



## **CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**Thursday, 10 March 2022**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION</b>

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

The Children, Young People and Education Committee held on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021 requested an update on progress in relation to the Children's Residential Transformation Programme as part of the forward plan. The report below offers this update.

The report impacts all wards but is not a key decision.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to the report and request that the Director of Children's Services bring-an update report to the Committee on the progress of the Programme in 12 months.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 The Children, Young People and Education Committee held on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021 requested an update on progress in relation to the Children's Residential Transformation Programme as part of the forward plan.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 A range of options were considered in relation to the Children's Residential Transformation Programme in the report considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021. There is no reason to consider other options within this report as it is an update on progress in relation to the options agreed in October 2021.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The case for change leading to the establishment of a Partnership Accommodation Board for Children Looked After and Care Experienced Young People remains compelling and clear.
1. The council needs to ensure there are sufficient local, high quality placements for local children. Currently 74 74 residential placements for children looked after are commissioned and only 40% of those placements are in-borough
  2. The increase in costs for children's residential care nationally shows no sign of slowing and the projects below aim to help address some of the financial pressures on the council
  3. We need to support the provision of high-quality provision for the borough's most vulnerable children
  4. We need to increase sufficiency of local placements in line with our statutory sufficiency duty
  5. By investing in different models of delivery we reduce the risk and begin to bring balance to a market dominated by private providers who use growth acquisition models to increase market share, funded by private equity, resulting in increasing risk and volatility in the care system. Children who have all experienced trauma and neglect need and deserve stability
- 3.2 Overseeing the four current projects is a Partnership Accommodation Programme Board with the Director of Children's Services as Senior Responsible Officer.
- 3.3 These projects aim to encourage resilience in the supply of placements locally. Officers across the council from social care, commissioning, legal, procurement, finance, housing, assets, regeneration have explored various options over the past 12 –18 months leading to a mixed model of enhancing provision locally.
- ### **4.0 PROJECT UPDATES**
- #### **In-House Provision**
- 4.1 Pursuing an in-house model with the expansion of Willowtree (currently a short break provision for children with disabilities soon to be registered as a children's home for 6

children). All building works on the extension have now been completed. The building was officially handed over to the Local Authority on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2021. There remain some outstanding snagging issues which have been identified and are being remedied in conjunction with the architect and building firm. We are still looking at the possibility of the inclusion of additional work being carried out to existing parts of Willowtree to bring the entire building up to the standard of the new extension. This work will not have any detrimental impact on the running of the service and will not prevent the service from opening.

- 4.2 All additional equipment and furniture required to complete the refurbishment has been ordered and either received or will be delivered to the building shortly. Staffing and recruitment is still ongoing. There has been an influx of new starters, however recruiting residential care staff for the required positions is currently an issue nationally across the sector. The majority of day staff vacancies are filled and there are still some night vacancies, but interviews are ongoing and there is confidence that we will be able to fill these posts. Recruitment for a Registered Manager is ongoing; there has been very little response both to the permanent post advert and via the recruitment agency. Again, this is currently an issue across this sector nationally. Work continues to encourage applicants as the lack of a registered manager could be viewed as a risk by Ofsted when they consider the variation in registration. We will be able to evidence that work is continually ongoing to recruit to the post and we will be able to evidence how there is currently good management oversight of the service via the Responsible Individual.
- 4.3 All the paperwork required to be in place in preparation for applying to Ofsted for the variation has now been completed. The application for the variation will be submitted to Ofsted week commencing 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022. This will prompt an Ofsted inspection of Willowtree, to judge whether the variation can be granted.
- 4.4 Work has begun to identify children and young people who would be appropriately matched to move to Willowtree. Matching discussions will begin with families and young people week commencing 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022.
- 4.5 **Transforming Care Project;** Following a successful capital grant process with NHSE the Council was initially awarded £866,000 (reported to Children, Young People and Education Committee on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2021 and Policy and Resource Committee on the 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021) Wirral is purchasing and opening a 3-bedded community provision to prevent admissions to Tier 4 mental health hospital beds and to prevent out of borough placements for children and young people with learning disabilities and autism. We are in the conveyancing stage of purchase with relevant structural reports and specialist reports having been completed. The legal and procurement teams are progressing the terms with a registered provider to appoint an employer's agent to take forward the coordination of the refurbishment works. The planning application for change of use has been granted. Current NHSE timescales present a challenge to the project as purchase needs to be completed prior to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. The refurbishment costs can be carried over into the new financial year. Regular internal reporting on this project is via the capital programme. Lead members, spokespersons and ward members will be regularly updated and when purchase is finalised service provider engagement with neighbours will be undertaken.

