

## Young People Scrutiny Engagement Group (Action 4 Us) Care Leavers – 16<sup>th</sup> July 2025

### Attendees:

Robert (Chair)	Action 4 Us
David	Action 4 Us
Riley	Action 4 Us
Jack	Action 4 Us
Lewis	Action 4 Us
	Action 4 Us
	Action 4 Us
	Action 4 Us
X.Shipley	Young People's Regeneration Champion
L. Sherriff	Young People's Regeneration Champion
P. Milson	Young People's Regeneration Champion
P. Morris	Senior Personal Advisor
A. Townsend	Group Manager, Leaving Care
P. Turner	Executive Director Children/Family Services/Deputy Chief Executive
K. Ryan	Head Of Transport & Traffic Management
M. Nearney	Executive Director of Housing and Communities
B. Smith	Head of Service (Contracting and Investment)
C. Leader	Maintenance & Improvements Manager
R. Grannon	Kingstown Works Limited
D. Glews	Kingstown Works Limited
T. Zvauya	Head Of Safeguarding Standards
Councillor Tock	Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
Councillor Robinson	Elected Member
Councillor Kennett	Elected Member
Councillor Payne	Elected Member
C. Brennan	Scrutiny Officer
P. Todd	Scrutiny Officer

### 1. Welcome & Introductions

Introductions were made by those in attendance.

### 2. Minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025

P. Todd presented the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025 for approval.

It was highlighted the date at the top of the minutes was incorrect and should be amended.

**Agreed** – That, the minutes of the meeting, held on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025, be taken as read and correctly recorded.

### **3. Freedom Pass**

K. Ryan attended the meeting to provide an update on the Freedom Pass, noting that the scheme, which ran from April 2025 to March 2026, had seen increased usage, with applications reaching 272 against the original estimate of 350. Promotional work, including a PR piece developed with a care leaver, had helped raise awareness. Although the scheme had continued to receive broad support from the Council and the Combined Authority's Mayor, financial pressures had begun to emerge. Funding through the Bus Service Improvement Plan had been confirmed for an extension, but without an increase in revenue, meaning commitments could not rise further. With a projected 545 potential applications and a budget of £310k against rising costs, the scheme had faced significant budget pressures. Work had been underway to identify additional funding sources, and while the scheme was viewed as a success that partners wished to continue, firm commitments could not yet be made.

The young people discussed:

- i. The projected increase in eligible young people due to extending support from 21 up to 25, noting that earlier figures had only considered those up to 21 and that working to the maximum estimate might place unnecessary pressure on the budget. The young people were advised that the higher number had only been shared that afternoon and required further analysis, but officers did not want to refuse applications unnecessarily and would seek to balance affordability with need, raising funding implications with the Combined Authority Mayor where required. It was explained that although uptake among 21–25-year-olds was currently low, the Council must plan responsibly for a three-year funding settlement while ensuring sufficient revenue, given £3m of the wider allocation already supported subsidised bus services.
- ii. The value of the travel passes for care leavers, with young people describing significant financial benefits for accessing college and apprenticeships and offering to present again to bus operators or the Combined Authority Mayor. The young people were advised that the Combined Authority Mayor was supportive of continuing the scheme and early indications following the latest allocation were positive.
- iii. Maintaining eligibility up to age 25, with members and officers expressing no opposition, and it was confirmed that any operational difficulties would be worked through with the Head of Transport to protect the offer.

**Agreed** – That an off-agenda update be provided once decisions been made surrounding funding for the future of the Freedom Pass.

#### 4. Council Housing Repairs

C. Leader, B. Smith, M. Nearney, R. Grannon and D. Glews attended the meeting to provide an update on issues raised at a previous meeting on Council Housing Repairs.

Officers explained that properties were advertised as soon as notice was given, often before staff knew what repairs were required, which KWL then undertook. This caused delays, made worse by staffing pressures, limited key access, and KWL's difficulty in providing accurate return dates. Communication during this stage was acknowledged as needing improvement. Successful applicants were expected to be contacted by Allocations and their Personal Advisor, and any failures were to be reported. Housing Access and Leaving Care teams had moved from individual contacts to shared inboxes to improve consistency. Where major void issues were known, KWL was alerted early, and properties requiring long-term or structural repairs were not to be allocated. Applicants were instead to be informed and offered alternatives sooner. Any cases where this did not happen were requested to be flagged.

