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| Scrutiny Board : | Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board |
| Report Title | Scrutiny Review Recommendations– The Transition to Adulthood Journey for Care Experienced Young People |
| Date of Meeting | Monday, 23 March 2026 |
| Report Author | Connor Robinson – Democratic Services Officer |
| Lead Officer | Assistant Chief Executive |
| Wards Affected | All Wards |
| Identify exempt information and exemption category | N/A |
| Appendices (if any) | |

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review into the Transition to Adulthood Journey for Care Experienced Young People, which was initiated in response to feedback the Board had received from Care Experienced Young People who the Board had held an engagement session with in April 2025. This session had raised a number of challenges experienced by Care Experienced Young People that related to Education, Housing, Health and Adult Services, as well as the provision provided to support positive outcomes.
- 1.2 At its meeting on 30 June 2025 (Minute No. 27/25), the Board agreed to undertake a Scrutiny Review into the Transition to Adulthood Journey for Care Experienced Young People. Subsequently a number of briefing sessions and visits have been undertaken by the Board across service areas to gather evidence and enhance understanding of the key issues and challenges that impact Care Experienced Young People through their transition to adulthood journey. A number of recommendations have been proposed to address issues and challenges that were raised.

2. Recommendation

That the Board considers and recommends for approval to Cabinet the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review – The Transition to Adulthood Journey for Care Experienced Young People set out as follows:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families ensures training on the Sandwell Care Experienced Local Offer is included within the introductory training for all Sandwell Children's Trust employees, and that Personal Advisors are provided with additional training on the Local Offer on an annual basis in order to maintain a good knowledge and understanding of what the Local Offer includes.
- 2.2 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families ensures that Corporate Parenting and the role of the Council as Corporate Parents is included at Staff Briefings, that where appropriate additional training is provided to frontline services who come into contact with care experienced young people on the Care Experienced Local Offer along with training (the Corporate Parenting e-module on Oracle Learning) on how their interactions with care experienced young people should be trauma informed.
- 2.3 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families ensures the Corporate Parenting e-training model is circulated across the partnership including across local Police, NHS and School providers to ensure all partners understand their role and responsibilities as Corporate Parents.
- 2.4 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, makes mandatory, Councillor attendance at Corporate Parenting Training, on an annual basis so they can understand their role as elected members and their statutory duty as Corporate Parents.
- 2.5 That the Corporate Parenting Board receives a report on how the Sandwell Children's Trust is promoting the establishment of 'Life Long Links' and how the Trust is establishing a strategy and also working towards achieving 'Lifelong Links service accreditation' demonstrating that Sandwell is meeting high standards of Lifelong Links practice.
- 2.6 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, in consultation with the Executive Director for Children and Education and the Chief Executive of Sandwell Children's Trust detail how the Local Offer for Care Experienced Young People is being standardised across the West Midlands region.
- 2.7 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families and Cabinet Member for Adult Services, Health and Wellbeing in consultation with the Executive Director of Children and Education, Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health and Executive Director of Place, while recognising the statutory responsibilities, work to standardise the application and assessment process as much as possible (introducing a single assessment pathway), in order to enable care experienced young people to access and apply for services seamlessly, speeding up assessments, reducing duplication and allowing a more joined-up approach to service provision and delivery.

- 2.8 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families in consultation with the Executive Director for Children and Education and the Chief Executive of Sandwell Children's Trust continue to promote Corporate Parenting as a Protected Characteristic and provide an update to the Corporate Parenting Board on an annual basis on what measures / policies have been made to improve outcomes of care experienced young people and ensure service areas across the Council as well as partners across Sandwell (including the Police and NHS) are putting in measures and policies to improve the outcomes.
- 2.9 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families investigates the possibility of expanding the processes developed in the Accommodation Panel, into creating a 'Transition Panel' that will bring together all partners across Council, Trust, NHS, etc... to enable services to be direct, and support provided, from a single panel body.
- 2.10 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families and Cabinet Member for Housing, in consultation with the Executive Director of Place and the Chief Executive of Sandwell Children's Trust, explores the option of purchasing properties to convert them into Houses of Multiple Occupancy that can be specifically used to accommodate care experienced young people.
- 2.11 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families and the Cabinet Member for Adult Services, Health and Wellbeing work to strengthen collaboratively working to address the needs of care experienced young people, and reduce barriers to collaboration and multi-agency working.
- 2.12 That the Cabinet Member for Housing, in consultation with the Executive Director of Place, ensures Corporate Parenting training is delivered across the Housing Team on an annual basis, to ensure officers are operating under trauma informed practices and understand the needs of care experienced young people as well as understanding the Local Offer the Council provides to care experienced young people.
- 2.13 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families in consultation with the Chief Executive of Sandwell Children's Trust reviews training provided by Personal Advisors to ensure they are knowledgeable and confident in advising on the education, employment and training options and support available across Sandwell to care experienced young people.
- 2.14 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families in consultation with the Executive Director for Children and Education and the Chief Executive of Sandwell Children's Trust ensure that the Local Offer includes information, and signposts clearly, education, employment and training support and guidance, as well as providing links to regional and national supporting bodies that can offer support and guidance.
- 2.15 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families in consultation with the Executive Director for Children and Education develop a strategy to engage and communicate with care experienced young people who are not in education, employment and training.

