

County Council – 8 February 2022

Written Question under Council Procedure Rule 9.2

1. Question from Councillor Simon Bywater

Could the Chair of the Children and Young People Committee advise Council whether it still plans to invest and continue the very successful Care Leavers Mentoring programme. Having fully engaged in the programme myself over the past 18 months (as a mentor) I have seen the huge benefits this has had for our care leavers in Cambridgeshire.

Response from Councillor Bryony Goodliffe, Chair of Children and Young People Committee

I would like to begin by thanking Councillor Bywater for his question, and for his commitment in providing mentoring to one of our young people leaving care through this scheme.

The mentoring scheme was introduced as a pilot in January 2020, with an aim to support young people leaving care to build the skills they need in order to successfully enter employment. The scheme linked young people leaving care with business mentors who would be able to develop their confidence and improve their skills in a variety of relevant areas, develop their career aspirations and focus on the steps they need to take to achieve these.

The project was called 'Reach High, Cambridgeshire' and initially involved 10 young people leaving care. The pilot scheme was delivered in partnership with Essex Community Development and was initially intended to operate for a year, with an evaluation of outcomes to follow.

As with many things in life, the Covid-19 pandemic impacted this timetable, and the evaluation of the scheme needed to broaden to take into account the necessary move away from face to face work to virtual and telephone-based mentoring.

The impact of the pilot has now been evaluated, however. Of the 10 young people who initially began the programme, 8 remained throughout. Mentors were identified from a variety of different backgrounds, and matched by the provider.

Feedback from young people leaving care has been entirely positive; young people felt valued, and described developing confidence and a renewed focus on reaching their longer term life goals.

These positive findings have resulted in a decision in principle to continue with the programme. Initiatives such as these are an important element of our offer to young people leaving care. We are now in the process of agreeing the scope and operation for the continuation of the pilot.

Once again, I would like to thank Councillor Bywater's contribution to the pilot programme and his support to the young person concerned.