

 Brent	<p>Corporate Parenting Committee 2 February 2026</p> <p>Report from the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Community Development</p> <p>Lead Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Employment - Cllr Gwen Grahm</p>
<p>An update on the Brent Residential Children's Home project</p>	

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)	Kelli Eboji Head of Service, Looked After Children and Permanency kelli.eboji@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 3 February 2025.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

That the Committee:

- 2.1. Notes and comments on the progress of the Brent Residential Children's Home project.

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 better equipped to succeed in adulthood.

5.0 Detail

- 5.1. A fortnightly cross Council working group was established with the aim of delivering the children's residential home. 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 CYPSCD Senior Leadership Team meeting on a quarterly basis, as well as the Corporate Parenting Committee. The working group did not meet between August and December 2025 owing to works being conducted to the home and officers being unable to safely access the site (see paragraph 5.5 below).

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 comprised both interior and exterior works, including replacing the roof.
- 5.4. The capital works were completed by the expected date of March 2025. Whilst partial possession was secured on 3 April 2025, allowing officers in CYPCCD to set up the home, practical completion could only be certified upon Building Control (BC) issuing their completion certificate. Capital colleagues met with BC on 10 June 2025 to establish actions required for sign-off. The actions identified by BC, for the residential home to receive a completion certificate, included:
 - Amendments to the fire strategy and fire management plan to include more information on staff number, mobility and personal emergency evacuation plans
 - Three fire doors to be installed on the ground and first floor
- 5.5. Before the identified actions could be addressed, unfortunately on 12 August 2025 an incident occurred. The neighbour residing opposite property lost control of their car which resulted in a crash into the front wall of the children's home. The neighbour was taken to hospital for tests and fortunately was unharmed. The property was vacant at the time and fortunately nobody was injured. Officers sent flowers to the neighbour wishing him a speedy recovery.
- 5.6. The Council's Building Control structural engineer assessed the building and advised the need for internal props under the lintel before removal of the car. These were installed and then the car was removed from the driveway. A full structural survey was completed on 20 Aug 2025 to assess the works required. The breakdown of costs for this totalled £13,010.04
- 5.7. Prior to any works being completed the Council needed to present a claim (with the quotation) to the insurance company and obtain approval ahead of progressing any works. Unfortunately, the insurance company for the neighbour's car delayed responding to the Local Authority's quote and did not give agreement for the work to commence in a timely manner. The works began on 24 November 2025 and were completed by 19 December 2025.
- 5.8. Building Control visited the property on 20 December 2025; the completion certificate was received on 05 January 2026 and the practical completion certificate was received on 07 January 2026.

Recruitment Workstream

- 5.9. A successful candidate for the Registered Manager role was onboarded and started in post on 28 February 2025. Unfortunately, this candidate made a personal decision to resign and left the Local Authority on 15 September 2025. Ofsted were made aware that the Registered Manager was leaving the department and made clear that the application for the children's home must go on hold until a new permanent Registered Manager was appointed and in-post.

- 5.10 An enhanced recruitment campaign for a replacement permanent Registered Manager took place in October 2025 with a successful appointment made. The new manager started in post in January. Ofsted have been updated and have shared they plan to complete a visit to the children's home and undertake the interviews of the Registered Manager and Responsible Individual in April 2026.
- 5.11 Three rounds of recruitment for the Deputy Manager position took place between February 2025 and November 2025. A successful candidate for the Deputy Manager role has accepted the position and is due to be onboarded in late February 2026.
- 5.12 All 3 Senior Residential Support Worker (SRSW) and 7 Residential Support Worker (RSW) roles were filled after a rigorous recruitment exercise. The successful candidates were kept updated that the project has been delayed owing to the issues described above relating to building repairs and manager recruitment. Three staff withdrew their interest in the role due to the delays and opted to secure employment elsewhere. The remaining candidates are excited to start their employment and are eagerly awaiting start dates.

Start dates will be given to all remaining candidates for end of February 2026, subject to notice periods from their current employment. Candidates will receive training and induction in March 2025 with the aim of the home being operational following the inspection and interviews planned for April 2026.

Registration Workstream

- 5.13 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 Residents' 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. Now the new Registered Manager has started in post an updated SC2 will be submitted to Ofsted to complement the SC1 and SC2 that Ofsted already have. As outlined above Ofsted have indicated an inspection visit and interviews to take place in April 2026.

Operational Update

- 5.14 Operational aspects of the project are being reinstated now that the new Registered Manager has started in the Local Authority and 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.

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 was 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. In March 2025 young people from Brent Care Journeys 2.0 visited the site and gave feedback on the layout, use of space and set-up. Their feedback has been integrated into the planning process, and they will be kept informed about how their input has influenced decisions. The young people were impressed with the site and looked forward to it opening.
- 6.2 Young People from Brent Care Journeys 2.0 also assisted by sitting on interview panels with CYPDC staff that were undertaken for the new posts created. The Young People helped co-create interview questions and took part in the scoring of candidates. When Young People were not able to attend interviews, they put forward interview questions that were used in the interviews of candidates.
- 6.3 In response to the feedback from young people, a decision was made by the working group to leave the bedrooms in the property to be neutrally decorated. An allowance will be given to each young people upon moving into the residential home to personalise their room to their preference, taste and style. Items that young people suggested should go into the bedrooms for young people included LED and fairy lights, comfy rugs, artist posters, plushies or soft toys and gaming accessories.

7.0 Financial Considerations

Revenue Costs

- 7.1 Work was completed on the operational running cost for the home and this is estimated to be £1.027m per year, which comprises £0.203m running costs and staffing costs of £0.824m (including unsociable hours pay). This total is comparable to the estimated running costs of £1.1m in the original business case and was developed using available comparative information from a consultant, the Short Breaks Centre and benchmarking staffing costs against private and local authority owned children's residential homes.
- 7.2 The CYPDC department has a 2025/26 saving of £290K predicated on setting up and running the new residential home. This will not be achieved this financial year and it is part of the placements budget pressures in Children Services included in the Quarter 3 Financial Forecast update to Cabinet on the 19th of January.

Capital Costs

- 7.3 The project budget was initially set at £2.2m, comprising £1.1m from the DfE grant and £1.1m in borrowing. The total budget is now forecast at £1.64m by

31 March 2026. Of this, £1.57m had been spent by 31 March 2025, with a further £0.06m projected for 2025/26.

7.4 Officers will undertake a reconciliation of project costs to confirm the final outturn.

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 additional Equality, Diversity and 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 at necessary key intervals. The immediate residents either side 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 Children's Care Home Business Case](#), Cabinet Report, 22 May 2023

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

Report sign off:

Nigel Chapman

Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Community Development