

16th September 2019**Agenda Item: 4****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION, LEARNING AND
SKILLS****PROGRESS OF THE PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY FOR NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS (2018 – 2021)****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report provides Committee with an update on progress within the Leaving Care Service since Ofsted's focussed visit in January 2018.
2. In addition, the report provides Committee with an update on the 'Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers (2018-2021)' in Nottinghamshire during the first year of its implementation (2018-2019). This report supports Members to fulfil their duties as corporate parents and to monitor this partnership strategy to ensure Members continue to provide sufficient vision and ambition to allow every looked after child and care leaver to thrive and to reach their potential socially, emotionally and in relation to their educational progress and attainment.
3. Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires each local authority to consult on and publish a local offer for its care leavers. Committee approved Nottinghamshire County Council's Local Offer in February 2019. This report also seeks to provide Committee with an update on progress in relation to the Local Offer for Care Leavers and the impact to date on improving the wellbeing and wider outcomes for care leavers. The report recommends that Committee receives a six-monthly report on the uptake and impact of the Local Offer for Care Leavers.

Information

4. The DfE Publication 'Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers' (February 2018) states that "Local Authorities have a unique responsibility to the children they look after and their care leavers". This statutory advice also states that local authorities that have a strong corporate parenting culture, recognise that the "care system is not just about keeping children safe, but also to promote recovery, resilience and well-being". Members are reminded that the Council continues to make a pledge to all children and young people who come into care and can be accessed at:
<https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/media/2408/safeguardingreportapp6.pdf>

5. The Council's Partnership Strategy (2018-2021) reflects the seven corporate parenting principles that must inform all actions undertaken by Members as they fulfil their duties as 'corporate parents':
- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
 - to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
 - to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
 - to help those children and young people to gain access to and make the best use of services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
 - to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
 - for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
 - to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.
6. A focussed visit by Ofsted in January 2018 identified the following areas for improvement within Nottinghamshire County Council's Leaving Care service:
- ensuring that workers have sufficient capacity to effectively support care leavers in a planned way, particularly when transitioning to adulthood
 - offering sufficient opportunities for care leavers to participate in service improvement.
 - dedicated support for 16/ 17 year olds in accessing employment, education and training (EET).
 - increased priority to be given to ensuring there is no delay in assessing need and managing risk for young people alongside partner agencies.
 - the need for more intensive support accommodation to respond to the complexity of need of some children leaving care
 - ensuring looked after children and care leavers are consistently able to get the help they need for poor mental health and substance abuse.
7. Following the January 2018 visit, inspectors recommended stronger strategic planning for the LAC and Care Leavers strategy. The Council's new Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in Nottinghamshire was approved by the Policy Committee on 14 February 2018. This Strategy was co-produced with partners, looked after children and care leavers, and outlined the vision and ambition that every looked after child and care leaver can thrive and achieve their potential, including a fulfilling transition to adulthood.

PROGRESS SINCE THE OFSTED FOCUSED VISIT OF LEAVING CARE IN JANUARY 2018

Increasing Capacity and Increasing Support for Transition:

8. In July 2019, the Children and Young People's Committee approved an increase of the Leaving Care service's capacity, with funding from contingency for the remainder of the financial year 2019/20 supporting an additional:
- 1.4 full time equivalent (FTE) Team Manager
 - 5 FTE Personal Advisors (PAs).

The Team Managers and Personal Advisors have now been successfully recruited and, following employment checks, will join the service over the coming weeks.

9. The uplift of PAs will enable early allocation of 16 and 17 year olds, and ensure that caseloads are manageable. Dual allocation to a LAC social worker and Personal Advisor at 16 years will support young people to feel more confident to make difficult decisions about their future as they approach adulthood. The recent introduction of workers dedicated to working with young people aged 21 to 24 years also removes the majority of cases of young people of this age from the caseloads of PAs. Some of the most complex cases are retained by the PAs to ensure long-standing and beneficial relationships for care leavers are still available.
10. To better support transition into adulthood and development of independence skills, three Transitional Personal Advisors (TPAs) work within the Leaving Care service to assist young people to successfully move out of residential placements into semi-independent provision prior to their 18th birthday. Recognising that this cohort predominantly has complex needs, TPAs have smaller caseloads (5 – 7) so that they can work intensively with young people. Across an 8-month pilot of the TPAs, 12 out of 22 LAC transitioned to semi-independent provision. This represents a positive step to greater independent living. Members should be aware that semi-independent living provides residents with self-contained accommodation with access to support with budgeting, shopping, cooking and planning for a positive future when they need it.
11. Within the LAC service, an achievement officer now works with 16 and 17 year olds who are not accessing education or training, to support their engagement in education, training or employment prior to reaching 18 years of age. This worker also supports Care Leavers post-18 as required to support their transition into adulthood. Since January 2018, the Virtual School team has worked closely with the Leaving Care service's Post 16 Achievement Officer. This is improving the oversight of the educational, employment and training progress of young people who are looked after post-16 years of age.