- 2.16 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families in consultation with the Chief Executive of Sandwell Children's Trust set out a strategy and infographic setting out service standards that care experienced young people can expect to receive from their Personal Advisor.
- 2.17 That the Corporate Parenting Board adds to its Work Programme in 2026/2027 a review of the House Project programme and the impact of the programme on care experienced young people.
- 2.18 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families in consultation with the Chief Executive of Sandwell Children's Trust, research the viability of acquiring mentors outside of the Sandwell Children's Trust and Council for care experienced young people across partner organisations that would allow for relationship building within the wider community.
- 2.19 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families and the Cabinet Member for Housing in consultation with the Executive Director for Place review the accommodation available to care experienced young people.
- 2.20 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families in consultation with the Executive Director for Children and Education and Chief Executive of Sandwell Children's Trust review the process and time around which a care experienced young persons future is discussed so that it does not impact and add extra stress during the exam period.
- 2.21 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families in consultation with the Executive Director for Children and Education and the Chief Executive of Sandwell Children's Trust develop a communication strategy that sets out expectations from officers from across the partnership to ensure care experienced young people are spoken to with respect and understanding of their position.
- 2.22 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families in consultation with the Chief Executive of Sandwell Children's Trust review the process around the provision of the 'leaving care grant' and how this is communicated to care experienced young people within the Local Offer.
- 2.23 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation explore the development of a dedicated Sandwell Care Experienced App, that can be used to signpost care experienced young people towards the Local Offer as well as services and additional provisions to improve their outcomes.
- 2.24 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources in consultation with the Executive Director of Finance and Transformation, Executive Director for Children and Education and the Chief Executive of Sandwell Children's Trust provide funding to Sandwell Children's Trust to employ additional Personal Advisors to enable the increase in service provision and ensure that the Sandwell Children's Trust is meeting its statutory obligation to reach all 16 year old care experienced young people.

- 2.25 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families and the Cabinet Member for Housing, in consultation with the Executive Director of Place, explore the acquisition of a property that would operate as a working day youth hub, that would be used solely for care experienced young people and services that support them, allowing for the development of a dedicated 'safe' space within the community that can jointly be used as office space (for duty) and a training/support facility for care experienced young people.
- 2.26 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families in consultation with the Executive Director of Children and Education, explore the possibility of using the Family Hubs across Sandwell as spaces where care experienced young people can access shared services and engage with partners.
- 2.27 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families in consultation with the Corporate Parenting Board, advises elected members and officers of the Council of the ability as Corporate Parents to engage with the Corporate Parenting team and join events and share skills with care experienced young people.
- 2.28 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families in consultation with the Executive Director of Children, the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health and Education and Executive Director of Place, encourage front-line services such as Housing, NHS and Finance hold drop-in sessions for care experienced young people at Metsec.
- 2.29 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families and Cabinet Member for Adult Services, Health and Wellbeing in consultation with the Executive Director of Children and Education, the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health and the Chief Executive of Sandwell Children's Trust develop a strategy between Children and Adult Services, which would allow joined-up services to provide support as a child/young person moves from children's to adult services with a uninterrupted service.
- 2.30 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families and the Cabinet Member for Adult Services, Health and Wellbeing in consultation with the Executive Director of Children and Education and the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health develop a joint e-training module in Oracle that would explain to officers across the Council and Sandwell Children's Trust, children's and adult services and the legislation that underpins decision making across the two directorates and how legislation impacts the provision provided by the individual service areas.
- 2.31 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Cabinet Member for Adult Services, Health and Wellbeing in consultation with the Executive Director of Children and Education, the Executive Director of Place, the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health and the Chief Executive of Sandwell Children's Trust explore the creation of joint commissioning of accommodation support, that would increase collaboration across service areas and develop local supported accommodation provision.

- 2.32 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families and Cabinet Member for Adult Services, Health and Wellbeing in consultation with the Executive Director of Children and Education, the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health and the Chief Executive of Sandwell Children's Trust develop a joined up quality assurance strategy that will set out how joint working across children's and adult services will maintain quality assurance as a care experienced young person moves from children's to adult services, ensuring there is an audit trail in the services and provided.

