough Council
- Three young people are privately renting.
- One young person chose to remain in a 'Staying Put' arrangement with their foster carer
- One young person has moved in with their boyfriend who has his own accommodation.

1.8 The table below shows the areas of housing needs per district that were required for young people who are part of Cohort 2. The housing will be a mix of Social Housing, Private Landlords and Housing Association.

Area	Number of houses needed
Nuneaton	7
Bedworth	1
Coventry	1
Rugby	2

1.9 Whilst the lockdown continued so too did our support to young people ensuring we have been able to meet their needs. This has included supporting two young people with their pregnancies, a parental bereavement and a grandfather passing due to COVID-19. We have continued our positive messages to our young people on social media, delivered mental health parcels (chocolate, positive postcards, worksheets) and acquired two bikes for our young people.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The annual cost of the House Project is currently £175,000.
- 2.2 The House Project has a number of benefits and cost savings measures for young people that are associated with the project, which are hard to quantify. To date no young people associated with the House Project have lost their tenancy either with private rented landlords or local housing providers. Typically, there are a proportion of care experienced young people who are overrepresented in terms of evictions and associated costs with enforcing evictions leading to homelessness. Invariably this leads to further unintended consequences such as mental health difficulties and unemployment. The House Project supports young people to have a sense of control and ownership of their lives and tenancies and an increased feeling of belonging which prevents evictions and allows young people to realise their potential and positively contribute to life in Warwickshire.
- 2.3 The House Project ethos is to support young people to build peer to peer support networks. This allows young people to support each other and build relationships which results in reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation. This positively impacts on their mental health, educational attainment for those in college and further studies and in gaining meaningful employment. The non-financial benefits for young people including increased confidence, attainment and happiness cannot be overstated and all of which lead to increased positive outcomes for young people.

3. Environmental Implications

- 3.1 With the increase in online training it is anticipated that there will be a reduction in travel and printing paper copies. This will have a positive impact on the environment.
- 3.2 Should a House Project be set up in the South of the County, this will lead to a reduction in travel for young people who live in Stratford, Leamington Spa or Warwick.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 The impact of the House Project and the project outcomes for young people have to date been extremely positive. The House Project is a good example of a restorative and relationships-based approach to working with young people which is solution focused. Young People are being accommodated in their own properties and successfully managing to maintain and sustain their tenancies. The support House Project provides the young people supports them to develop the confidence to transition into adulthood. The community of support around them gives them someone to go to for help if issues arise or problems need solving.

- 4.2 The lack of appropriate housing continues to be a risk to the success of the House Project. For the model to be successful housing needs to be sustainable, affordable and timely. Good progress has been made with District & Boroughs housing teams, but further work is required with the districts and boroughs committing to make properties available across the county. Private Landlords and Developers are interested in the House Project but are concerned about young peoples' ages and their investments.

5. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

Action	Who is responsible	Timescales
Begin Cohort 3 of The Warwickshire North House Project	Matt Smith	January 2021
Complete a paper considering the expansion of the Warwickshire South House Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with representatives from Stratford and Warwick District. • Complete paper with financial plan. - Identify a base - Recruit staff (if agreed) - Recruit young people - Resource suitable housing 	Matt Smith Peter Berridge	January – July 2021

6. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Comments from House Project Young People.

Appendix 2 - Issues, Risks & Developments

	Name	Contact Information
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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): None

Other members: None

Appendix 1

Comments from House Project Young People.

Care Leaver, Age 18:

'Thanks to the House Project I am now in my own property; I have the chance for a new life with new doors to open.'

Care Leaver, 18:

'I'd be homeless right now living in a B&B. Instead I am living in my own home. I've got the support I need to live independently, and I do. They helped with bills and always make sure that I'm healthy. They are always there when I need advice.'

Care Leaver, Female – 17:

'HP is one of the best things that have happened to me, they have supported me through the good times and bad. You get to meet the most incredible people that stay with you though life. The staff have constantly push me into the best version of myself. I love HP, just want to say thanks for never giving up!'

Care Leaver, Male -17:

'House Project has helped me open up more as a person and helped me get to where I am today and they have helped me find a course to do, to get a job I want. They have really helped and supported me'.

Care Leaver, Female – 17:

'House Project has supported me in understanding who I am and helping me overcome the challenges I have had. It has also helped me make new friends and has gotten me ready to live independently.'

Care Leaver, Female – 17:

'To me the house project means a lot as it gives looked after young people like myself a better chance of getting our own place and taking the next step to adulthood with the guidance of our Key Workers. I have made a family in the house project the family I never had'.

Care Leaver, Male – 18:

'This project is very helpful in many ways including managing money and managing to live independently which I find very useful for me in the future because I will be able to live by myself with my independence skills'.

Care Leaver, Female -17:

'It gave me a second chance with people who believed in me when nobody else would'.

Issues, Risks & Development Needs

Housing – A lot of searching and negotiating is needed to locate suitable housing provision. Having under 18's has meant WCC is acting as Guarantor. We have developed a 'Equitable Tenancy' agreement prior to giving an 'Introduction Tenancy'. Sourcing enough housing for the project is our primary development need. We have started to develop links in other areas, and with alternative providers to ensure we have enough properties available for future cohorts. This issue needs to be looked at a strategic level and is the most significant risk to the project.

Having a base to work from – Having Portland House, although expensive, has proven to be a success. Letting the young people develop a base they feel comfortable to meet at and drop in has enabled staff to build strong, meaningful, challenging relationships. Portland House is currently on a 3-year lease moving the project to another venue would be a risk to the project.

Proactive Staff Team – Having this enables the project to work flexible to support the changing needs of the young people. Staff have the opportunity to work with each young person on their specific needs. A plan is put together with the young person to identify their learning, safety plan and development needs. There is a risk of losing staff and the impact this will have on the project and the young people they support intensively.

Measured Risk Taking – Using Clinical Psychology formulation and safety planning we use Barry Masons model of 'Safe Uncertainty'. We believe in handing over responsibility to these Young People even though they are under 18yrs old. This is uncomfortable for some people and it sometimes prevents organisations and services working with the Project. In particular Letting Agencies generally will not allow any under 18's in their properties. Setting up services for example utilities & broadband are also difficult for under 18's, we have struggled to find affordable deals for our young people.

It's alright not to have all the answers. Young people are told at the beginning of the project that this is a developmental journey with them. We emphasise that things will evolve and change as time goes by and as their personal circumstances change. It is ok not to know the destination, but we will travel with them on the way.