

22 September 2014

Agenda Item: 7

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

LEAVING CARE SERVICE UPDATE

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with an update on the Leaving Care Team. The team is part of the Throughcare Service and provides advice, support and guidance to young people who have left the care of the local authority and are over the age of 18 years.

Information and Advice

2. There has been no change to the team structure or specification since the previous report to this Sub-Committee in March 2014. The staff group of 1.6 Team Managers, 13 Personal Advisers and 2 Achievement Advisers remains stable and there have been no vacancies during this period.
3. Since the previous report in March the numbers of young people the team is working with has increased from 290 to 316 (July 2014). An increase had been predicted due to the higher numbers of looked after young people, especially the growing number of 16 and 17 year olds in care. There has also been an increase in young people returning for services after the age of 21 years due to returning to education and requiring support. The average Personal Adviser caseload is now 24.
4. The following tables show the ethnicity, gender and age breakdown of the young people currently open to the Leaving Care Team. The number with a disability is also shown.

Ethnicity	Count	Age	Count	Gender	Count
Asian or Asian British Any other Asian Background	10	17	46	Male	132
Black or Black British African	3	18	84	Female	184
Black or Black British Any other Black background	1	19	82	Total:	316
Black or Black British Caribbean	1	20	72		
Mixed Any other mixed background	2	21	22	Disability	Count
Mixed White and Asian	2	22	5	No	292
Mixed White and Black African	2	23	2	Yes	24
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	13	24	3	Total:	316
Other Ethnic Groups Any other ethnic group	26	Total:	316		
White Any other White background	3				
White British	251				

White Polish or other Eastern European	2
Total:	316

5. 64 of the 270 (or 23%) over 18 year olds open to the team live outside of Nottinghamshire. The majority are in adjoining areas with only 14 living outside a 50 mile radius of the County. These include young people who are at university and young people who have chosen to remain with foster carers over the age of 18 years.

Performance Data

6. An annual performance report is provided to the DfE annually. 2013/14 has seen a change in how and what is reported. Overall, of 235 care leavers (aged 18 to 21 years) 82% were in suitable accommodation and 38% were **not** in education, employment or training. It is not possible to compare these outcomes with previous performance due to the changes made by Government to the data collection criteria.
7. Information from the Who Cares Trust informs us that nationally one third of care leavers are **not** in education employment or training compared with 13% of all young people.

Accommodation

8. The looked after children service will begin to consider accommodation options post 18 with young people from the age of 16 years. At 17.5 years, when the Personal Advisers are introduced to young people, the search for more permanent, stable and affordable accommodation begins in earnest. At 18 years the statutory duty of the local authority to provide accommodation ends and so the focus of activity is to support young people with applications for housing as adults. The choices young people make will be determined by their support needs, location choice, property availability and cost. Options include: private rented tenancies, council tenancies or supported semi-independent accommodation if still needed. Some young people will return to live with family or friends at this stage. A snapshot of the current circumstances of 19 year olds and above revealed that:
 - 16% are living with friends or family
 - 49% are living independently
 - 9% are in semi-independent accommodation.
9. This is a positive picture with the majority of care leavers over the age of 19 years living in the community either in or preparing for their own tenancies or living with friends and family.
10. 4% (8) of the 193 19 to 21 year old care leavers we are currently supporting are in prison. Nationally 23% of the adult prison population has been in care and almost 40% of prisoners under 21 years were in care as children. Only 2% of the general population spend time in prison.
11. There are only 9 young people in the Supporting People accommodation accessed through the Targeted Support Service; it is not clear as to why this number appears to be small. One would expect care leavers in particular to need this type of accommodation. In order to increase the access to this provision for care leavers, a member off the

Targeted Support Service has been tasked with meeting with Leaving Care Team managers regularly to ensure that young people are identified early and prioritised by Targeted Support Service. Each young person is now allocated a Targeted Support Service worker at 17.5 years who is responsible for fast tracking and progress chasing their applications for this provision.

12. Three young people are in bed and breakfast or emergency accommodation placed by District Housing Teams. District councils face a huge challenge in discharging their duties in regards to housing and homelessness. Whilst bed and breakfast should not be used for those under 18 years, it is used by district councils in discharging their duties towards homeless adults. The Leaving Care Team has also funded bed and breakfast for over 18s for short periods where they may be in a crisis to prevent rooflessness.
13. The Staying Put policy which allows young people to remain with foster carers over the age of 18 up to 21 years is proving to be very successful. According to financial records 19 young people are currently in a Staying Put arrangement. The weekly cost to the Authority for these arrangements in July 2014 was £3,200. Government expectations regarding this are high and there is now a legal requirement on local authorities to advise, assist and support both the young person and their foster carer when they wish to stay living together after the young person's 18th birthday. There are financial implications attached to this policy and implications for placement availability for looked after children under the age of 18 years if young people do not move on from foster placements at 18. Central Government has announced £40m funding for Staying Put across the country and Nottinghamshire's allocation is £67,058. At current running costs this will lead to a deficit of £99,342.
14. These positive housing outcomes have been achieved at a time of housing shortages, higher rents and less social housing provision. A great deal of Personal Adviser time is spent supporting young people with housing issues. Activity includes taking young people to register with district councils, advocating with district councils to ensure that young people are given maximum priority for housing, and supporting young people with appeals where negative decisions are made. This is made more difficult due to the number of district councils we are working with. Personal Advisers also negotiate with estate agents to obtain private rented accommodation, support young people with tenancy issues to prevent debt and eviction as well as physically supporting young people to move and establish their homes.
15. Whilst some young people move to their own accommodation smoothly, for many their accommodation experiences may be characterised by a number of moves – often in crisis. We are currently contributing to the review of Placement Options for young people aged 16 years and above which will include how to improve the pathway to independent living post 18 years.

