

Corporate Parenting Board

Date:

Title of report: **Successful Funding application – ‘Elevating young peoples’ voices in digital resilience’**

Purpose of report: The purpose of this paper is to inform members Board of a successful bid for funding to consult, develop and implement a policy/guidance document in relation to ‘digital parenting’ in respect of Children Looked After and Care Leavers.

Key Decisions -

- To note the successful funding application
- To support the project and employment of an apprentice (ideally a Care Leaver)
- To agree to consider the final policy document, once developed.

Date signed off by the Director of Childrens Services:

11 March 2021

Cabinet Member Portfolio Lead:

1. Summary report

In February 2021, a funding opportunity was circulated by Parentzone and Nominet. By way of background, Parentzone is a national organisation which is widely recognised as ‘experts in digital family’ and Nominet is the UK’s official web domain registrar.

Middlesbrough Council submitted a bid under Design Challenge 3, the purpose of which is:

Design Challenge 3: Elevating young peoples’ voice to influence the services that impact on their digital safety and opportunity Care experienced young people have invaluable insight which is currently under-used in relation to digital and online safety policy development.

To ensure care experienced young people can influence the service policies, process and practice that impact on their digital lives we need to extend participation and diversify and improve channels of communication and feedback.

Design Challenge 3 will award multiple grants between £10,000 - £30,000 depending on applicants reach and scale to be delivered for to 12-18 months

Following consultation with key managers and officers an initial application was submitted requesting the maximum amount of £30,000. The application was accompanied with supporting statements from the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board and the Deputy Mayor.

This bid was successful with funders making an offer of an additional £5,719 (a total of £5719), to extend the project from 18 months to 2 years.

In essence the funding is to develop and implement a ‘digital parenting’ policy and practice guidance for Children Looked After and Children Leaving Care.

The funding will be used to employ an apprentice (**ideally a care leaver**), who will assist the Risk and Resilience Coordinator and members of the Participation Team to consult, develop and implement the policy/guidance document.

The document will be developed through consultation with Children Looked After and Care Leavers (including the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Council), as well as with Social Workers, Foster Carers and staff in residential placements.

It is expected that the guidance will provide clarity and consistency regarding some legal issues that are emerging. For example, the confiscation of digital devices in some situations can be classed as a deprivation of the young person's liberty and repeated searching of social media and digital devices by Social Workers without consent or an authorisation under the Regulation of Investigative Powers Act (RIPA), could be illegal and a breach of a young person's right to privacy.

The development of this policy and guidance will bring together a high level of national, regional and local expertise to develop what will be an innovative document that will help provide digital resilience in Looked After Children and Children Leaving Care in Middlesbrough's.

Once developed, a draft policy document will be presented to the Departmental Management Team and the Corporate Parenting Board for approval.

2. Background Papers and History of Decisions (where applicable)

None

3. Contact officer: Jeff Watson, Risk and Resilience Manager

4. Director responsible: Rob Brown / Sue Butcher