

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	31 August 2022
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Digital Support for Care Leavers
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/22/164
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Graeme Simpson
REPORT AUTHOR	Graeme Simpson
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an outline of progress made on delivery of the agreed plan to address the digital support needs of care leavers which was approved by Committee in September 2021.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the progress being achieved and that full implementation of the plan is ongoing and being embedded into business as usual activity.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 In March 2021 Council identified an annual budget of £25,000 from the General Fund to address the digital exclusion care experienced young people often encounter. A plan, co-produced with care experienced young people, was developed outlining the actions the service intended to take forward to address this need. This plan was endorsed by Committee in September 2021.

- 3.2 Enhancing access to digital provision supports a key priority in creating equity of opportunity and improving the life experiences of Care Experienced Young People (CEYP), linking to stretch aim 6 of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan:

“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”

- 3.3 Access to digital resources is increasingly considered as a fundamental human right. Research by the Carnegie Foundation (2016) (quoted by McGhee and Roesch-Marsh) suggests:

'Those who are digitally excluded do not benefit from the great many advantages the technology can bring. They are more limited in their access to public services to channels for civic and democratic participation, to a wide array of knowledge and information, to opportunities for cultural and social engagement, to the labour market and to opportunities for education and learning. Addressing these disparities is one of the great social challenges of our age.' (Carnegie Trust, 2016)

3.4 Providing additional resource and supporting equitable digital access reflects our corporate parenting responsibilities, which include taking actions to promote inclusion, and by extension, supporting access to digital connection. Our intention to promote greater equity is reflected in the Corporate Parenting and Champions Board Plans for 2021-2023.

3.5 The Report provided to Committee in September 2021, committed to the following plan:

- Children's Social Work will amend Pathway Planning and Aftercare Support documents to include assessment of the digital support required by a young person at each stage of their transition from care.
- Planning for the provision of access to a device, data and skills as a key requirement when care plans are being updated.
- Ensuring that at the point of leaving care each young person has a suitable device, beyond a mobile phone.
- Provide support to purchase MiFi connections and exploring best value options in this area.
- Ensure devices purchased support care leaver circumstances e.g. to study, work, participate socially, financial inclusion.
- Seek to identify resource which offers advice and guidance on safe use of social media.
- Consult with CEYP on how the above approach can be built on and developed over time.

3.6 It can be reported that in 2021/22:

- The Pathway Planning documents which support transition planning have been updated to include a focus on digital support needs. These have been shared with key stakeholders.
- Changes to key documents has improved the Children's Social Work workforce understanding of how to access resources to purchase digital devices and provides a direct link to Looked After Review care planning and accountabilities.
- Sign posting and promoting access to the range of providers who offer support to access digital devices has been led by the Youth Team in their general advice and guidance to referrers.
- Not all digital support requires to be funded by General Fund monies. Connecting Scotland, ABZ Works, Nescol, and Aberdeen Foyer have all provided access to devices and digital support to Care Experienced Young people.
- The role of Team Leader based in the Youth Team has offered direct links to care planning within Looked After Reviews at key transitions, by matching young people's digital needs to their care plan, in addition to

raising awareness across the Children's Social Work workforce as part of briefing sessions making links to supporting digital connection.

- The Youth Team regularly audit the digital status of care leavers to ensure their access to digital device reflects their circumstances. This activity has highlighted the following:
- Twelve care leavers have received digital devices at the time of a key transitions.
- The changing status of the 88 care leavers who received digital support via the Connecting Scotland award in 2020/21 are kept under review as their devices have a 24-month period of support.
- The 41 care leavers, who attend college and university, all have accessed devices and equipment appropriate to their studies.
- Purchases in 2021/22 have included: 100 data sims, 3 laptops, multiple MiFi boxes providing internet connection, mobile phones, headphones, and printer.
- 12 iPads have been purchased to support the needs of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young people (UASYP) who are placed in Aberdeen City.
- One laptop and iPad have been purchased to provide support to young people accessing the facilities within 116 Westburn Rd. This will enable any young person using the building to e.g. maintain their Universal Credit accounts, job seeking activities, and business which needs online access.

3.7 Developing digital access and matching purchases to a CEYP circumstances is an embedded operational practice which will continue to be developed and consolidated. Opportunities will also be maximised which allows for funding to be secured from other sources extending the impact of the resource agreed by Council.

3.8 The structural and pervasive disadvantages experienced by CEYP demonstrate their over representation in homelessness, criminal justice systems and in comparatively poorer education outcomes than non-care experienced peers. Their disadvantaged position in relation to digital access has been highlighted in Bridging the Digital Divide for CEYP in Scotland: <https://www.celcis.org/news/news-pages/digital-connection-and-inclusion-should-be-basic-right-care-leavers/>

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Spend against the identified budget for Supporting Digital Access for Care Leavers is within the agreed budget delivering tangible benefits. It is also enabling connections to be developed which can enhance the digital access for care leavers without incurring additional cost for the Council.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications from this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Many of the improvements required to support care leavers align with The Promise and delivery of Plan 21 – 24.	Children’s Services Board and Community Planning Management Group have oversight of the delivery of the relevant aspects of strategic plans in this respect. They are ensuring that the terms of Plan 21-24 are incorporated into current and future strategic planning.	M	Yes
Compliance	No significant related risks.	Services across all multi-agency partners are aware of legislative requirement to support care leavers.	L	Yes
Operational	Care experienced children and young people are a vulnerable cohort whose needs require to be recognised and met.	These are corporate parenting duties are incorporated across existing structures and will be consolidated into our practice and culture.	L	Yes
Financial	That the number of children looked after away from home is reducing. The provision of digital access will contribute	Our Corporate Parenting Plan and delivery of Plan 21-24 are in place to address these issues	L	Yes

	to delivering improved longer term outcomes in relation to employment, financial and wellbeing outcomes. It provides preventative support reducing demand on future demand on services.			
Reputational	Failure to ensure delivery of The Promise at a local level will scrutiny from the inspection of services and reporting to Scottish Government.	The public can be assured that: the Council takes seriously its corporate parenting duties and promotes positive outcomes for care experienced young people.	M	Yes
Environment / Climate	Not applicable for this report			Yes

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
Impact of Report	
	The information in this report demonstrates how ensuring digital access for care leavers contributes to key aspects in the Council Delivery Plan as it relates to children and young people. This includes sustainable positive destinations, reducing the impact of poverty and ensure access to employment opportunities. .
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	<p>The report seeks to provide assurance to Committee on progress being made to delivery on enhanced digital access for care leavers and the impact this is having. This links with Corporate Parenting activities, including the following improvement projects within the LOIP:</p> <p><i>Stretch Outcome 6. As corporate parents we will ensure 95% of care experienced children and young people will have the same levels of attainment in</i></p>

	<i>education, health and emotional wellbeing, and positive destinations as their peers by 2026.</i>
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9 IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	Not required

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Committee Report Sept 2021 –

<http://councilcommittees.acc.gov.uk/documents/g7634/Public%20reports%20pack%2016th-Sep-2021%2014.00%20Operational%20Delivery%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

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