

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET
SUBJECT:	STAYING CLOSE – DFE GRANT FUNDING
DATE OF DECISION:	13 SEPTEMBER 2022
REPORT OF:	COUNCILLOR DR PAFFEY CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND LEARNING

<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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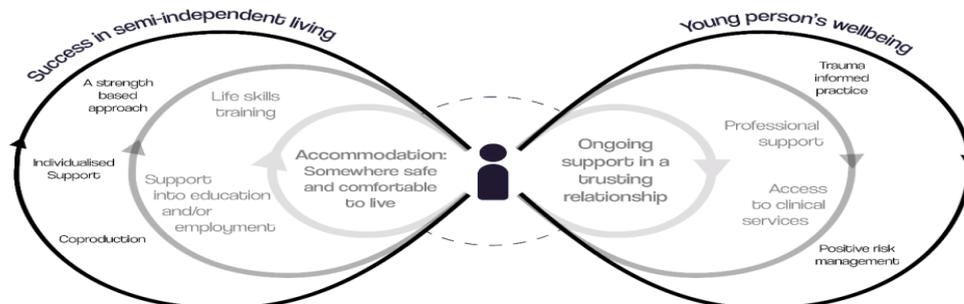
STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY
N/A

BRIEF SUMMARY

Staying Close is a way to support young people who are leaving residential care to build and remain connected to strong networks that they require to reduce isolation, mental health, housing and employment challenges. Changes at the point that young people leave care can be disruptive to them, with them often losing relationships with key supporters and networks. Staying Close models therefore aim to provide positive networks for young people and enduring relationships to enhance their leaving care experiences.

The DFE guide for the key components of the model is highlighted pictorially below.

Staying Close – Supporting young people into independence



Via a bidding process, SCC has been granted £717,000 over the next three years to develop what we have called Connected, a model to improve outcomes for young

people leaving residential care. The DfE altered the criteria for bidding to allow us to include young people who are in supported accommodation. SCC has several young people in (often costly) supported accommodation who would benefit from Connected

The funding pays for additional staffing alongside an outcomes framework via a digital tool for the life of the three-year project. Young people within the Connected cohort will live in small groups in two tiers of local accommodation, initially receiving very intensive support from staff, with contact most days, followed by a gradual reduction of support until they are tenancy ready. This should take two years. Combined with the support of a multi-agency team, this will allow for strong relationship-based practice and access to targeted support. The model is designed to support care leavers to thrive, contribute as citizens, reduce the emotional distress and significant council costs related to young people who do not do well after leaving residential care. Over the funding period we would be supporting 24-32 young people depending on how quickly we can get the set up completed. This includes young people who are due to join and who will be leaving the accommodation offer to move into the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

	(i)	To approve the Staying Close Connected Project and agree to accept the grant of £717k over 3 years provided by DFE.
	(ii)	To approve the request to fund the rental costs of properties Circa £3500/month (this is not funded by the grant but is required to make the project viable).

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1.	Due to their difficult life experiences many care leavers leave care with increased vulnerabilities in relation to employment, mental health, housing and relationships. Those leaving residential care are particularly vulnerable because on leaving they lose important relationships and often they are not yet ready for independence.
2.	For the Connected project cohort, on leaving high-cost residential care or supported accommodation at age 18, young people will initially move to 'Intensive support' accommodation, moving on to 'extended support' accommodation when they are ready. Designated Personal Advisors (PAs) will build strong relationships with young people during their 17 th year. They will have exceptionally low caseloads and will be based within the young people's accommodation, providing strong relationships and intensive support, including overnight. This is how good parents support their young people when they reach the age of 18.
3.	A multi-agency team around the young people will provide timely, flexible, specialist support on issues such as health, mental health, employment, education and training, or substance misuse.
4.	Young people who are engaged in the Connected project will also be able to access the general Care Leavers Offer from Southampton City Council, including positive leisure activities, support around ETE activity, relationships etc. The refreshed Care Leavers Offer remains in draft and will shortly be presented to Cabinet for consideration.
5.	Due to the use of the Connected PAs who will be employed to work directly with these young people, caseloads for the main PA cohort who currently work with all care leavers will reduce. This will enable increased support to the young people who are not in the Connected cohort.