- 4.6 **Care Leaver Accommodation:** The award of a three-year contract, following a full tendering process was completed with a start date of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2022, to a local registered provider to provide eleven units of high-quality accommodation for Care Experienced Young People 16-18. This is a three-tiered project over three houses with varying levels of support to meet needs flexibly. Tier 1 and Tier 2 both provide 24/7 on-site support with waking nights 365 days a year. The service comprises of two homes offering group living accommodation to four young people in each setting. Young people are supported from the ages of 16 - 17 to promote their independent living skills, assist with education, training and employment, budgeting, daily living skills as well as signposting to appropriate mental health services. Young people are also supported with work around healthy relationships and staying safe along with other areas of support specific to the individual. A flexible approach is taken to how support is offered as well as engaging young people with activities such as basic life stories boards, where appropriate, and more interactive styles of support. The re-settlement passport is used when the young person is ready as a tool for assessing their ability to manage independently.
- 4.7 Tier 3 offers three self-contained flats giving young people a taster of living independently. There is an office on site, however this is staffed to provide waking nights 365 days a year and floating support, as required, during the week. Support staff are not based on site all the time during the day and will attend when needed. Furniture is provided to young people including a double bed, white goods and wardrobes. Young people from Tier 1 and Tier 2, when they are ready, move through to Tier 3. The Registered Provider will support young people to secure their own accommodation, either via Property Pool Plus or via general needs accommodation with the Registered Provider.
- 4.8 The scheme prioritises young people, who are currently placed in residential care, and as part of their care plan, are ready to make the transition from residential care into supported accommodation. The Commissioning team have an identified cohort of young people who meet the criteria for the scheme and consultation takes places with the social worker, personal advisor and independent reviewing officer with final matching decisions endorsed by Childrens Services 16-18 Panel.
- 4.9 **Community Interest Company:** The We Are Juno residential Childrens Homes proposal considered at Committees throughout 2021 forms another part of the ongoing solution-finding to a very complex problem. The full reports gave members background information to Wirral's approach to the residential children's home market development. The agreed investment will provide Wirral Children Looked After with the opportunity to be matched across 4 different homes with capacity to offer a home to 16 children. The homes will bring a social pedagogy model to the Wirral, a workforce development partnership with a local University partner, an evaluation of impact and a child psychologist to the homes to support the emotional health and wellbeing of the children. It brings a cost model fixed for 3 years, a rich network of services rooted in the community and inward investment into the borough. By way of an update to Committee as at the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022 the loan agreement and memorandum of understanding have been finalised and signed copies sent to the company for signature. The Head of Homes and first Registered Manager have been appointed and a recruitment strategy and plan is in place for the remainder of the staff team. The first home will have building work commence during February 2022 with a 26 week completion period. The regulatory registration process will

follow with an Autumn 2022 opening timescale. Sites for the second home are being scoped and lead members, spokespersons and ward members will be briefed at each stage with the company undertaking immediate neighbourhood engagement as each home is progressed.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 As the above projects directly link to the Council's medium to long term financial savings plan a finance sub-committee of the Partnership Programme Board outlined above has been established to provide scrutiny and challenge to the projects. Clear savings targets totalling £1m have been submitted for approval to the Policy and Resources Committee meeting of 15 February 2022, as part of the 2022/23 budget and are attributed to each scheme and will be monitored closely to ensure they are achieved. The social value aspects of each project add value to the Council's local offer for children looked after and quality outcomes will be reported on against each scheme.