Increased Support for 21+ Care Leavers:

12. As of June 2019, 398 care leavers were eligible to request support from the 21 Plus Service; over the next 12 months, this figure is forecast to increase to 442 care leavers and then 465 care leavers by 2021. Currently just under 30% of all eligible 21 Plus care leavers have requested support, with an increase forecast as awareness of the Local Offer spreads.
13. Whilst the Department for Education has provided a new burdens grant to support care leavers 21+, the grant has only been for £37,000 in 2018/19 and £76,000 in 2019/20, which has been insufficient to fully meet the new burdens. To support care leavers requesting support aged 21 years plus, Nottinghamshire County Council has used this funding for a dedicated 2.5 FTE Personal Advisors, plus a Homelessness Prevention Personal Advisor and will be funded from the Rough Sleeping Initiative funding (£71,000). To further support this service, a dedicated 0.5 FTE Business Support Administrator position will be employed from August 2019.
14. The Council is required to make at least one contact with all care leavers aged 21 years plus per year. Following extensive work, by the end of July 2019, 96% of all care leavers aged 21 to 24 years had been contacted, with ongoing efforts to locate and contact the

remaining 4%. As of September 2019, the Leaving Care service will have made two contacts, highlighting the benefits of the Local Offer.

15. Initial feedback about the 21 Plus Service from care leavers has been positive. The examples below highlight the significant impact so far:
 - *A 23-year-old female with significant disabilities contacted by 21 Plus identified that she had no access to Adult Social Care services and that she is only being supported by an elderly ex-foster carer. 21 Plus have now contacted Adult Social Care and the voluntary sector to explore what support package needs to be in place to help plan for her future.*
 - *A 21-year-old young father was asked not to attend their child's Initial Child Protection Conference due to his anger and behavioural presentation. Therefore, the 21 Plus PA attended the Conference to help represent his views and advocate on his behalf and then feed that back to the Care Leaver.*
 - *After contacting one 23-year-old male, he said "Sometimes I think that I am probably a dusty file sitting on a shelf somewhere, but then having contact from you today, checking up on me and seeing that I'm okay, actually makes me believe that someone cares and that I'm valued".*

Increased engagement and participation with Care Leavers:

16. The Leaving Care service is supporting new monthly drop in sessions, with four in each area per year. Each session will include a Personal Advisor and Youth Worker to provide information, advice and guidance on both the Local Offer and local facilities. This service should encourage the harder-to-engage young people to access support.
17. Three care leaver apprentices employed by the Council led consultation activities with care leavers to develop the Local Offer. This included workshops with the 16+ Children in Care sub-group and a survey completed by over 20 care leavers, with support from their PAs. The Core Plus model of semi-independent living is also being co-produced with LAC and care leavers.
18. On-going engagement and participation with care leavers will continue to be essential to ensure the Local Offer, as well as the overarching Partnership Strategy, continues to evolve to meet the changing needs of each cohort of care leavers, particularly older ones.

Pathway Planning

19. Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) review all Pathway Plans for LAC and the IRO holds partners to account if there is insufficient attendance and engagement with the Plan. In addition, a pilot has commenced that invites care leavers at 18 years to opt in to a process which allows them to retain their IRO to review their Pathway Plan. The purpose of this is to provide increased independent scrutiny and to strengthen transition into early adulthood. The IRO would therefore continue to hold all partners to account for the positive outcomes of the Plan for the care leaver. To date, 15 care leavers have been asked and five care leavers have agreed that they want their post 18 Pathway Plan reviewed by an IRO.
20. There is now increased focus on the 'review' element of Pathway Plans to ensure that actions and tasks identified in the Plan have been progressed appropriately. There is an expectation that Team Managers within the Leaving Care service review all Pathway Plans

to ensure that these Plans identify specific tasks that will result in improved experiences and outcomes for the care leaver. In addition, these Plans are expected to be continually updated and informed by the views of the care leavers.

Response to risk and managing risk alongside partner agencies

21. Where risks to care leavers are identified, the Leaving Care service now routinely attend and convene risk strategy meetings with multi-agency partners and on occasion Multi-Agency Problem Solving meetings have been held. Managers retain oversight of these risks, and both the risk and safety plans are recorded via Mosaic.

Risks of larger semi-independent settings

22. A positive development since the Ofsted focussed visit in January 2018 is that a service specification has been co-produced with LAC & care leavers for the Core Plus service. This has now been shared with the service provider as an extension to their contract. It offers a more intensely staffed support for Care Leavers facing challenges within the core model, within settings of three to four care leavers.
23. Recognising Ofsted critique of larger semi-independent settings, a smaller seven bed core service has been developed including two self-contained flats. The Direct Purchasing System provides an alternative to the main provision; individual placements are commissioned from an approved provider list. These providers can offer smaller settings and solo placements for 16 to 17 year olds, and on rare occasions for young people aged 18 years plus. There are currently 28 children and young people within these placements, whose needs could not be met by the main provision.
24. For care leavers aged 21 years plus, the supported accommodation contracts have been varied to enable provision to be extended to support care leavers in their own home. Visiting support is provided which is flexible and responsive to their need, and support may be offered on a range of topics including: budgeting, managing their tenancy, setting up utilities, maximising their income, avoiding offending and antisocial behaviour and life skills.

