

	Corporate Parenting Committee
	Report from the Corporate Director of Children and Young People
	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools (Councillor Gwen Grahl)
An update on the Brent Residential Children’s Home project	

Wards Affected:	Barnhill
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Michelle Gwyther Head of Forward Planning, Performance and Partnerships Michelle.Gwyther@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Corporate Parenting Committee on the Brent Residential Children’s Home project. This is to follow from the previous update on 5 February 2024.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

That the Committee:

- 2.1. Notes the progress of the Brent Residential Children’s Home project and are informed of the key milestones to be achieved in the next three (3) months.

3.0 Background

- 3.1. In June 2022, the Department for Education (DfE) opened applications for its Wave 2 Children's Home Capital Grant Programme. This provided an opportunity for local authorities to apply for matched capital funding available until March 2025 to create provision for residential children’s homes for children and young people in their own local area.

- 3.2. The Council's bid to the DfE's Children's Home Capital Programme was submitted on 9 September 2022. On 17 November 2022, the Council received a letter which confirmed the bid was successful. This notified Brent that it would be awarded in principle grant funding of £1.1m for the development of a residential children's care home in Brent subject to 50% match funding from the local authority. This match funding was agreed by the Council's Capital Programme Board in May 2023.
- 3.3. The Brent Residential Children's Home project will deliver a four-bed residential step-down home within Brent for looked after adolescents (aged 12 – 16) with social, emotional and behavioural needs. It will provide three bedrooms for a step-down provision to prepare young people who are in residential settings away from the borough for a move into a local fostering placement, supported accommodation (if 16+) or to return home. The remaining one bedroom will be allocated for emergency placements to enable a short-term response for young people in crisis.

4.0. Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

- 4.1. The development of a Children's Residential home in Brent aligns with two Borough Plan outcomes, firstly Prosperity and Stability in Brent, and secondly The Best Start in Life. Enabling more children and young people to stay in the borough means they will have greater opportunities to participate in and contribute to the Brent community. They will receive local services to enable them to be fully equipped to succeed in adulthood.

5.0 Detail

- 5.1. A fortnightly cross Council working group has been established with the aim of delivering the children's residential home in Brent. The working group is held to account by reporting to the Department for Education on a monthly basis, the Children's Residential Care Home Board on a monthly basis and the CYP Senior Leadership Team meeting on a quarterly basis, as well as the Corporate Parenting Committee.

Workstream Updates

- 5.2. The project plan has been split into separate workstream and progress on each area with key milestones over the next three months can be found below.

Capital Workstream

- 5.3. Refurbishment work on the property commenced on 28 October 2024 following a procurement exercise. This comprises both interior and exterior works, including replacing the roof.
- 5.4. The capital works are expected to be completed by 21 March 2025, which is later than late January 2025, due to some delays at the start and the end of the procurement process. This impacted on the start date for refurbishment works.

The completion date remains within the Department for Education wave 2 grant timeframe for all capital works to be completed by end of March 2025.

Recruitment Workstream

- 5.5. A successful candidate for the Registered Manager role has been onboarded and will start on 28 February 2025. A recruitment campaign supported by the corporate Recruitment Team has been created for the remaining residential home staff roles as these are hard to recruit and retain roles. This is due to go live by the end of January.

Registration Workstream

- 5.6. The process to register the home with Ofsted is composed of three aspects, the submission of an SC1 document for the residential home, an SC2 document for the Responsible Individual and another SC2 document for the Registered Manager. The SC1 document includes details on the home and key documents and policies such as the Statement of Purpose and Resident's Guide. The SC2 documents provide details of the Responsible Individual and Registered Manager to ensure they have the knowledge and experience required for the role. Once all three are submitted the Ofsted registration process commences. All three documents have been submitted and it could take at least 16 weeks for Ofsted to complete the registration process.

Operational Update

- 5.7. Operational aspects of the project are being formed as the opening date for the home becomes closer. This includes furnishing and decorating the property, how the home will operate, for example shift patterns for staff assurance and the early identification of young people to move into the home once it is opened.
- 5.8. The current expected annual operating costs is comparable with the estimated cost in the original business case (£1.1m) and has been developed from using available comparative information from the consultant, the Short Breaks Centre and benchmarking staffing costs against private and local authority owned children's residential homes. This is in the process of being finalised as the detailed operation of the home is being agreed.

6.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 6.1 Care experienced young people have been actively consulted throughout the development of the children's home, using various engagement methods to ensure broad participation. The goal is to gather their preferences on aspects such as the design, personalisation of private spaces, optimal use of communal areas, creating a sense of safety, and the overall operation of the home. Their feedback has been integrated into the planning process, and they will be kept informed about how their input has influenced decisions.
- 6.2 Previous approaches to engaging with young people included focus groups, a survey, and a drawing competition in which the young people were

compensated for their time and participation. Unfortunately, this had minimal take up with four young people in total engaging in these activities. The methods used were reviewed including gaining best practice insights from a Children's Residential Home Consultant as well as the Participation Team to help refine existing ideas, inform ongoing activities and plan for meaningful participation work.

- 6.3. It was agreed that instead of conducting activities specific to the children's residential home that young people would be engaged with through existing events hosted by various teams across Children and Young People. In December 2024, 12–17-year-olds in care were consulted through the Brent Virtual School and Brent Care Journeys 2.0 enrichment events. At the Brent Virtual School event, the children's residential home working group had a stall that enabled young people to engage with the topic if they were interested, this reached 5 young people. The Brent Care Journeys 2.0 event allowed for a 20-minute slot to conduct an activity focused on the children's residential home, there were around 14 young people who engaged with this. Both events asked young people to list qualities of a trustworthy adult and their bedroom wish list, if given a £75 budget. The former will help to inform how the home staff are inducted and the relationships they will build with future residents of the home.
- 6.4. Some of the qualities that young people stated include 'motivated by the cause, and capable', 'wants to be there', 'caring and vigilant' and 'arranges events and activities.' Items that young people would purchase include LED and fairy lights, a comfy rug, artist posters, plushies or soft toys and gaming accessories. This will be incorporated into the decision making for the soft furnishings of the home and how to enable young people to personalise their rooms.

7.0 Financial Considerations

- 7.1. Funding of £1.1m for the development of a residential children's care home has been secured via the DfE's Children's Home Capital Programme, subject to 50% match funding from the local authority. In developing the care home, the Council is required to ensure grant conditions and agreed timescales under the DfE's Children's Home Capital Programme grant are observed, failing which there is a risk of repayment of DfE funding.
- 7.2. The current assumption is the capital project will be delivered in time and budget.

8.0 Legal Considerations

- 8.1 A children's residential care home run by Brent Council directly supports the Council in delivering a range of statutory duties as laid down the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, the Children Leaving Care Act 2000 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

9.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

9.1 There are currently no Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) considerations arising from this report.

10.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

10.1 There are no additional climate change or environmental considerations other than to ensure the home's refurbishment improves its environmental efficiency rating.

11.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

11.1 There are no additional human resource or property considerations to those referenced in the report.

12.0 Communication Considerations

12.1 The Barnhill Residents' Association is kept informed of changes in the project. The immediate residents of the property have been kept informed of works directly by the builder.

12.2 Information about the residential home is included on the Brent Council website.

Related documents:

[Brent Childrens Care Home Business Case](#), Cabinet Report, 22 May 2023

[Acquisition of Property Brent Childrens Care Home Project](#), Cabinet Report 15 January 2024

Report sign off:

Nigel Chapman

Corporate Director of Children and Young People