

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	10/09/2020
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Rent Support Scheme for Care Experienced Young People
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/20/115
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Graeme Simpson
REPORT AUTHOR	Andrea McGill
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide details of a Rent Support Scheme for Care Experienced Young People (CEYP). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this was not possible however work to develop and implement the scheme was progressed by officers.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Note that the process to introduce a Rent Support Scheme for CEYP has been agreed and is in operation.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 It was agreed at the meeting of the Full Council in March 2020, to take forward a Rent Support Scheme which supports CEYP. The beneficiaries of the scheme are CEYP who are Aberdeen City Council tenants and are students enrolled in higher or further education. It can be reported that this Scheme is now operational and benefitting 8 (of the 19) young people who are supported by the Youth Team, undertaking further or higher education studies.
- 3.2 CEYP who qualify for rent support, are identified, and assessed by the Youth Team, the specialist support team which offers Throughcare and Aftercare support to CEYP. The Local Authority has a range of duties, including financial support, designed to support the long term welfare and progression in education, of CEYP. Sections 29 and 30 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, and Parts 10 and 11 of The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 are the primary legislative mechanisms. The Youth Team have a significant role in matching the assessed Aftercare support needs of CEYP to these supports. CEYP are financially supported in their studies by means of the care experienced bursary, paid by the Student Award Agency Scotland (SAAS). Guidance produced by the Scottish Government indicates that the availability

of a bursary does not negate nor diminish the duties of Local Authorities in respect of CEYP. While the bursary allowance is higher than state benefits, it creates a requirement to pay full rent costs, which has created unintended financial challenges for CEYP who, with limited resource, can result in their accrual of rent arrears. The Rent Support Scheme removes this risk.

- 3.3 The process which has been established allows for rent costs to be recharged to the Housing Revenue Account, as an interdepartmental reclaim process. In Quarter 1 of 2020/21, 8 young people have been supported by the Scheme. It is anticipated that this number will grow as those who have expressed an interest in further/higher education begin to explore this option, after the uncertainty created by Covid19.
- 3.4 In addition to the above, the Youth Team will work collaboratively with further and higher education establishments, to expand the reach of the Scheme, by targeting information to CEYP from Aberdeen City who are enrolled with these providers.
- 3.5 It can be reported that of those receiving support from the Scheme, 87% of the group attend further education provision. The majority of these young people aspire to progress to a higher-level course, with 13% of this cohort already undertaking University level studies.
- 3.6 The Rent Support Scheme takes effect to priorities Aberdeen City Council has adopted as Corporate Parents, as set out in the Getting it Right for Aberdeen's Children and Families Corporate Parenting Plan (2019-2021) and to Local Outcome Improvement Plan (2019-2026) commitments:

"All care experienced children and young people will have the same levels of attainment in education, emotional wellbeing and positive destinations as their peers by 2026". To achieve this, it is recognised in the LOIP that ACC will support equity of access to education for all our children and young people; *"our care experienced young people and our other children at risk we will put addressing inequality in education and positive destinations at the forefront of our aims".*
- 3.7 The provision of financial support to pay rent is an example of our investment in outcomes which concern the future success of Aberdeen's CEYP. Historically, those with care experience have had poorer outcomes than their peers in accessing and sustaining post school study. Information reproduced by Who Cares? Scotland, positively indicates that there has been a small increase from 2016-18 in the number of Care Experienced entrants to further and higher education establishments, however this is within a backdrop of national data which signifies that, 9 months after leaving school, 30% of Care Experienced young people who were in care for part of the year are classed as unemployed, compared to 5% of their non-Care Experienced peers (Scottish Government, 2018).
- 3.8 The provision of financial support to meet rent costs should support an increase in the numbers in Aberdeen City who remain engaged with and sustain courses of study to completion. This links to a core aim identified for the Aberdeen City Champions Board who are tasked with addressing the core duties of Corporate Parents, and the key priority within the Champions Board plan, to support

'Increasing the number of care leavers in education, training and employment'. National information further indicates this challenge, as comparison between Care Experienced students and non-Care Experienced students, identifies a difference of 5.3% for retention at university, with a growing gap in successful completion of full-time further education courses undertaken at college where the gap is 15.6% (Who Cares? Scotland website 2020). This national information demonstrates that at all levels of study, Care Experienced students have lower rates of completing courses compared to all students at university and college.

- 3.9 The provision of this Rent Support Scheme for CEYP in Aberdeen City should contribute to an increase in the numbers completing studies, by removing an element of financial pressure from them. The Scheme will also be beneficial in alleviating uncertainty created both by the reliance on a student bursary being the main source of income and ameliorating the absence for some, who unlike their non care experienced peers, do not have the safety net of a network of family or alternatively supportive relationships. As a consequence of this, many CEYP are at lifelong disadvantage in terms of social mobility and equality of experience and therefore opportunity.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This is effectively a spend to save and investment action, with the HRA providing the mechanism to enable the payment of rent for those with Aberdeen City property tenure.
- 4.2 As this scheme is recently initiated and operational since 1 April and due to the uncertainties created by the Covid19 pandemic, future costs are difficult to accurately predict. Q 1 costs amount to £9,129.65, with an annual estimated expenditure of around £40,000 in year one. The success of this Scheme will lead to a growth in expenditure.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	That the Scheme will have a limited impact on strategic priorities.	L	There are several interconnected strategic drivers identified in the LOIP which seek to enhance CEYP engagement in education and which offer direct Aftercare support.
Compliance	There are no compliance issues.	L	N/A.
Operational	Adjustment of systems and awareness of key staff.	L	Existing systems have been amended to accommodate this process change and staff have been briefed.
Financial	Long term investment of resources with reported benefits at a relatively small scale.	L	There are well developed multi agency plans in place to improve the take up and access to further and higher education for CEYP.
Reputational	A failure of Aberdeen City Council to comply and meet its Corporate Parenting responsibilities would reflect negatively on the Council.	L	Positive media promotion and communication strategy have ensured local coverage of national event participation in e.g. National Care Day; Champs Camp to promote positive promotion of Corporate Parenting Role.
Environment / Climate	There are no environment/climate issues.	L	N/A.

7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	Proposals within this report support the delivery of Policy Statement 7 – Commit to closing the attainment gap in education while working with partners in the city.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	N/A
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposals in the report have direct link specifically to the delivery and attainment of stretch outcome 5 and peripherally linked to outcomes 4 and 8. • 95% of care experienced children and young people will have the same levels of attainment in education, emotional wellbeing, and positive destinations as their peers by 2026. • Increase the number of care experienced young people accessing a positive and sustained destination by 25% by 2021. • Increase the number of children and young people remaining in a placement between 16-18 years old by 2021. • Increase the number of care experienced young people receiving appropriate multiagency throughcare by 2021. • Increase the number of staff, including carers who report increased understanding and skills to respond to children who have adverse childhood experiences (ACE) by 20% by 2021.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	N/A
Regional and City	N/A
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	The duties in Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 legally embed the concept of corporate parenting and collectively are <i>‘designed to ensure that the attention and resources of various publicly funded organisations are explicitly focused on the task of safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers’</i> . (CELCIS, Corporate Parenting Implementation Notes, 2016).
Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 Section 56	

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Not Required.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not Required.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A

10. APPENDICES

N/A

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Name	Andrea McGill
Title	Service Manager
Email Address	AMcGill@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Tel	07824608372