PROGRESS OF THE COUNCIL'S CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE (2018 – 2021)

25. The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategic Partnership Board continues to be chaired by the Service Director for Education, Learning and Skills. This Board is also attended by the Vice Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee, Councillor Tracey Taylor. This Board has met bi-monthly since January 2018 and is well attended by both internal services and external partners which, in addition to internal education and social care colleagues, also includes district council representation, public health, health commissioners, higher education and Futures. Therefore, a key objective for the Board during 2019-2020 will be to invite stronger police and probation engagement with this Partnership Strategy. The Terms of Reference which includes membership of the Board is attached as **Appendix A**.
26. Since 2014, local authorities have had a duty (Children Act 2004 section 10) to promote cooperation between relevant partners with a view to improving the wellbeing of all children and young people in their area. The 2018-2019 delivery plan has been a key tool to ensure

a shared understanding of this duty with relevant partners and particularly in relation to LAC and care leavers. Section 10 defines relevant partners as including: the district council; the local policing body and the chief officer of police; probation board; any provider of probation services; youth offending team; NHS England and Clinical Commissioning groups; and the governing bodies of publicly funded schools. This report highlights some of the key achievements to date, driven by the partnership, to improve the experiences and life chances of LAC and care leavers through the 2018-19 delivery plan, attached as **Appendix B**.

27. The strategy has been driven by a partnership delivery plan which has been 'owned' by all the partners. This delivery plan is structured around the six Ambitions with the Local Offer for Care Leavers incorporated into the sixth ambition:

Ambition 1: LAC and Care Leavers are safe and feel safe

Ambition 2: LAC and Care Leavers experience good physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing

Ambition 3: LAC and Care Leavers fulfil their potential

Ambition 4: LAC and Care Leavers achieve sustained and fulfilling employment and economic independence

Ambition 5 LAC and Care Leavers make a positive contribution

Ambition 6: LAC and Care leavers have a positive transition to adulthood.

28. This delivery plan has been used as a 'tool' by the Board to ensure that internal and external stakeholders secure a visible and explicit commitment to the Strategy's vision and ambition to improve provision and outcomes for LAC and care leavers in their relevant strategic services' core work. As such, all partners have been invited to ensure that their relevant service and departmental plans identify how the Partnership Strategy's vision and ambitions can be realised; all partners and stakeholders have used the six ambitions strategically and operationally to improve provision and outcomes for LAC and care leavers.

29. A particular challenge for the Partnership Board has been to develop a relevant set of impact indicators and this is an ongoing task. Members currently receive quarterly performance reports which include relevant education and social care data. It was agreed by the board that there would not be a replication of existing statutory data being presented to the Board but rather, the partners would develop a richer 'data' set which seeks to capture wider achievements of LAC and care leavers in relation to their social and emotional wellbeing, with a stronger focus on preparation for independence and a fulfilling adulthood. The last performance report which summarised the most recent education performance data for LAC is available as a **background paper**.

30. Impact reports and/or relevant case studies for 2018-2019 have been received from:

- a) Nottinghamshire Children's Social Care (Children's Disability Service, Looked After Children, Leaving Care teams)
- b) Nottinghamshire education (Early Childhood Services, Virtual School, Psychology Services)
- c) Nottinghamshire County Council Public Health (Health and Commissioning)
- d) Health care commissioners and providers (Nottinghamshire CCGs (Mid and Greater Nottinghamshire & Bassetlaw)
- e) Nottinghamshire County Council Adult Social Care and Health.

31. Whilst it has not been possible for some stakeholders to undertake formal reviews of actions, partners such as Nottingham Trent University have significantly contributed to the partnership in relation to the strategic leadership and delivery of a highly successful education conference in April 2019, which was attended by 81 designated teachers from publicly funded schools in the County and other agencies with 115 professionals in total attending. Every keynote speaker was either a foster carer or had been LAC and included: Sir John Timpson, CEO of Timpsons and Max Spielman; Lisa Cherry, author, trainer and educational researcher on all areas of education, with a focus on LAC and care leavers; Luke Rodgers, a care leaver and CEO of his own company, 'The Care Leaders', and one of Nottinghamshire's own LAC.
32. Evaluation of the event suggested that all participants found it to be inspiring and informative, with many teachers undertaking to use information and training received to inform further good practice in their schools. The delegates also requested that a similar event be run in the future to support CPD opportunities. Nottingham Trent University has committed to a further partnership event in 2020 which will bring designated teachers, social workers and health professionals together. The programme for the April 2019 event is attached as **Appendix C**.
33. Members should be aware that the Board's membership includes two of the Council's care leaver apprentices and another care leaver. The Board is also supported by senior representation from the Council's Youth Service. This is to ensure that all of the work of the Board is underpinned by a significant input directly from care leavers. Youth workers from the Youth Service facilitate the participation and engagement events which is undertaken with LAC and is overseen by the Children in Care Council, 'No Labels'. Both the Chair of the LAC and Care Leavers Partnership Board and the Vice Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee are invited and attend regularly all No Labels meetings.
34. The Children in Care Council (CiCC), has continued to shape and inform the ongoing development of this Strategy. The CiCC played a key role in shaping, refining and finalising the Strategy during the Autumn and Spring terms 2017-2018 and has continued to use the Strategy to shape the on-going design and delivery of the services available to them. For 2019-2020, the CiCC has decided to focus on the following two ambitions to ensure that young people have the opportunity to shape and scrutinise the design and delivery of services available to them; the ambitions are:

Ambition 2: LAC and Care Leavers experience good physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing

Ambition 4: LAC and Care Leavers achieve sustained and fulfilling employment and economic independence.

