



## **National Housing Project**

**Report by Joan Tranent, CSWO & Chief Officer Children's Services,  
Partnerships and Communities**

### **Report for Decision:**

## **1 Recommendations**

### **1.1 Council is requested to note and approve the following:**

- I. The success of the National Housing Project around improving outcomes for young people through securing a permanent tenancy.
- II. To utilise the learning and to develop a Midlothian House Project which will be a permanent element of the children's services structure.
- III. This to be achieved within existing budget.

## **2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary**

- 2.1** This report provides Council with the context which informed the decision taken by Children's Services to match fund a successful Life Changes funding application to pilot the National House Project framework within Midlothian.

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### **Report Contact:**

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### 3 Background

- 3.1** It is well documented that the outcomes for Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) are poor. Scottish Government statistics reveal that CEYP have a 50% chance of becoming homeless<sup>(1)</sup>. Moreover the lack of a permanent home has a negative impact on a range of other indicators such as health, offending, education, employment and mental health. Publications such as The Promise, which contains the recommendations of the Independent Care Review, highlights the importance of such services being available to children and families at a much earlier stage.
- 3.2** Whilst the national average age for leaving home is now approximately 25 years old, the average age at which young people leave their care placements in Scotland is 16-18 years old. Many are ill-prepared for the realities of independent living, as their subsequent poor outcomes demonstrate. Accommodation instability is common (with tenancies breaking down), and this directly affects other critical areas of their lives, such as their engagement with education, employment or training.<sup>(2)</sup>
- 3.3** UK wide studies tell us that young people with a care history are particularly vulnerable to and disproportionately represented in the homeless population. In 2017, an all-party parliamentary group for ending homelessness found that one third of care leavers become homeless in the first two years immediately after they leave care and 25% of homeless people have been in care at some point in their lives <sup>(3)</sup>.
- 3.4** Midlothian House Project provides care-experienced young people between the ages of 16-26 with the support and guidance to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to live independently. The young people are supported to access, decorate, and furnish their own home in a way that meets their preferences and requirements and once they have moved, support is provided for as long as they need it. In addition to practical supports with maintaining their home, this model places a high emphasis on the development of a trusting relationship between the facilitators and the young people they support. This relationship based approach supports young people to address trauma, access appropriate health supports (including mental health), identifying appropriate education or employment opportunities and help with maximising income and continue to build their self-esteem.
- 3.5** The promise states that everyone involved in the lives of children and families must know that their primary purpose is to develop nurturing, patient, kind, compassionate, trusting and respectful relationships that keep children and families safe. The Promise laid out five foundations, **family, voice, care, people and scaffolding**. The framework of support that Midlothian House Project provides embodies the key foundations of the promise.

**Family:** The approach promotes peer support, community and a sense of family. Young people on the project refer to their project peers as their “house project family”.

**Voice:** The Care Leavers National Movement (CLNM) is made up of care leavers from Local House Projects nationally. They use their skills as expert advisers to develop House Projects and improve outcomes for all young people leaving care. The North Chair of this group is indeed a member of Midlothian House Project. Moreover, the initial Life Changes Trust funding which was used to pilot the project was awarded as a direct result of input

from our young champs who form Midlothian Champions Board. Furthermore young people are heard, listened to and given agency to make key decisions such as when they move, where they move to and how their property will be furnished and decorated.

**Care:** Through regular training and consultation sessions with Changing Minds, a specialist psychological service, project staff are able to deliver care and support in a fully trauma informed way.

**People:** The basis for all positive development, self-reliance, resilience and independence depends upon good relationships. The intensive support provided by House Project staff provides opportunities for trusting relationships to be formed to facilitate effective relationship based practice.

**Scaffolding:** House Project support is founded on Self-determination theory. The house project practice framework focussed on Ownership, Responsibility, Community, Home, Interdependence, Direction and Sense of Wellbeing (ORCHIDS). The young people determine the timescales for progress and are provided with scaffolding for as long as this is required.

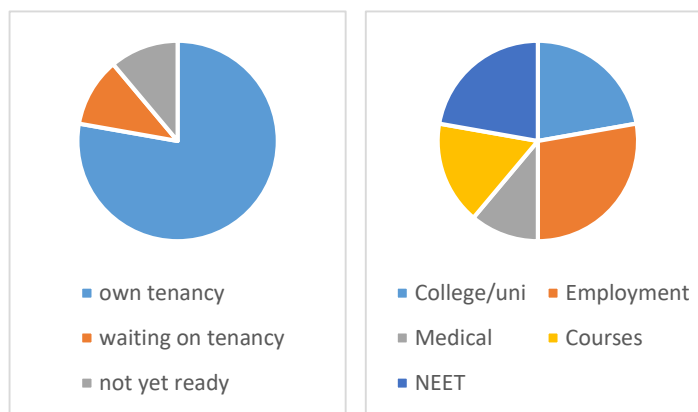
- 3.6** The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 defines corporate parenting as *“the formal and local Partnerships between all services responsible for working together to meet the needs of looked after children, Young people and care leavers”*.