The young people discussed:

- i. Concerns that some issues arose when young people aged 21+ did not have an allocated Personal Adviser, suggesting the need for further discussion. The young people were advised that unsuccessful housing applicants were not routinely contacted due to the very high volume of bids, with 200–300 bids per property, and that multiple high-band applicants often competed for the same homes, though Personal Advisers could access information where needed.
- ii. Whether the Care Leavers' Promise—stating that care leavers can choose to live where they want in safe, secure housing—needed to be updated, as this did not reflect the reality of receiving only one bid opportunity and then waiting months for a Band B allocation. The young people were advised that the current allocation policy governed this process and that an off-agenda response could be provided.
- iii. Communication issues between Personal Advisers, the housing teams, and young people, noting staff frustration and asking for an update on the proposed Care Leaver Housing Champion role suggested at the previous meeting. The young people were advised that work was ongoing, with improved contact between departments and recognition that current protocols were insufficient. Officers emphasised the need to strengthen joint working and ensure all specialist teams operated as one, with recent discussions already improving communication.
- iv. Whether Band B status still provided meaningful priority in a system where large numbers of applicants competed for limited properties, and whether care leavers received adequate prioritisation compared with other local authorities

that used Priority A. The young people were advised that demand across all bands had intensified and that housing availability remained extremely limited. Care leavers only moved to Priority A if they met two Band B criteria. Officers agreed to ask the Housing Access Manager to review the banding picture and provide figures, acknowledging the validity of concerns raised.

It was further advised that KWL had committed to a maximum 48-hour turnaround for gas and electric tests. If a tenancy had been signed and a start date agreed but no test slot was available, Allocations had access to a hotline to release slots and secure the required appointment. Energy Angels had been supporting KWL, and any bypassed or unsafe meters identified during voids were addressed as part of the void works. Any instances where processes were not followed were requested to be flagged.

The young people discussed:

- i. Concerns that appointment windows for gas and electrical safety checks were often unsuitable for care leavers who were working or in college, and that some had been incorrectly recorded as missed when they were unable to attend. The young people were advised that daily operational pressures made it difficult for KWL to guarantee specific times, though they aimed to accommodate young people where possible and asked that issues be reported immediately so they could respond. It was noted that a Tenant Experience, Influence and Support Manager had begun work to improve contact processes, and KWL should be the first point of contact for such issues.
- ii. Expectations that tenants must be available for two consecutive days when signing for a property and questioned whether this created barriers for young people. The young people were advised that at sign-up tenants should leave the viewing with a gas and electric safety check arranged, normally within a half-day window (AM or PM) across a 48-hour period. The checks were required before utilities could be activated and tenants needed to have registered with an energy provider. While young people were expected to attend, any person could be present on their behalf, as ID was not required.
- iii. The availability of performance information from KWL on missed appointments and sought assurance that the system worked effectively for care leavers. The young people were advised that KWL reported regularly on Key Performance Indicators, achieving high levels of compliance in the high-90% range. However, the service could not identify how many of those appointments related specifically to care leavers, as this information was not captured within the operational data.
- iv. Whether having a dedicated Housing Champion could help resolve communication issues and ensure visibility of care leaver-specific appointment patterns. The young people were advised that although a champion could provide an additional link, the aim should be to get the process right for all tenants, making separate reporting unnecessary. Officers

reaffirmed the commitment to improving protocol, communication routes and joint working between teams so that care leavers received a consistent, reliable service.

Redecoration delays were discussed, with officers noting that a joint agreement for the enhanced redecoration package had been in place since 2022, providing two rent-free weeks and support such as cooker connections, painting, blinds and other enhancements. It was acknowledged that this area had not been managed well. When a Band B applicant accepted a property but then declined it for a valid reason, the property should have been passed back to KWL for the full enhanced package before being reallocated to a care leaver. In practice, the Council had not been consistently notifying KWL at the correct point, resulting in keys moving back and forth and delays in completing the works. Work was needed to ensure KWL were informed earlier so the enhancements could be carried out while they still held the keys.

The young people discussed:

- i. Whether void works and the care leaver package could be requested at the same time in order to reduce waiting times. The young people were advised that this was now happening, with a short delay applied so the package could be installed immediately rather than causing longer delays later, and that this change had already begun as a result of earlier scrutiny. It was confirmed that young people could choose to undertake decoration themselves and that the allocations team had been instructed to ensure this choice was clearly offered at allocation or viewing.
- ii. The need for young people to understand what the enhanced package included in order to make an informed choice and asked whether the details could be made available.

Communication issues were discussed, with housing officers and Children's Services having held conversations to improve coordination and ensure Personal Advisors were informed appropriately. It was acknowledged that voids were taking longer, and in cases where significant work was identified once officers accessed a property, additional operatives had been deployed to reduce the time homes remained empty. Previous disconnects between housing officers and other teams had begun to be addressed, and renewed conversations were helping rebuild these relationships, including with area team colleagues. It was also noted that once a tenancy was granted, tenants should have received a named tenancy officer as their point of contact.