Ambition 1: LAC and Care Leavers are safe and feel safe

35. The impact reports from partners have supported the board to secure some assurances that the ambitions are driving improved experiences for LAC and care leavers. Ambition 1 (LAC and Care Leavers are safe and feel safe) underpins the whole strategy as children who are safe and feel safe are clearly equipped to maximise opportunities and experiences provided by services and stakeholders. Several of the impact reports from partners highlighted successful resilience projects which have met short term needs as well as

contributing positively to preparation for adulthood. During 2018-2019, the Councils' current advocacy contract has been reviewed to ensure that every LAC has access to an independent advocate. During this period, the Virtual School has undertaken additional training for Designated Teachers to improve their understanding of LAC in relation to 'feeling safe' so that schools and Alternative Providers better understand the needs of LAC and care leavers to feel safe and be safe when accessing their education. 98 Designated teachers have accessed this bespoke training and 17 Designated Teachers have participated in Attachment Awareness training.

Ambition 2: LAC and Care Leavers experience good physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing

36. The impact report from the Public Health Commissioning Manager reports on how Ambition 2 (LAC and care leavers experience good physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing) has driven the 'Integrated Personal Commissioning Pilot ('You Know Your Mind' Project) for LAC and care leavers (aged 0-25 years) with mental health needs to find alternative and timely support arrangements for their mental health and emotional wellbeing needs. This project has explored alternatives to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and other mental health interventions.
37. As of June 2019, 210 LAC and care leavers in Nottinghamshire are in receipt of a personal health budget and personalised support plan in order to support their mental and emotional health needs through the 'You Know Your Mind' Project. The support arrangements through this project have been driven by the children and young people. Self-directed support has included: gym memberships, bicycles, boxing lessons, fishing equipment, drumming lessons, play houses, educational resources, cameras and access to community groups, classes and clubs. This has been funded by NHS England.
38. Of the 56 children and young people who have participated in self review in August 2019:
 - a) 93 % (52 children and young people) felt that their support plan had improved or greatly improved their quality of life
 - b) 80% (45 children and young people) felt better or a lot better about their health and wellbeing
 - c) 82% (46 children and young people) indicated that the project had given them something to look forward to
 - d) 82% (46 children and young people) reported that they had had fun whilst engaging with the self-directed projects
 - e) 71% (40 children and young people) reported increased confidence levels
 - f) 61% (34 children and young people) stated they were now better equipped to deal with difficult situations
 - g) 57% (32 children and young people) suggested the self-directed support had helped them to maintain friendships.
39. A further positive achievement of this project is that 80 members of staff across Nottinghamshire's Children's Services have been trained in undertaking 'Difficult Conversations' with LAC and care leavers to promote person-centred planning in relation to support for LAC and care leavers' emotional health and wellbeing. This project will continue throughout 2019-2020.

40. Improving the physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing has been a key driver across health partners. Mid and greater Nottinghamshire CCGs have raised awareness of the needs of care leavers through three GP training sessions offered to all GPs (82% of GPs attended) and in addition has included an article about care leavers within the GP safeguarding newsletter.
41. The CCGs and both local authorities have revised and agreed an East Midlands Regional Protocol to ensure a robust process is in place for notifications when local authorities place LAC within other local authorities in the East Midlands. Although the protocol has been agreed for use by the East Midlands region the practice will extend to children and young people placed in all areas.
42. Alongside the protocol the CCG has led on devising an accompanying out of area 'pathway'. This pathway has been agreed by both local authorities. The pathway ensures that the CCGs are aware of all LAC placed out of area and that the receiving CCG is also made aware of the placement. In addition the pathway ensures that all statutory health assessments delivered to children and young people placed in another local authority area are quality assured so the Council can be assured they are completed to an acceptable standard and if not an appropriate escalation process is in place. Further work is currently underway around managing the transfer of care when children and young people are placed out of area and open to CAMHS services.
43. The Nottinghamshire Children in Care Health Service Improvement Forum (SIF) was established in 2016. This forum is now well established and is a multi-partner forum led by health commissioners and consisting of senior representatives from both local authorities, CCGs and health providers. The forum considers the pathway from a child/young person entering to leaving care and has an accompanying action plan and associated working groups aiming to improve practice, service delivery and ultimately health outcomes for children and young people. The health actions within the strategy closely align with the SIF action plan.
44. The LAC service is now meeting with health partners to improve the timeliness of health assessments and how needs identified in assessments are followed up. 98.1% of the eligible cohort had their annual health assessment in 2018/19. An audit of health timeliness is to be undertaken during the Autumn term 2019 with the emerging learning used to inform further CPD with social workers and health professionals. The LAC service is also working with health professionals to develop strategies to improve the number of Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaires returned by carers and providers, with a completion rate of 83% in 2018/19. The work is also around ensuring they are shared in a timely manner with health providers to ensure they support the statutory health assessments. Again this core information is essential to better understand how the wider wellbeing of looked after children can be positively impacted. In 2018/19, 99.5% of looked after children (12 months plus) had up to date immunisations, whilst an identified area for improvement is in respect of dental checks, with current data suggesting that 78% of the same cohort had up to date dental checks. This is an area of focus within both childcare social work and fostering.