Midlothian Council has specific Corporate Parent duties and responsibilities towards Care Experienced children and young people up to the age of 26 and must demonstrate this in their Corporate Parent Strategy and Plan.

Key Housing actions from our Corporate Parent Plan and Strategy<sup>(4)</sup> include the development of a Leaving Care Housing Pathway. To strengthen multi – agency working and Investigate alternative housing approaches such as the National House Project.

Measurements of success include no young person becomes homeless on leaving care. Accommodation and support is made available to young people leaving care and a reduction in tenancy breakdowns.

The current successes of Midlothian House Project demonstrate that we are effectively meeting our Corporate Parent responsibilities in this area. Since August 2021, 100% of those supported by Midlothian House Project remain engaged. 78% have secured their own permanent property with no tenancy breakdowns. 78% are either in employment, college or training. Those not in their own properties remain in either supported accommodation or with family members and are working towards independent living.



**3.7** The Promise recognises that the reform and re-design of services should meet the need of those they serve. Midlothian House Project provides a holistic model of support for young people leaving care and moving onto “interdependent” living. This novel approach of support promotes a high emphasis on relationship based and trauma based practice which is supplemented by a link psychologist. This alone demonstrates the local authority’s commitment to embedding the 5 foundations identified in The Promise as detailed earlier.

**3.8** Most of the young people engaged in the project have experienced multiple care settings and have limited if any family support. A high proportion have come from “out of authority” specialist resources and some have experienced “secure care”. All have experienced significant trauma in the absence of nurturing and reliable primary caregivers. The project design as detailed previously places a high emphasis on psychological informed practice which enables facilitators to respond in a trauma informed way to begin to co-regulate responses to produce better outcomes.

#### **Case Study:**

K who is now 20, was first looked after by the local authority when he was 2 years old. K was placed in various care settings including Kinship and Foster care before finally being placed in an out of authority residential house from the ages of 8 until he was 16. K then returned to Midlothian to the care of his gran. At this time, K was accumulating lots of police charges and was seriously misusing substances.

K was referred to Midlothian House Project in Oct 2020 as a diversionary measure by his Justice Social Worker. K was allocated a facilitator who began the process of relationship building. K’s worker quickly realised gran was not coping and eventually uncovered that she was suffering from dementia. As K was not ready to manage his own property he was moved into temporary accommodation with intensive support provided by Midlothian House Project. This involved almost daily contact with K either in his home or within the House Project Hub. Existing Aftercare support could not offer this level of intervention. The persistence, consistency and determination of facilitators to ensure visits and supports took place (even when this was refused or K was not at home) eventually created a trusting connection between K and his worker facilitating true relationship based practice. This in turn provided the opportunity to address his wider issues and trauma. Using our link psychologist, we were able to increase our trauma knowledge which directed a more tailored response to K’s challenges. The availability of his

facilitator ensured the level of support could be intensive or less so depending upon K's needs.

Over time gradual improvements were observed and K's offending reduced and his substance misuse decreased substantially. K who had previously disengaged with education supports has now enrolled on his 2<sup>nd</sup> college course and has acquired a part time job. K has recently moved into his own permanent property which he is managing well.

**3.9** While financial savings are not the driving force behind Midlothian House Project, our experience would suggest that substantial savings have occurred in the prevention of tenancy breakdowns and the costs incurred in the provision of homelessness supports. More importantly, as the above case study demonstrates, Midlothian House Project support has substantially contributed to the positive outcomes for the young people. In addition, we can extrapolate wider financial savings in terms of the police and health resources required to address his offending and substance misuse.

**3.10** Midlothian House Project is now recognised by those who work with Care Experienced Young People in Midlothian as an effective and vital resource. This has been reflected in the large number of referrals received for our latest cohort. 18 referrals were received for 10 spaces which have increased the number of young people engaged in the project to 30.

In addition, Care Experienced Young People are aware of Midlothian House Project and are now approaching social workers asking to be referred. At a recent Champions Board visit, Children's Services Chief officer was asked by younger care experienced young people if Midlothian House Project would still be available for them.