The young people discussed:

- i. The need to better manage expectations for care leavers regarding void works, appointments and communication, emphasising that Personal Advisors played a crucial role in explaining processes and delays. The young people

- were advised that void management arrangements were being strengthened, with increased supervision and efforts to provide more reliable estimated completion times so that dates were not repeatedly missed; KWL were working to improve this through a recovery plan.
- ii. Concerns about inconsistent communication from area teams, and it was explained that this would be fed back as part of ongoing changes within the teams. The Executive Director for Housing and Communities outlined plans to introduce a dedicated generic inbox and issues log covering gas, allocations and repairs, accessible to KWL, with weekly responses and monthly review meetings to monitor recurring issues. This would allow immediate logging of concerns, reduce duplication and generate evidence on volumes and patterns before further decisions were made, with a three-month review planned.
  - iii. Access to the new inbox and whether champions and young people could use it directly rather than only through Personal Advisers. The young people were advised that access would likely be managed through PAs but was open to operational suggestions, with the intention to make pathways clearer for care leavers, including those aged 21+ who may not have an allocated PA, and to reflect this clearly in the local offer. Officers emphasised the importance of balancing open access with ensuring issues were triaged appropriately and that specific case volumes would help shape future arrangements.
  - iv. The request for a dedicated Care Leaver Housing Champion and that champions with lived experience could provide direct support, navigate systems quickly and resolve issues without multiple hand-offs. The young people were advised that while the role was not ruled out, there was not yet enough evidence to create a funded post. Officers stressed the need first to fix underlying system inefficiencies and allow time for the new inbox and tracking process to generate clear data on demand and recurring problems. They noted that Personal Advisers remained the statutory lead and should be supported to fulfil that role but acknowledged the value of the champion proposal and committed to revisiting it once evidence had been collected and evaluated.

### **Agreed –**

- a. That a response be provided off-agenda with regards to the commitment of the care leavers promise (choice to live where they want to in safe and secure housing) under the allocations policy as they only receive one bid;
- b. that officers investigate other Local Authorities categorising Care Leavers as a Band A and consider adopting a similar approach to the Allocations Policy.
- c. that figures be provided off agenda that detail the breakdown of applicants per band;
- d. that an off-agenda update be provided detailing the progress of implementing the enhanced care leavers package during the void process as this requires co-operation with KWL;
- e. that the Enhanced Care Leaver Package be circulated off agenda;

- f. that a new joint inbox and issues log be established to enable Care Leavers to report housing issues. This will allow a for greater understanding of problem areas to be highlighted, allowing officers to address and resolve occurrences of dissatisfaction;
- g. that Housing setup monthly meetings to review the problem areas and challenge issues that haven't been resolved;
- h. that the new dedicated inbox for Care Leaver Housing Issues be established no later than 1<sup>st</sup> February 2026, and
- i. that a future item be added to the work programme following a minimum trial period of 3 months to enable Housing to report back results on the trail period.

## **5. Outcomes from the Officer Steering Group on Care Leavers as a Protected Characteristic**

T. Zvauya attended the meeting to provide an update on Care Leavers as a Protected Characteristic and advised that the Corporate Parenting Steering Group continued to explore recognising care experience as a protected characteristic, drawing on input from council services, partners and learning from other local authorities. Feedback elsewhere was mixed, with many adopting the status without full equality impact work. The group focused on how this would interact with existing protected characteristics and what practical changes it might bring, noting that several measures used by others were already in place locally. Young people emphasised the need for accountability, though the group recognised the status is not legally defined and views among care-experienced people vary due to concerns about stigma.

A young person, having learned about the meeting, submitted a statement which was read out.

The young people discussed:

- i. Whether an impact assessment had been completed. The young people were advised that the assessment was scheduled for completion at the end of the month.
- ii. National lobbying around care leaver entitlements and whether members should write to government given inconsistencies between national policy and the ambitions of the local offer. The young people were advised that Councillor Tock would draft a letter expressing support and raising concerns, with Councillor Kennett offering to co-sign, and that—with permission—the statement could be shared with Corporate Parenting and Cabinet to increase visibility and pressure on government.
- iii. How new initiatives for care leavers aligned with the Council's "family business model," particularly in relation to creating supportive roles and opportunities without increasing taxpayer burden. The young people were advised that efforts focused on helping young people into existing roles rather than creating care-leaver-specific posts, with this work monitored through the

steering group and linked to apprenticeships and employment pathways. Officers emphasised that good ideas would continue to be developed with input from young people.

