

**17 March 2014****Agenda Item: 6**

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE**

### **LEAVING CARE SERVICE UPDATE**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Members with information about the service to care leavers provided by the Leaving Care Service set up in September 2013.

#### **Information and Advice**

##### **The Service**

2. The Leaving Care Service provides an advice and practical support service for young people who have left the care of the Local Authority. The statutory framework for this support is contained in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 with expectations updated by the 2010 Care Planning Regulations and Guidance Volume 3.
3. In September 2013, the Leaving Care Service was restructured for reasons outlined in a previous report to the Sub-Committee in June 2013. There is now a clearly defined transfer point to the Leaving Care Service when a young person leaves care at the age of 18 years. Personal advisers are introduced to young people six months before they reach 18 in order to make introductions and to become involved in the young person's plans for adulthood. The focus of this support is to help care leavers maximise their employability through access to appropriate education and training, to find safe, affordable and sustainable accommodation and to ensure that care leavers have a named adult who they can turn to for advice and guidance when needed.
4. The support offered through our Leaving Care Service includes the allocation of a named personal adviser, financial help with further and higher education (fees, travel and accommodation, and resources such as equipment), help with benefits and meeting Job Centre Plus requirements, finding and sustaining appropriate training and education, access to health care, finding appropriate accommodation and financial support to set up a first home, a Staying Put Scheme that allows young people to stay with foster carers post 18 years, and help with independent living skills.
5. When looked after young people reach 18 years of age, their maintenance, accommodation and health needs are met through mainstream sources with the personal adviser providing guidance, advocacy, and practical support depending on the young person's level of independent living skills and existing support from community or family

and friends. Whilst this support ends at age 21 years for most young people, for those in education it can extend up to age 25 years. Even where we have ended our involvement with young people at 21, if they wish to pursue a course of education or training post 21 years, they can come back to us for an assessment of need and where necessary we have a duty to offer support.

6. The service is made up of 2 two teams, North and South. There are 13 full time equivalent (fte) Personal Advisers (grade 5 staff) and two fte 18+ Achievement Advisers providing specialist advice on education, training and employment issues. Management of the team is provided by 1.6 fte social work qualified Team Managers and a 0.5 fte Children's Services Manager. The staff group is stable and most members of the team have worked with care leavers for a number of years so there is a great deal of expertise and knowledge within the staff group. Current average caseloads for personal advisers are 23 young people. The service is currently carrying two vacancies.
7. The service currently works with 290 young people. This number has risen over the past year from a consistently average number of 250 over previous years and reflects the growth in the looked after population in the County. The cohort is made up of the following:

Ethnicity	Count								
Asian or Asian British Any other Asian background	10	Age	Count	Gender	Count	Disability	Count		
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	1								
Black or Black British African	2								
Black or Black British Caribbean	1								
Mixed Any other mixed background	2								
Mixed White and Asian	1								
Mixed White and Black African	2								
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	11								
Other Ethnic Groups Any other ethnic group	26								
White Any other White background	2								
White British	231	16	1	Female	115	No	262		
White Polish or other Eastern European	1	17	31	Male	175	Yes	28		
Total :		18	83	Total :		Total :			
		19	77						
		20	75						
		21	15						
		22	4						
		23	4						
Total :		Total :	290	Total :		Total :		Total :	

8. Whilst 89 of these young people are living outside of Nottinghamshire, 47 of these live in Nottingham City with another 42 living within 50 miles of the County in Leicestershire, Derbyshire or Derby. Only 20 young people are further afield and these include young people who are at university. The Looked After Children strategy supports local placements for children and this has a definite link to positive outcomes once they leave care. This means that we are able to maintain meaningful contact with most young people in order to offer the support with independent living that they need.
9. In the financial year 2012/13 the cost of the service was £1,670,440. This includes staffing, running costs and payments made to and on behalf of young people such as higher education tuition fees, accommodation, Staying Put arrangements, Home Establishment payments to young people and maintenance and accommodation for former unaccompanied asylum seeking young people.