## **6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The following Legislation is relevant to the provision of care homes for children:-  
The Care Act 2014 and supporting guidance;  
The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015; and  
The Care Standards Act 2000

6.2 Local Authorities await the publication of Government national standards for supported accommodation providers who will be required to be registered with OFSTED by April 2023. The full registration schedule will be announced in the summer of 2022, with pilot inspections from April 2023 and full implementation by April 2024. We have already started to engage the local market in the preparatory process for this change and have scheduled a full engagement event with local providers for March 2022. We would expect all good quality local providers to already meet the standards however a check against national standards and a culture of continuous improvement will enhance the local offer

6.3 Commissioning of any placements in any residential care facility will need to comply with the requirements of all relevant procurement obligations including the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and Part 4 Section 6 of the Council's Constitution – Contract Procedure Rules.

## **7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

7.1 There are no significant Information Technology issues arising out of the report.

7.2 There are no significant staffing issues arising out of the report. However, officers from across several departments across the Council have been involved in the collaboration with and work with We are Juno and will continue to be involved either indirectly through overseeing various elements of the project from a Council perspective or through representation within the formal governance arrangements of the social enterprise backbone organisation.

7.3 Work will need to continue with the Council's Asset teams to explore the feasibility of acquiring property or land to support the development.

## 8.0 RELEVANT RISKS

8.1 In relation to the development of **four CIC Children's Homes** the risks to the Council include:

- a) Failure to provide financial savings to the Council: This risk must be weighed up against the improved offer of homes for vulnerable children and young people and the potential quality of support to improve outcomes for young people. The escalating placement costs which are continuing to rise means that alternative options need to be explored even if they do not achieve the full financial return expected. The expected savings from this programme, once fully operational, are estimated to be £166,400 per year;
- b) Failing to deliver the programme outlined and the children's homes on Wirral: The loan agreement includes conditions for repayment of the loan if the project is not completed. The impact of this risk is mitigated by the market equivalent rate of interest to be charged on any loan made and the provision for non-repayment of debt;
- c) Reputational damage should the homes fail to obtain registration or do not deliver on the quality of provision promised: This risk will be mitigated by the Council having oversight of the progress of the project throughout its establishment and will be able to guide and support the backbone social enterprise organisation. The Council will have influence over the strategic direction of the backbone organisation and be regularly sighted on performance monitoring and quality assurance activity/analysis.

8.2 The risk with the in-house Willowtree Residential Children's Home is the home not being fully registered and operational in order to reach the savings targets for 2022-2023. This risk is mitigated by matching discussions and future planning with all key stakeholders, parents, carers, social care teams, independent reviewing officers to ensure occupancy levels are high and children suitably matched. There is a highly experienced Responsible Individual overseeing this process. A further risk with this project is the difficulty in recruiting a Registered Manager which may impact on the OFSTED registration process. Every possible recruitment route is being followed to mitigate this risk

8.3 The risk to the **Transforming Care** project is timescales and multi-faceted project milestones hitting their target completion dates in order to meet the NHSE capital grant requirements, specifically the purchase of the property before the end of this financial year. The project team is mitigating this risk by updating the NHSE Regional Lead weekly and keeping a tight rein on all strands of delivery targets.

8.4 Sustaining high occupancy levels remains the main risk for the Care Leavers project. The impact of COVID meant the full scheme was slow to start with each tier of the provision opening in a staggered fashion. Matching considerations are key to the overall outcomes for the young people and this has at times impacted on the occupancy levels. During the pandemic we have matched young people coming out

of disrupted foster placements, where the financial risk begins to impact. The business modelling for this project is based on young people stepping across from residential care. This risk is mitigated by rigorous oversight of referrals to the project by the Care Leavers Team, Commissioning, the 16-18 Panel and the Provider, ensuring there are no delays in our own systems and processes which might prevent young people entering the provisions. The outcomes we are seeing for the young people who have accessed the project over the past year are outstanding, high levels of engagement with employment, education and/or training and high levels of engagement with relevant support services such as mental health services.