Ambition 3: LAC and Care Leavers fulfil their potential

45. The third Ambition (LAC and care leavers fulfil their potential), is reported by the Early Childhood Services, in relation to their work to promote early years as a career opportunity

through targeted recruitment and apprenticeships within the sector. Early Years professionals have been working with the Private, Voluntary & Independent (PVI) sector in particular to attend recruitment fairs led by schools and the district councils where careers in early years are promoted. At this time, data is not available to demonstrate uptake of these career opportunities by care leavers.

46. In January 2018 Nottinghamshire's Virtual School applied for and successfully secured funding from The Careers Local Enterprise Grant to support a project to prevent children/young people who were most 'at risk' of becoming NEET. This funding supported partnership with Futures which developed 10 bespoke solution-focused coaching sessions and five days of work experience opportunities to 20 LAC at risk of becoming NEET. The success of this project was demonstrated through the young people's individual reflections and evaluations; and the fact that 18 out of the 20 young people were successfully in EET at the end of the project.
47. This ambition to ensure LAC and care leavers fulfil their potential is a clear priority for the Virtual School which has developed evidence based guidance for schools on the effective use of the Pupil Premium to ensure that 'fulfilling potential' is a key driver for all additional requests for funding.
48. The working partnership between the Virtual School and Children in Care and Leaving Care service continues to strengthen. The Virtual School Senior Leadership Team meets with the Achievement Officer (Post 16) within the Leaving Care Team on a termly basis. During the summer term, the Virtual School in liaison with the Leaving Care Post 16 Achievement Officer agree a database of all Year 11 pupils moving into the Post-16 phase of their education. This database provides basic identifying information and the provisional plan for each of the young people. This same meeting reviews the equivalent database for Year 12 LAC and care leavers. During September, the Virtual School Data Officer checks that each LAC and care leaver is accessing their planned destinations, including whether they have achieved their educational qualifications. These databases are reviewed again in September and January of each year. Whilst progress data has hitherto routinely been gathered from schools whilst pupils are of statutory school age, this practice is now to be extended to Years 12 and 13, from the academic year 2019/20. Looking to the future, this progress tracking data should improve the quality of the pathway plans with a stronger focus on every care leaver being in EET.

Ambition 4: LAC and Care Leavers achieve sustained and fulfilling employment and economic independence

49. Ambition 4 (LAC and Care Leavers achieve sustained and fulfilling employment and economic independence) has been a focus for several internal and external partners and teams. A particular success has been the employment by the Council of five care leaving apprenticeships which include one apprenticeship focussed exclusively within Public Health (You Know Your Mind Project). The Virtual School has also piloted work readiness sessions for two different groups of Year 8 pupils (24 young people) and plans are being developed to roll this into other year groups during 2019-2020.

Ambition 5: LAC and Care Leavers make a positive contribution

50. Ambition 5 continues to be the focus of the partnership. On entering care, all LAC have the opportunity to complete the 'Listen to Me' booklet which seeks their views in relation to LAC reviews and other planning processes. Both the Looked After Children's team and the Children's Disability Service continue to ensure the views, thoughts and feelings of LAC inform Care Plans and Pathway Planning processes.
51. Whilst the 'Listen to Me' booklet has been used for some time now, over this last year bespoke participation sessions have been held with care leavers to ensure their views directly influence planning for the future.
52. The 'Mind of My Own' app has been purchased by the Council and went live on 24th July 2019. This app provides an online platform for LAC and care leavers to directly communicate their views, wishes and feelings to their Children's Services workers. The app will be rolled out to all children and young people receiving services from Children's Services (including care leavers) over the next 12 months. However, this phased roll out is targeted in the first instance at LAC who can now provide feedback 24 hours a day every day of the year. Take up of the app in the first four weeks since going live is as follows:
- 27 young people have their own One app account
 - 35 statements have been sent by children and young people to Council workers

When using the One app, young people have suggested that they feel 'happy', 'supported' and 'settled' at home