Nationally, Midlothian House Project was highlighted in a recent publication by the charity Crisis as an example of good practice in their Publication 75 Ways to Prevent Homelessness<sup>(5)</sup>. A recent study of the 3 house projects in Scotland by the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum (STAF) highlighted overwhelmingly the "significant positive impact on young people supported by local House Projects" (see appendix B).

## **4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)**

### **4.1 Service resource**

Based on the information in this report we respectfully request that Council agree that the Children's Services budget reflects the resources outlined in table 2.

<b>Staffing</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>Annual Cost</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
<b>Team Leader</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>£63,293</b>	<b>£63,293</b>
<b>Key Workers</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>£148,972</b>	<b>£148,972</b>
<b>Annual expenses / sundries</b>			<b>£15,000</b>	<b>£15,000</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>£227,085</b>

Care experienced young people are legally entitled to "Aftercare" Support until they reach 26. The term 'Aftercare' refers to the advice, guidance and assistance provided to care leavers under section 29 of the 1995 Act. Section 29(1) and (2) of the 1995 Act (as amended by section 66 of the 2014 Act)

specifies the descriptions of care leavers that are eligible or potentially eligible for Aftercare. In line with The Promise, Midlothian House Project is an example of the re-design of existing services within Children's Services to provide "Aftercare" in this form. This model of support providing intensive support at the outset should reduce repeated re-referrals often seen by those requiring Aftercare.

#### **4.2 Digital**

None

#### **4.3 Risk**

Care has been taking to monitor and reduce any associated risk. If Midlothian House Project be discontinued, Care leavers will have a reduced level of options in this particularly difficult period of transition onto independent living. A consequence of this could result in increased tenancy breakdowns and levels of homelessness. The absence of Midlothian House Project will reduce the choices for those ready to leave care. This could have financial implications for the Local Authority if high cost placements are extended due to lack of suitable housing options.

Midlothian House Project has demonstrated excellent advances and improvements in multiagency working which is gradually influencing cultural shifts in this area of work in line with the aims of The Promise. Removing Midlothian House Project would be a backward step in areas where Midlothian is being recognised as being examples of good practice. Additionally, this would impact on Midlothian Council's capacity to fulfil its corporate parenting responsibilities.

#### **4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)**

The proposal largely has apposite impact on a range of protected groups service and practice change. An Equalities Impact Assessment is within Members Library.

#### **4.5 Additional Report Implications**

### **APPENDIX A – Report Implications**

#### **A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan**

This work is a part of the Single Midlothian Plan's key priority and also aligns with the preventative and early intervention approach. The direction of travel is also supported by the national drivers previously mentioned; the Independent Care Review and the Promise.

## **A.2 Key Drivers for Change**

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- ☒ Holistic Working
- ☐ Hub and Spoke
- ☒ Modern
- ☒ Sustainable
- ☒ Transformational
- ☒ Preventative
- ☒ Asset-based
- ☒ Continuous Improvement
- ☒ One size fits one
- ☐ None of the above

## **A.3 Key Delivery Streams**

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- ☒ One Council Working with you, for you
- ☒ Preventative and Sustainable
- ☒ Efficient and Modern
- ☒ Innovative and Ambitious
- ☐ None of the above

## **A.4 Delivering Best Value**

The rationale for the proposal is based on early investment into effectively managed and governed services. In addition to delivering future savings, the model will ensure improved outcomes for children, young people and families within Midlothian.

## **A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders**

We have consulted and listened to our stakeholders including: parents, carers, children, young people and local communities

## **A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes**

The service will provide an alternative pathway for those leaving care and provide improved outcomes for looked after young people leaving care.

## **A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach**

Midlothian House Project will prevent tenancy breakdowns and homelessness.

## **A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development**

Not applicable

## APPENDIX B

### Background Papers/Resource Links (if applicable)

(1)

[www.celcis.org/knowledge-bank/search-bank/homelessness-and-care-experience/](http://www.celcis.org/knowledge-bank/search-bank/homelessness-and-care-experience/)

(2)

[www.whocaresscotland.org/?s=homelessness](http://www.whocaresscotland.org/?s=homelessness)

(3)

APPG FOR ENDING HOMELESSNESS REPORT—JULY 2017

(4)

[https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/3819/corporate\\_parent\\_strategy\\_2020-2023.pdf](https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/3819/corporate_parent_strategy_2020-2023.pdf)

(5)

<https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/247563/75-ways-to-prevent-homelessness.pdf>

Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum (STAF) evaluation of Scottish House Projects

<https://www.staf.scot/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=07df3078-37b8-4039-ad66-21388a0db0b2>