## **Performance Data**

10. The service performance is measured annually through the National Performance Indicator 148 data set. Performance is measured in three key areas which focus on outcomes for young people. Over the past ten years this has been measured when young people reach age 19 years but for the first time in 2014 we will also report on outcomes at age 20 and 21 years which will allow us to identify whether young people are sustaining positive outcomes over time.
11. A snapshot of our performance in December 2013 showed the following:
  - Out of 77 19 year old care leavers, 100% have maintained contact with the service, 95% are in suitable accommodation and 66% are in education, employment and training.
  - Out of 61 20 year old care leavers, 98% have maintained contact with the service, 93% are in suitable accommodation and 56% are in education, employment and training.
  - Out of 41 21 year old care leavers, 100% have maintained contact with the service, 90% are in suitable accommodation and 66% are in education, employment and training.
  - Across the County care leaver population as a whole, 99% remain in touch with the service, 63% are in education, employment or training and 94% are in suitable accommodation. These indicators compare favourably with other local authorities.

## **Recent Developments**

12. We are continually trying to improve life outcomes for young people. Care leavers are an extremely diverse group and outcomes will be affected by a number of factors, not least background, pre-care experiences, stability within the care system and personal resilience. Research tells us that young people who remain in care until they are ready and able to live independently do better in terms of economic independence and social inclusion than those who leave early. To this end we have developed a Staying Put Policy in line with the central government framework that allows looked after young people to remain with their foster carers post 18 years. Young people finance the rent element of the arrangement and make a contribution to food and utilities with an allowance to the provider paid by Nottinghamshire County Council. There are currently 18 young people in a Staying Put arrangement and a further 12 young people benefitted from being able to stay with their ex foster carers under the scheme before leaving when they were ready. The current running cost is £3,302 per week.
13. Care leavers are trying to find work in a national and global recession. Youth unemployment continues to be high nationally, and many jobs for under 25 year olds are low paid, temporary or part time. There are currently 23,000 Job Seekers Allowance claimants in Nottinghamshire (Bassetlaw having the greatest number) with 3,500 18 to 25 year olds being a target group for the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). Young people with complex needs will find getting work or into education particularly difficult and for those young people the ability to sustain a benefit claim will be vital. The

Achievement Advisers have worked alongside DWP officers to develop the Government initiative which hopes to fast track claims for care leavers. In addition, where young people are put forward for work programmes through the DWP, additional support will be offered to support attendance and compliance to prevent sanctions and support young people with the new Claimant Commitment planning to help young people develop skills for work. We are at the early stages of linking with a national charity to support young people who wish to get involved with volunteering as a way of developing skills for employment.

## **Success Stories**

14. 63% of care leavers are in a variety of employment, education and training settings. Jobs include retail, hospitality, and carer roles. One young person has set up her own business as a dog groomer. Ten Nottinghamshire care leavers are currently studying at universities across the country and courses include teaching, youth work, engineering, accountancy, communication and linguistics, media production, fine art and social care and health. One young person has recently applied for additional funding from the Authority to support her during her Master's Degree studies in psychology. Over the past couple of years two young people have travelled to Africa and China to do voluntary work.

## **Participation and Service User Views**

15. The service aims to engage young people in group activities where possible. One member of our team has recently started attending the Children in Care Council Care Leavers Group as a representative in order to get young people's views and answer any queries they may have about leaving care. We have written information available for young people about the service and are in the process of updating the intranet information on the Nottinghamshire County Council website.
16. We have put on two successful events this year which attracted 39 care leavers. The events included a healthy eating cooking session, budgeting and practical living skills exercises and a chance for young people to get together in a relaxed environment with staff. Feedback statements from young people included:

*"It takes too long to get an adult social worker, complaints take too long. This can cause problems with money"*

*"There should be better joint working with other agencies, housing forms and A1 form to be easier to fill in and understand"*

*"Pathway Plans not used in life so I do not see them as necessary"*

*"They help with everything ...like a house and college"*

*"I have learnt things I never thought I could learn"*

*"Leaving Care have found me a place to live and I am happy"*

*“Leaving Care team have helped me get through college and find somewhere to live. Without their support I wouldn’t be where I am. Thank you”*

### **Other Options Considered**

17. The report is for noting only.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

18. The report is for noting only.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

19. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That the information about the service to care leavers provided by the Leaving Care Service be noted.

**Steve Edwards**  
**Service Director, Children’s Social Care**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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### **Constitutional Comments**

20. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

### **Financial Comments (KLA 13/02/14)**

21. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Leaving Care Service update – report to Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee on 24 June 2013

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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