53. The County wide Participation and Engagement Team which sits within the Youth Service has used the Partnership Strategy to drive further meaningful engagement with LAC and care leavers. This service has continued to work with children and young people to better understand their experiences and to ensure that this ambition to make a positive contribution continues to be relevant to them. During 2018-2019, 260 LAC and care leavers engaged with a range of positive activities outside the school day. This has provided a safe and supportive environment in which LAC and care leavers can come together to participate and engage in constructive and fun activities as well as having an opportunity to express their views and feelings about life in care and how it can be further improved.
54. The Youth Service also actively encourages and enables young people who are looked after, adopted or living in residential care, to engage in positive activities and to independently access mainstream provision through the Platinum Card system of free entry to Young People's Centres. Platinum cards are issued to Looked After Children and Young Carers to give free access to the Youth Service's open access provision, and is available to young people from the age of 10 to 19 years, up to 21 for Looked After Children, and up to 25 years for young people with disabilities. During 2018-2019 118 Platinum cards were issued to LAC. In addition, currently, three LAC are participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme although there may be more on the programme funded by schools.

Ambition 6 LAC and Care Leavers have a positive transition to adulthood, and the Local Offer for Care Leavers

55. This ambition is reflected in the Local Offer for Care Leavers. Preparing LAC and care leavers for adulthood remains the overarching objective of the partnership strategy. The Local Offer is driven by the ambitions that ensure every care leaver can become a resilient and confident young adult, in secure work, with financial independence and permanent and secure housing, either through long-term tenancy or by buying their own homes. Moreover, the Local Offer supports the development of a healthy lifestyle that brings confidence and fulfilment and seeks to support care leavers to develop the ability to forge and maintain friendships and relationships and be able to engage positively with their wider communities.
56. The Care Leaver Offer was developed through strong partnership working particularly with the district councils and health partners, was approved by the Children and Young People's Committee on 11th February 2019 and published on 8th April 2019. This Offer has and will continue to evolve as partners seek to constantly refresh and strengthen the offer. The offer is dynamic and Members can view the current offer at: www.nottshelpyourself.org.uk/careleaverslo.
57. The exemption from Council Tax for all care leavers up to 25 years is key to supporting care leavers to secure independent living. This benefit has been delivered by district councils who have committed to absorbing the additional costs for this. Whilst individual districts are recording data using different methodologies, early feedback does suggest that care leavers are taking up this offer. As of July 2019 the following District Councils have provided exemption data as follows:

Ashfield

2018-19 - 101 care leaver exemptions applied out of 101

2019-20 - 103 care leaver exemptions applied out of 103

Bassetlaw

2019 - 20 - care leaver exemptions applied out of a potential of 49

Broxtowe

2019 – 2020 – 6 care leaver exemptions applied out of a potential 39

Gedling

2018-19 – 44 care leaver exemptions applied out of 44

2019-20 - 45 care leaver exemptions applied (to date) out of 45

Mansfield

2018-19 - 107 care leaver exemptions applied out of 107

2019-20 - 108 care leaver exemptions applied (to date) out of 108

Newark

2019 – 2020 – 27 care leaver exemptions applied (to date) out of a potential 62

Rushcliffe

2018 – 2019 - 8 care leaver exemptions applied out of a potential 37

2019 – 2020 - 8 care leaver exemptions applied (to date) out of a potential 33.

58. In addition to the Council Tax exemption district councils now offer support for care leavers to live on their own if this is what they desire. District councils offer priority to care leavers on their local authority waiting lists and all district councils have secured district Member approval for this. This offer is flexible and allows care leavers to secure housing in any Nottinghamshire district regardless of their existing address. Having secured local authority housing, care leavers are now also eligible for priority for repairs and other tenancy support that may be required.
59. Care leavers have historically been able to access a range of financial support which has included contributions of approximately £3,500 towards university fees with all accommodation paid for throughout the duration of the course including holiday periods. When setting up home, care leavers also access a home establishment grant of approximately £2,000 and practical support and advice is given for budgeting. During 2018-2019, 21 young people (aged 18-21 years) are accessing higher education which includes payment of their bursary and their home establishment grant. In addition, all LAC and care leavers have a Child Trust Fund or Junior ISA bank account which comprises government and Council and/or carers' contributions that have been made over the course of the time each child has been in care. This account can be accessed at 18 years or left by the care leaver for future use.
60. In addition, there are 14 young people who are confirmed as progressing to Higher Education courses for 2019 – 2020 with two additional who are still exploring their options. There are also three 21 plus care leavers who are starting university courses in September 2019, with an additional two young people aged 21 plus who are being assessed as to what financial support they may need to access.
61. The Local Offer provides information, advice and guidance in relation to health and wellbeing. During 2018-2019, through a strong partnership between the Leaving Care Service and district councils, care leavers (aged 18 to 25 years) are now able to join their local leisure centre gyms and wider facilities including swimming and other fitness classes at no cost. This is a new offer as of July 2019 and is thought to be the first leisure offer across seven districts within a two tier authority. Early signs are that this is really popular with care leavers and so a leaflet has been sent out to all care leavers who are able to access this offer. The data below shows the number of care leavers in each district who have received information about the leisure offer. Initial anecdotal feedback from PAs who have been assisting care leavers to register for the offer indicates that it is very popular. Official data on the take-up of the offer is being collated and will be reported by district councils in the coming weeks.