- iv. The job application processes and concerns that the guaranteed interview scheme did not always work effectively, noting that application forms did not currently include a box for care leavers to declare their status and that jobs were sometimes closed early despite significant preparation by champions and young people. The young people were advised that a new recruitment system was being introduced and was expected to include a care leaver tick-box, and that early job closure typically occurred where a post received very high numbers of applicants.
- v. Frequent HR-related barriers affecting care leaver employment pathways and requested clearer guidance on what was and was not possible. The young people were advised that officers needed to ensure compliance with strict employment law but agreed that further clarity from HR would be helpful to support problem-solving and promote opportunities for young people.

**Agreed:**

- a. That the Care Leavers' letter be shared with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and read to the members of the Corporate Parenting Panel and Cabinet, with a view to the Council writing to the Government in support of recognising Care Leavers as a protected characteristic;
- b. that the Council's new system for job applications should include the ability to specify care leaver status, and
- c. that a meeting be arranged between Human Resources and Room 42 to discuss barriers faced by Care Leavers during the job application process and develop solutions.

**6. Education, Employment and Training**

T. Zvauya attended the meeting to discuss Education, Employment and Training for care leavers. It was highlighted that a Grade 3 casual post had opened for young people, with Personal Advisors and Room 42 available to support applications or work-experience requests. One young person had already engaged, received an introduction to the role and immediate support, and began arranging work experience. This was highlighted as a positive start, with hopes that more young people would take up the opportunity after months of development.

The young people discussed:

- i. The positive engagement with service leads and the potential to replicate successful approaches across the Council. The young people were advised that if the current work proved effective, it could be expanded, with learning fed back through the steering group. It was noted that trauma-informed

training would also form part of the offer so employers were better equipped to support young people when placements or employment opportunities began.

- ii. Whether there was an interest from KWL in adopting the same model. The young people were advised that the intention was to maximise opportunities for young people by increasing exposure to employers, offering work experience that could progress into training or apprenticeships, and sharing the emerging blueprint with KWL. Officers were also meeting regarding a potential apprenticeship based around void properties, with further discussions planned with champions to shape what this would look like.
- iii. The shortage of construction-based apprenticeships and wider apprenticeship opportunities, noting that external employers were reluctant to take on apprentices and that the Council offered few options outside administrative roles. The young people were advised that it would be helpful to involve the Head of 14–19 Learning & Skills, particularly as new training programmes and bootcamps were being approved, and to explore further support from Economic Development & Regeneration. Officers acknowledged that some bootcamp funding included care leaver-specific requirements and agreed to revisit consultation and alignment.
- iv. Whether apprenticeships were being considered within Preparing for Adulthood work, particularly external apprenticeships, and expressed concern that the Council's apprenticeship levy was not being utilised across all directorates. The young people were advised that Children's and Adult's Services likely used a significant proportion of the levy and that understanding its allocation across the Council would require input from the Head of 14–19 Learning & Skills. The young people were noted that family hubs had previously offered apprenticeships but had ceased due to insufficient trainers, raising concerns that similar issues existed in other departments.
- v. The wider apprenticeship landscape, including Hull Training events and employer engagement, and emphasised the need for guaranteed employer placements so young people completing training were not left without progression routes. The young people were advised that while events were helpful, success relied on employers offering placements at the end of training, and that further work was needed to attract businesses to invest in young people. Links to economic development colleagues were suggested to strengthen employer networks.
- vi. The need for more level-2 opportunities for young people aged 21–25 who were not well served by existing school-leaver-focused events. Officers shared an example of a care leaver successfully supported into the armed forces, emphasising the importance of tailored pathways for each young person.

**Agreed:**

- a. That the Family Business Model which includes access to Trauma Informed Training, developed by young people, be shared with KWL to be used when providing work experience, apprenticeships and training opportunities.
- b. That the Council's apprenticeship levy be investigated to understand the job roles on offer, how the directorates are making use of the fund and how further practical apprenticeship can be offered rather than the weighting put toward administrative roles.
- c. Following the investigation into the apprenticeship levy usage, relevant officers be invited to a future meeting to discuss Education, Employment and Training and funding opportunities for apprenticeships.

## **7. Resolution List**

P. Todd presented the outstanding actions on the resolution list.

It was advised that the contact list and flow chart had not yet been provided by housing officers.

**Agreed** – That the Scrutiny Officer follows up on the Contact List and Flow Chart which had not yet been sent to Room 42.

## **8. Work Programme and dates for future meetings**

Future meetings were discussed, and it was requested the next meeting (April) to focus on:

- i. Health / Mental Health / Anxiety / Loneliness
- ii. Council wide understanding of corporate parenting with members of the Corporate Parenting Officer Steering Group invited.

**Agreed** – That the Action 4 Us group discuss items to add to the work programme for the forthcoming year and provide the clerk with topics to add to the work programme.