3. Background and Context

- 3.1 At its meeting on 30 June 2025 (Minute No. 27/25), the Board agreed to undertake a Scrutiny Review into the Transition to Adulthood Journey for Care Experienced Young People. Subsequently a number of briefing sessions and visits have been undertaken by the Board across service areas to gather evidence and enhance understanding of the key issues and challenges that impact Care Experienced Young People through their transition to adulthood journey.
- 3.2 The Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board undertook six online briefing sessions with service areas across the Council and Sandwell Children's Trust. In addition, two site visits were undertaken to Sandwell Children's Trust where the Board met with and engaged directly with staff and senior leaders as well as the Forum for Independent Young Adults.
- 3.3 Briefing Session on the Care Experienced Young People Journey into adulthood - 20 October 2025 – Introduced the current Transition to Adulthood offer provided to Care Experienced Young People and how different service areas across the Council, Children's Trust and partners engage and support them. The Local Offer for Care Experienced Young People was explained as well as how service areas engage with wider Corporate Parenting Offer. The training offer was emphasised along with the need for service areas to engage with training and understand service requirements from a Corporate Parenting perspective.
- 3.4 Briefing Session on the role of Sandwell Children's Trust and how provision is provided jointly across the Council and the Trust, looking at the Education, Housing, and the Health and Adult Services provision – 25 November 2025 – the session expanded on the provision available to Care Experienced Young People to enable the Board to understand what the different service areas provide and support with. A strong emphasis was placed on the need to work in collaboration across service areas to ensure a more joined up approach to working and improve outcomes.
- 3.5 Briefing Session with Housing, setting out the provision provided by the Housing Service – 1 December 2025 – the need to work in partnership with colleagues across the Council and Children's Trust was emphasised along with how services for young people could be improved. The Board received a detailed presentation on the provision provided by the Housing Service and the accommodation options that were available to Care Experienced Young

People as well as the support provision that had been developed to support independent living.

- 3.6 Briefing Session with Education setting out the provision provided by the Education and Skills Service – 10 December 2025 – the Board were presented with how Care Experienced Young People were supported into further education, employment and training and what support was available to Care Experienced Young People if they were not in education, employment and training. Barriers to accessing opportunities were discussed and consideration given to how to engage and reach out to those who had disengaged with services was considered.
- 3.7 Briefing Session with the Independent Review Officers at Sandwell Children's Trust – 21 January 2026 – the Board received a presentation on the work of the Independent Review Officers and their involvement with Care Experienced Young People and how the Children's Trust works to support and deliver positive outcomes for young people. The Board considered the work that went into quality assuring service delivery as well as what would support the Children's Trust further in enhancing and delivering services for Care Experienced Young People.
- 3.8 Scrutiny Visit to Metsec with the Forum for Independent Young Adults – 11 February 2026 – the Board held an engagement session with the Forum for Independent Young Adults to discuss their own transition to adulthood as well as what provision should be put in place to support Care Experienced Young People across service areas. The Forum for Independent Young Adults were very honest in discussing their concerns and how services across the Council and Children's Trust should be enhanced to improve service offer and delivery.
- 3.9 Scrutiny Visit to Sandwell Children's Trust – 18 February 2026 – the Board were able to meet with the senior leaders across Sandwell Children's Trust, along with the Personal Advisors Team. The Board received an update from senior leaders at the Trust, on the recent developments and work that had been undertaken following the Ofsted inspection in October 2025, the judgment of which had been rated 'good'. In addition the Board were able to meet with young people as well as the Personal Advisors Team who support Care Experienced Young People through their transition to adulthood. The Board were able to hear the ideas the Personal Advisors had to improve provision across Sandwell for Care Experienced Young People, as well as improve outcomes and service delivery.
- 3.10 Briefing Session with Adult Social Care – 11 March 2026 – the final session allowed the Board to understand how Adult Social Care provision engaged with Children's Services and understand how greater collaboration and joint-working would improve how services are delivered. There was recognition that Adult Services and Children's Services had different statutory obligations, and there needed to be a greater understanding of this. It was further recognised that a means of smoothing and enhancing any transition to adulthood required a greater joined up approach across all service areas.

- 3.11 Desktop research was also carried out to understand both regional and national issues and challenges as it related to Care Experienced Young People and their transition to adulthood.
- 3.12 The briefing sessions and visits allowed the members of the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board to formulate a number of recommendations that would contribute towards improving service collaboration and understanding as well as improving outcomes for Care Experienced Young People.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 The Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board undertook to work with and collaborate across service areas both within the Council and Sandwell Children's Trust.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. Any financial implications as a result of the recommendations will be considered by the Executive, should they be approved.

6. Legal and Governance Implications

- 6.1 The recommendations fall within the Council's general powers under the Local Government Act 1972 and the Equality Act 2010. Compliance with statutory duties, including the Public Sector Equality Duty, has been considered. Consultation with stakeholders and partners has been undertaken in line with governance requirements.

7. Risks

- 7.1 There are no specific risk implications arising from this report. Any risk implications as a result of the recommendations will be considered by the Executive, should they be approved.

8. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty)

- 8.1 The Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board undertook this Scrutiny Review to improve services and outcomes for Care Experienced Young People. Due regard was given to the Care Experience as a protected characteristic and the work of the Board had this in mind across all sessions as well as in compiling the above recommendations.

9. Other Relevant Implications

- 9.1 Corporate parenting – due regard had been given to care experience as a protected characteristic throughout the review and questions and recommendations had had this in mind. The Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Board took seriously its role as corporate parents and the recommendations presented reflected that ambition.

10. Background Documents

- 10.1 None

11. How does this deliver the Outcomes in the Council Plan?

Growing up in Sandwell

- 11.1 Be a good Corporate Parent for the children we care for, ensuring that those children are fully a part of our ‘family’, and promoting fostering and adoption.
- 11.2 An outstanding corporate parent, with all of the young people in our care reaching their full potential.