Ashfield	95
Bassetlaw	75
Broxtowe	35
Gedling	41
Mansfield	105
Newark	47
Rushcliffe	28

62. One young person in one of the districts has been able to get her leisure pass so that she can go swimming with her child and meet other young mums. There has also been flexibility

offered so one young person in one district will be attending a gym in another that is closer to their college and more accessible to their needs.

63. Elements of the Local Offer continue to be new to care leavers such as the offer of an annual free residential or day trip to one of the Council's outdoor and environmental centres around Nottinghamshire as well as Hagg Farm which is located within Derbyshire's Peak District. This offer provides an opportunity to develop new skills as well as enjoy new experiences, meeting others and taking risks in a safe environment. Whilst no care leavers have taken up this offer since the launch of the Local Offer, plans are being developed by the Leaving Care service to promote this offer during 2019-2020. For those care leavers who wish to pursue more structured opportunities, access to the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is free. During 2018-2019, three care leavers took part in this scheme.
64. A significant offer is through support, advice and guidance to secure employment, training and further education. This offer is strong within Nottinghamshire and is underpinned by an effective partnership between the Leaving Care Team and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Achievement Advisers have developed a positive working relationship with Nottinghamshire Job Centres with a designated point of contact available. There is also in place an arrangement with DWP, which allows the Achievement Adviser within the Leaving Care Team to act on the care leaver's behalf as and when necessary. This has made a significant difference to ensure that care leavers secure additional support when looking for employment and training. This support includes access to work readiness programmes, access to work experience, support to complete job applications, preparation for interviews, access to life skills courses, and support for apprenticeship applications. At this time, there are 45 care leavers aged 18 – 21 years old who are in employment in Nottinghamshire, with a further 23 in training or apprenticeships. There are four young people who are volunteering in schemes to help develop their experience of work and progress to paid employment, alongside 87 who are accessing educational courses, with 21 of these being in Higher Education. This means that 54% of the 18 – 21 care leaver population is in employment, education and training (EET), with plans in the Care Leaver Offer to link with businesses around related opportunities (e.g. mentoring, employment, work experience and apprenticeships) as well as the development of a new Employability Assessment Tool to help identify the areas of need for young people to successfully progress into employment, education and training in the future.
65. Securing permanent employment remains a driving ambition of the Local Offer. A key approach has been the development of stronger partnerships with local employers. On 7th March 2019, the Council facilitated a business breakfast attended by 60 local employers ranging from small and medium sized companies to multi-nationals. The event was hosted by Sir John Peace, the Lord Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire, supported by the Council's Chief Executive, Anthony May. This event led to formal commitments and support by local employers to provide work placements, work experience, work mentoring, apprenticeships and jobs. The Leaving Care team is working with additional support from the Council's Programmes and Project team to develop a Nottinghamshire Pilot Employment Partnership programme with local employers who attended the business breakfast. This Project aims to provide LAC and care leavers from 14 years with an increase in their ambition and aspiration through offering opportunities for a range of work placements, and wrap around mentoring and training. In addition, for LAC and care leavers aged 18-25 years the team is working closely with Keepmoat Homes and East Midlands Airport to provide employability/taster sessions for this cohort in October and November 2019.

66. In addition, the Leaving Care team is reviewing the skill sets of the existing cohort of care leavers to develop a tool which identifies and quantifies the employment skills, including the 'soft' employment skills of each care leaver and to match them with relevant opportunities from local businesses. This project is starting to build systems that will support increasing aspirations for LAC and care leavers. This tool will measure the impact of the experiences on the young person. However, it is at its earliest stage of development and impact data will not be available until 2020-2021 at the earliest.
67. A particular achievement of the Local Offer in 2018-2019 has been the provision of five Council apprenticeships, ring fenced for care leavers and paid at the national living wage. Four of these apprentices are based within the Youth Service with one based within Public Health. Newark District Council has also offered one care leaver apprenticeship within the District's environmental team.

Case studies

68. The Partnership Board has recognised the vital importance of capturing the journeys of LAC and care leavers through the development of case studies. Case studies have particular resonance to support professionals to understand the levels of challenge and to explore in more detail how professionals can work with LAC and care leavers to overcome barriers resulting in better experiences and outcomes for LAC and care leavers. Throughout 2018-19, over 20 case studies have been prepared by partners.
69. Most of the case studies have been drafted to a structured format which includes contextual information, recording the LAC or care leaver's 'story', what difference the support and/or experiences have made, the perspective of the child or young person and most importantly, a request that professionals identify factors that have contributed to better outcomes for the LAC or care leaver. Partners identified a range of factors including:
- a) Therapeutic foster care, underpinned by sound theoretical practice models
 - b) Careful matching of the needs of the LAC to the experience and strengths of the foster carer thus providing more stable placements.
 - c) Effective Children in Care Review Health Assessments undertaken by specialist LAC nurses and other health professionals with the ability to sensitively and quickly secure a safe place which supports LAC to share intimate health information. Subsequently the nurse or health professionals being able to refer in a timely manner to the appropriate health professional with swift health referrals by the relevant social worker.
 - d) The key role of the social worker to work in partnership with health professionals to ensure that the birth parent participates in the gathering of health information from the child's birth and early life. This level of engagement with birth parents significantly contributes to health assessments and helps to secure accurate health assessments and to ensure that appropriate referrals can be made to services such as CAMHS.
 - e) Effective home school partnerships between foster carers and school.
 - f) Senior leadership and governing body engagement in the progress and attainment of LAC and care leavers.
 - g) A flexible person-centred approach to curriculum planning and delivery for LAC and care leavers.
 - h) Strong multi-agency planning which is not risk averse and initiates planning for post 18 to include a clear focus on secure accommodation.