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ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

7.	<p>To reject the grant funding and not undertake this project.</p> <p>The current staffing within the Pathways Through Care service does not allow for the level of intensive support that this project promotes, therefore without this investment most young people will not receive intensive support.</p> <p>Young people will continue to require costly supported and emergency accommodation post 18, but without intensive, targeted support to reduce their support needs over time. The anticipated savings will not be achieved.</p>
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8.	<p>To reject the grant funding and still undertake the housing aspect of the project. This is likely to be cost effective taking into account the current high private sector housing costs. However we cannot provide intensive support within current resources, and the DfE pathfinder projects have determined that this aspect of the project is critical.</p> <p>The DfE project will promote learning from other participating LAs. This is important for the sustainability of the project post-grant funding.</p> <p>Embarking on the project without DfE funds and infrastructure would reduce the positive impact on young people and cost benefits.</p>
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DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

9.	<p>SCC currently has 555 children (under 18) in our care, 47 are living in registered children’s homes in or outside of the City. A small number of 16/17 year olds live in semi-independent accommodation. Some young people do not do well after leaving such accommodation, leading to a succession of increasingly costly and unsettling moves. The Connected cohort will be carefully selected from this cohort. They will have a range of complex needs including challenges in keeping stable accommodation, emotional health and risk of exploitation. Most will be NEET and have minimal independence skills.</p> <p>The model centres around four local (leased) four-bedroomed homes, two will provide intensive care and support and two will offer extended (move-on) accommodation and support. The homes will include a lounge, a meeting/dining/computing room and an office/sleep in room.</p> <p>We will partner with high-quality local HMO landlords there is already some interest. This will be to create the accommodation offer needed for young people. This will provide supportive homes which are staffed by SCC employees to help manage the transition through to independence. When working out the contracts with the landlords we will discuss minimum expectations around the accommodation aspect of this project. There is already some interest. Southampton is well-served by such accommodation; at present this is commissioned via expensive spot purchasing arrangements.</p> <p>The leasing costs cannot be paid for using DfE grant funding as the DfE has determined that these are akin to capital expenditure. However, all of the young people in this cohort would otherwise have moved on to high-cost semi-independent provision funded by SCC.</p>
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	<p>The PAs will be based in Connected homes, with small caseloads, supported by a multi-disciplinary offer to help young people with emotional and physical health needs, exploitation, substance misuse, EET and life skills. The PAs will be trained in trauma-informed and restorative approaches and motivational interviewing, in keeping with SCC's practice framework.</p> <p>Intensive support homes will be staffed for a minimum of four nights per week. Weekly house meetings, facilitated by the PAs, will enable residents to have their say in the running of their homes, also promoting negotiation skills.</p> <p>Intensive support homes will promote emotional wellbeing and independence living skills, engaging young people in EET activity. Within a year we envisage that young people will: be engaged in therapeutic support; have good self-care and independence skills; have a clear EET pathway, and will therefore be ready to move to extended support accommodation.</p> <p>Extended support homes will have the same accommodation specification but will not include sleep-in staffing. Connected PAs will have an office, promoting visibility, accessibility and consistent management of the homes. The main focus of the second year is consolidation, EET and being tenancy-ready, with a focus on budgeting. The bespoke offer from the MDT remains accessible to the young people. The PAs will support young people initially with weekly visits, with outreach slowly reducing as they approach 21 years and beyond.</p> <p>The model will be supported by TRACS, a digital platform providing a visual timeline of a young person and their support network's activity on accommodation stability, wellbeing, EET activity, relationships and independent living skills. It has been designed (independently) in partnership with some SCC staff. We have undertaken a DPIA for its use. This will be complemented by the use of the ICOMPASSUK interactive tool to enable tracking of the project and the progress of young people provided with TRACS. This is funded within the DFE grant monies.</p> <p>The leaving care service already has a quota of social housing tenancies; we are hope to extend this further as part of our local offer in the future. These quota flats will be one of the final move-on steps for Connected young people, alongside other tenancy options.</p> <p>The model builds on the refreshed draft Southampton Local Offer which includes a personalised budget for health and well-being, a positive activity budget, support with EET activity and a care leavers grant.</p>
10.	<p>Consultation has been undertaken with:</p> <p>The Head of Young People's Services, who will ensure that emotional and therapeutic support is available and access to the Missing, Exploited and Trafficked service (MET). Substance misuse support will be provided by No Limits.</p> <p>The Young Persons' Employment and Learning Hubs, who are committed to the project. There is additional Employment Officer time built into Destination 22 who will directly support the project.</p> <p>The ICU. Children Looked After Nursing support has been built into the costs of the project, funded via the DFE grant.</p>
11.	<p>There are reporting streams into the DFE with a quarterly update and progress reports. The DFE are likely to engage with young people and staff to feed into</p>

	national learning. The think tank 'What Works for Children's Social Care' are leading on this research and analysis.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Capital/Revenue</u>	
12.	There is no proposed capital expenditure.
13.	<p>There will be revenue costs to fund the leases of the properties – these costs will be circa £420k over 3 years. These costs will be offset and more by the reduction in placement costs for this cohort.</p> <p>The finance breakdown below reflects the revenue costs for additional staffing required and other team costs as well as the house leases.</p> <p>The estimated cost reduction shown is based on a sample of current children that could be placed in this setting and the costs of their current placement that would be avoided.</p> <p>From 2023-24, more children will enter this service adding to the cost reductions expected.</p> <p>The exit strategy after the 3 years is that the entire project will still reduce costs overall, even without the DFE funding contribution. Furthermore, the scheme is expected to expand beyond the 8 placements assumed in the table below, this will provide further reductions in the high costs incurred on placements and again more than covering the HMO/staffing costs for the new accommodation arrangement proposed here.</p>
14.	The financial breakdown for the project is as follows:

Staying Close Breakdown of Costs and Estimated Cost Reduction					
		Half Year			
Area of Spend	Detail	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
Staffing	Program Manager	33,724	67,447	67,447	168,618
Staffing	Personal Advisors	66,648	133,296	133,296	333,240
Staffing	Residential Workers	38,730	77,460	77,460	193,650
Staffing oncosts	Essential User	1,440	2,880	2,880	7,200
Staffing oncosts	Staff Parking Permits	3,000	6,000	6,000	15,000
Staffing Contingency	Staffing Cover	28,700	57,400	57,400	143,500
Timeline Route and Health Commissioning / Additional CLA Nurse and Psychology	Progress monitoring system Additional CLA Nurse time	14,500 3,500	20,233 7,000	20,233 7,000	54,966 17,500
Rental	House of Multiple Occupation leases	84,000	168,000	168,000	420,000
Grant funding		(143,542)	(287,083)	(287,083)	(717,708)
Totals		130,700	252,633	252,633	635,966
Indicative current Placement costs reduction:	Per Week (£)	Half Year Cost Reduction	Full Year	Full Year	Total
Child 1	2,200	(57,200)	(114,400)	(114,400)	(286,000)
Child 2	1,200	(31,200)	(62,400)	(62,400)	(156,000)
Child 3	960	(24,960)	(49,920)	(49,920)	(124,800)
Child 4	1,086	(28,236)	(56,472)	(56,472)	(141,180)
Child 5	3,146	(81,796)	(163,592)	(163,592)	(408,980)
Child 6	1,650	(42,900)	(85,800)	(85,800)	(214,500)
Child 7	3,146	(81,796)	(163,592)	(163,592)	(408,980)
Child 8	960	(24,960)	(49,920)	(49,920)	(124,800)
Total		(373,048)	(746,096)	(746,096)	(1,865,240)
Estimated Net Cost Reduction		(242,349)	(493,463)	(493,463)	(1,229,275)
<u>Property/Other</u>					
15.	The project will lease HMO style properties meaning that there are no direct asset management issues.				
16.	Should the project prove to be sustainable in the longer term that SCC may wish to consider whether this would be better supported via a capital asset.				
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS					
<u>Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:</u>					
17.	Children Act 1989				
18.	Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000				
<u>Other Legal Implications:</u>					
19.	S.149 Equality Act 2010 places a duty on Local Authorities to exercise their functions having regard to the need to eliminate harassment, victimisation and				

	discrimination on the basis of any protected characteristic (including age) as well as promoting and fostering good relations between those who have and those who do not have protected characteristics. The barriers faced by young people in care engage the proactive duties set out in the Act.. The proposals within the report will contribute to the targets set out in the Public Sector Equality duty as set out above.
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RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

20..	Accommodation not available The service has already started a dialogue with a company who develop HMO properties. They are interested in engaging with the project. It is not anticipated that engaging with suitable HMOs will be difficult due to the number of such landlords in the City.
21.	Staffing levels not filled: Personal Advisors roles attract a great deal of interest during recruitment (approx. 10 for every vacant post). This is a specific and different PA role and there is likely to be a large number of applications.
22.	Young people leave the cohort/project or do not engage with the PA support: This is a possibility however this is a strong offer for a very vulnerable cohort who will be supported to get to understand the project and the housing offer before they leave care. Should young people leave the project early they will be supported to transition to the main service in a planned way.
23.	General Risks: Working with vulnerable young people always carries some risk, especially within their accommodation and overnight. The Connected PAs will be trained in Trauma Informed Practice, systemic approaches and de-escalation techniques. They will receive regular supervision from the Pathways Through Care service and clinical support from the BRS.

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

24.	The following strategies will be held in mind during the implementation of this project: 1.1 The Children and Young People’s Strategy 1.2 Children in Care – Our Corporate Parenting Strategy 1.3 Southampton City Children and Young People’s Emotional and Mental Health Wellbeing Plan
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KEY DECISION?	Yes
WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	We are not yet clear where in the City accommodation will be sourced. However any leased accommodation will already be similarly used in its current purpose
<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u> <u>NONE</u>	
Appendices	
1.	Equality and Safety Impact Assessment

Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	None	
Equality Impact Assessment		
Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out.		YES
Data Protection Impact Assessment		
Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out.		No
Other Background Documents		
Other Background documents available for inspection at:		
Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)	
1.	None	