

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services

DECISION NO:

23/00103

For publication [Do not include information which is exempt from publication under schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972]

Key decision: Yes

Key decision criteria. The decision will:

- a) result in savings or expenditure which is significant having regard to the budget for the service or function (currently defined by the Council as in excess of £1,000,000); or
- b) be significant in terms of its effects on a significant proportion of the community living or working within two or more electoral divisions – which will include those decisions that involve:
 - the adoption or significant amendment of major strategies or frameworks;
 - significant service developments, significant service reductions, or significant changes in the way that services are delivered, whether County-wide or in a particular locality.

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Family Finding, Befriending and Mentoring Programmes

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, I agree to:

- i) accept the funding from the DfE to enable the delivery of the Family finding, befriending and mentoring programmes.
- ii) delegate decisions on the implementation to the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education, or other Officer, as appropriate.

Reason(s) for decision:

Background

- 1.1 The Lifelong Links Service is here for children in care to reconnect with key family members or friends who can support them into adulthood. The team work with young people in care, who do not plan to return to their family or be adopted, to identify a group of safe adults who can commit to offering lifelong support for them.
- 1.2 The objective of the service is that the person in care leaves the system with a sense of belonging and identity, are provided with a network into adulthood, which will in turn prevent isolation and loneliness. The Lifelong Links service is run via the Social Connections Teams and is supported and accredited by Family Rights Group. (Please see attached Impact Reports for further information). Presently this offer is open to Children in Care but only funded for 50 pieces of work and aimed at those remaining in care.
- 1.3 The government has made £21million of funding available for Family Finding /Lifelong Links work via the DfE. KCC has submitted a bid for £715,000.00 to work with a minimum of 100 care leavers (*bid criteria is for 7- 10K per young person*). The bids focus is on leaving care

plans – for Lifelong Links work to be offered to Care Leavers as they move towards independence. Lifelong Links work will support each referred young person with a plan of where to gain help and support for both practical and emotional issues. This offer will extend more widely than family and friends – with advocacy support and bring in the community to support them on their journey to adulthood.

Financial Implications

2.1 If successful funding would be in place from November 2023 to 31st March 2025. All work will be formally evaluated by researchers, yet to be identified by DfE. This will measure the impact of the work undertaken.

2.2 This would add to our current service provision by reaching a wider cohort of young people leaving care and providing them with an improvement in the number of sustainable and supportive relationships they have and is attributable to better longer-term outcomes, and a reduction in mental health issues, isolation and loneliness. (See Impact Report attached) Reducing the cost to the public purse.

2.3 The money is divided into financial years.

	December 2023	March 2024
Total	245,866	469,828

Legal Implication

3.1 The LA will be expected to comply with the grant funding terms and conditions. Failure to comply with the terms and conditions will affect payment of the grant.

3.2 Grant funding will run until the end of March 2025. After the funding period ends, local authorities will be asked to continue to report outcomes until September 2025. This will allow the DfE us to gather information about how local authorities embed and sustain these programmes beyond the funding period.

Equalities Implications

4.1 The proposed decision will have positive impact across all protected characteristics as it will provide further support from KCC to improve social connections for young people in care and provide them with clear support plans from their family and network (including friends and professionals). This can aid their sense of belonging and confidence in being able to manage their lives, and decision making. The process will be open to all young people in care. Including young people with disabilities, mental health issues, gender diversity, BME, including UASC. The process is inclusive placing each young person at the centre of the planning process, giving them a voice to identify who is important to them and what needs to happen for them to move into a positive adulthood.

4.2 It is anticipated this proposal will not have any adverse negative impact on the protected characteristics of our care leavers that KCC has responsibility for and aim to promote overall fairness.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The Children's and Young People Cabinet Committee will consider the decision on 21 November 2023.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

The DfE ambitions for reform are set out in Children's social care: stable homes, built on love

strategy and consultation, put loving and stable relationships at the heart of children's social care. This includes the mission that, by 2027, every care-experienced child and young person will feel they have strong, loving relationships in place. If the LA did not apply for this grant we would not be able to enhance our services for the Care Leavers.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer: None

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signed

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date