- i) Stronger partnership planning for LAC and care leavers serving custodial sentences to ensure that the new 21 Plus Service can work positively with the Prison Service, Probation, the care leaver champion as well as the homelessness prevention advisor to ensure that a plan can be agreed with the district council to secure housing on release from prison.
70. All of the case studies demonstrate the vital importance of professionals developing and maintaining positive and appropriate relationships with LAC and care leavers. Above all, these case studies mirror the consistent feedback of LAC and care leavers of the importance of a 'constant professional' throughout their life. The case studies demonstrate the added value of professionals working with LAC and care leavers over an extended period of their lives avoiding the need for LAC and care leavers to be constantly forging new relationships, and avoiding the need to retell their story as professionals within this field come and go.

2019-2020 – Towards Year Two of the Partnership Strategy

71. The Children's Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children Care Leavers in Nottinghamshire (2018-2021) will continue to drive the Partnership to ensure that every LAC and care leaver can thrive, achieve and secure a positive transition to adulthood.
72. A review of the first year of the delivery plan also provides priorities to drive the Partnership delivery plan for the second year. These include:
- a) Enhancing offer of mental health support for care leavers 18 to 24 year olds – this could be delivered by extending CAMHS or by working differently with the Adult Mental Health Service.
 - b) Enhancing early interventions, which will include below CAMHS threshold or CAMHS alternatives, for LAC with mental health and emotional wellbeing issues. In addition, increased training for foster carers to better understand the mental health needs of this cohort, with best practice advice on how they can contribute.
73. During Year 2, the delivery plan will also explore how the partnership can ensure that LAC and care leavers are not only safe but feel safe. Whilst individual partners are sharply focused on contextual safeguarding concerns, the Partnership will seek to strengthen the sharing of information between children and adult social care, health professionals, the police, probation and education to ensure that LAC and care leavers are resilient and protected from, for example, the dangers of sexual exploitation and/or abuse, harmful sexual behaviour, and county lines. Given the recent national media coverage of concerns over historic abuse of children in care in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, Members are aware that keeping children and care leavers safe from harm continues to be the Council's highest priority.
74. This strategy aims to ensure that LAC and care leavers sustain fulfilling employment and economic independence. During the second year, the partnership will seek to explore the principle for successfully mentoring LAC and care leavers. As the partner organisations increasingly engage with their responsibilities to provide work experience, apprenticeships and, ultimately, full-time employment to care leavers, these organisations will be required to embed HR approaches to support the successful employment of care leavers in partnership organisations.

Other Options Considered

75. No other options have been considered.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

76. To ensure that elected Members are able to fulfil their corporate parenting duties.

Statutory and Policy Implications

77. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

78. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That Committee:

- 1) considers whether there are any actions it requires to further strengthen the Leaving Care service
- 2) considers how it wishes to further monitor the implementation of the Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in Nottinghamshire (2018-2021)
- 3) agrees to receive six monthly updates on the impact of the Local Offer for Care Leavers
- 4) agrees to receive an annual report on the work of the Partnership Board and the impact of the Strategy on Looked After Children and Care Leavers (2018 to 2021).

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Constitutional Comments (EP 02/09/19)

79. The Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report. If Committee resolves that any actions are required, it must be satisfied that such actions are within the Committee's terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SAS 05/09/19)

80. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. The budget for the Leaving Care Service is £1.569m. A report was presented to Children and Young People's Committee in July 2019 which approved the establishment of 6.0 FTE posts to service the new burdens to be funded by a request from contingency of up to £106,000. The full year effect of this will need to be considered as part of the 2020/21 budget setting process.

Background Papers and Published Documents

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.

DfE statutory guidance for local authorities Local Offer for care leavers:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-offer-guidance>

DfE statutory guidance for local authorities, Applying parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/applying-corporate-parenting-principles-to-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers>

Partnership Strategy for looked After Children and Care Leavers in Nottinghamshire 2018-2021 – report to Policy Committee on 14 February 2018

Approval of Nottinghamshire's Local Offer for Care Leavers - report to Children and Young People's Committee on 11 February 2019

Children and young people core data set – performance for Quarter 4 - report to Children and Young People's Committee on 17 June 2019

Changes to the staffing establishment within Children and Families - report to Children and Young People's Committee on 15 July 2019

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C1287