- 8.5 The total recurrent savings for 2022/23 totalling £1m must be fully achieved in year. If any of the risks above materialise, this may put the full achievement of these savings at risk. As part of the 2022/23 budget monitoring, a new Council wide Star Chamber type process will be proposed to ensure savings are on target to be achieved. This is vital to the medium and long term financial sustainability of the Council. If at any time, risks materialise that may mean the savings may not be achieved, immediate mitigation will be implemented to offset this.

## **9.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 9.1 Fundamental to the development of new residential models has been understanding what young people want and need. Their views and aspirations have been integral to shaping and designing the models outlined. They have said:

*“Good quality homes and accommodation for us are what we want **you** to make **your** priority”*

*“We want to be supported by people who care”*

*“We want to be near our family, school and friends”*

- 9.2 Care experienced children continue to have the loudest voice throughout the implementation and delivery of the above projects.
- 9.3 The Chair and Spokespersons of the Children, Young People and Education Committee have been briefed on the projects and regular progress updates have been presented to Corporate Parenting Board. Further regular detailed briefings will be provided to the Chair and Spokespersons and relevant ward members going forward.
- 9.4 Children and young people have played an integral part in designing and influencing the development of the projects. Their voice will be maintained throughout.

## **10.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The projects reported on above will bring more choice locally for children, young people looked after, with a vastly increased likelihood of being able to offer them provisions to meet their needs on the Wirral.
- 10.2 Consistency of education, peers and contact with family and the team of local professionals around Children Looked After is likely to lead to much greater emotional and placement stability.

- 10.3 Looking to provide excellent accommodation standards in good areas, near good schools raises aspirations for Children Looked After.
- 10.4 Environmental considerations will consider the sensory needs and triggers for children with adverse childhood experiences and who have suffered trauma and neglect including noise, physical structure, colours and patterns, labelling, lighting, window coverings, smells and temperature.
- 10.5 An Equality Impact Assessment will be required for each project with a view to assessing and mitigating any equality impacts.

## **11.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 There is the opportunity during any purchase, lease or refurbishment of property to ensure that a low carbon footprint design is undertaken.
- 11.2 The recommendations contained in this report are expected to have a neutral effect on emissions and greenhouse gases.

## **12.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 The projects outlined within this report have the potential to bring significant additional investment to the borough of Wirral. In summary, this includes:
- We are Juno have confirmed £250,000 from the National Lottery Community Fund for a 2-year development grant to support youth participation, social pedagogy learning and evaluation.
  - Segelman Trust: investment of £150,000 of development grant to support core costs for We Are Juno
  - Steve Morgan Foundation have committed to invest £600,000 plus building of high specification children's homes on land identified and work is progressing with social landlords to progress this;
  - We Are Juno have secured £600,000 from Green Pastures for the purchase and refurbishment of one of the homes.
- 12.2 As the investment catalyst, Wirral Council's investment has enabled We Are Juno CIC to secure this additional funding which will create employment opportunities in multiple sectors including construction, care and training and development bringing new opportunities and funding to the borough. As a social enterprise, the organisation is committing to providing opportunities within the borough that will help generate growth across many areas.

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## **APPENDICES**

**None**



## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

[literaturereview.pdf \(scie.org.uk\)](#)

[Social pedagogy - Lighthouse Children's Homes \(lighthousechildrenshomes.org.uk\)](#)

[Home - ThemPra Social Pedagogy](#)

[Wirral Borough Council's Accommodation Programme](#)

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Children, Young People &amp; Education Committee</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> June 2021 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021</b>
<b>Policy and Resources Committee</b>	<b>17<sup>th</sup> March 2021 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021</b>