Education, employment and training (EET)

16. 62% of the 19 year plus age group are engaged in some form of EET including 11 young people in higher education. In April 2011 the law was amended to allow young people over the age of 21 years and closed to the service to request support including financial support to return to studies. This is a positive step which addresses the fact that many care experienced young people may not be ready or able to access learning until they

are older than their peers. 13 young people are currently being supported and we are keen to ensure that young people are aware of their rights in this respect when we end our involvement at 21 years.

17. We have applied to be considered for the Government funded From Care2Work Quality Mark. This is awarded to local authorities who aspire to improve the employability options for young people leaving care. We have submitted a work plan and have had positive feedback. Our submission includes our work with Futures Nottingham to provide an annual apprenticeship workshop, additional support for care leavers who are entrenched in unemployment from the Inspire and Achieve Team at West Nott's College and a commitment from the Procurement Team to build in employability opportunities for care leavers to the social value statement included in all new contracts from September 2014.
18. The Achievement Advisers have identified a small group of hard to engage young people who are entrenched in unemployment due to their complex needs. These young people are at risk of benefit sanction due to non-compliance with Department for Work and Pension (DWP) requirements regarding job search. Discussions are taking place to improve DWP assessments of these young people and it is hoped that greater use of a joint assessment approach will support these young people in engaging with the DWP work programmes and prevent sanctions.

Participation and Young People's Views

19. In June 2014, the Leaving Care Service, as part of our ongoing partnership with Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum, organised an event for Post-16 students from Refugee and Asylum Seeking backgrounds to explore Nottingham Trent University's City Campus, talk to current students and get a taste of university life.
20. The event saw 26 young people from Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Peterborough Leaving Care Services given the opportunity to find out about university life from current student ambassadors, have a tour, and also heard from a student, who had come to the UK as an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC) and was now studying at the University.
21. The day also saw a number of different workshops including a session on the current funding for asylum seekers/refugees when accessing higher education, signposting to various support agencies for further advice and guidance. The afternoon session focused on the development of either a personal statement and/or curriculum vitae.
22. The Leaving Care Team staff are aware that unresolved asylum cases can be one of the many barriers certain young people face when it comes to accessing further education, but the University is keen to work with partner agencies in breaking down barriers and giving as much support and information as possible to young people from all backgrounds and inspire them to pursue their goals and potential either now or in the future.
23. In the near future, the Leaving Care Team will continue working in partnership with Refugee Action to support a 'Money Matters' course which will run every Thursday for 6 weeks (run by Advice Nottingham) open to UASC young people. The course outline will include budgeting, debt, and benefits advice etc.

24. Recent positive feedback and comments from ex care leavers supported by the Leaving Care Team were as follows:

"Thank you for all the help with my education even though I didn't stick at it. Once I move and get settled I'll go back to college then I'll let you know how it goes! Thank you so much"

"Thank you, I can't believe after 4 years were saying goodbye thank you for everything"

"You'll never forget me and I'll never forget you"

"Dear Care Leaver Team,

I would like to thank you all guys, for your support one by one. You have been a great team, which provided me with all I was needed to get me here. Without you guys I wouldn't be here today and could never reach here. University wasn't just my dream, it was my hopes, wishes, aims, goals and everything. With all hard work and difficult way. Finally, I found myself where I always hoped to be and surely this is where you wanted me to be.

The help, support and believe that you had on me. It pushed me to work harder and harder all way through to get myself here. And it made a significant change to my life and made me to be even more confident. Today, is a time to say thank you a lot for all the support and hard work you did on me.

After I have considered my future I believe that, it is a time to make some changes. I have been relying on (Care Leaver Team) for long time. And now it is a time to stand by myself and to take the responsibilities for my future. Little bit arrogant but don't worry, I will be fine, because you made me to be this strong and confident. I believe that, I have had more than I was expecting from you guys.

I am ready to stand by myself and I believe that, it is time to give that opportunity to someone else who needs that help and support more than I do. As we all know, I have got more ways to get financial support and can pay it back, after I graduate and getting a job. I want to start to take responsibility and make decisions regarding my future. To be someone who you guys wanted me to be, not just rely on (Nottinghamshire County Council) (Care Leaver Team), which I have been for long time." (Care leaver asylum seeker supported as a UASC who has entered higher education).

Other Options Considered

25. This report is for noting only.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

26. This report is for noting only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

27. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), 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 update on the Leaving Care Service be noted.

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Constitutional Comments

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

Financial Comments (KLA 28/08/14)

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

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.

Leaving Care Service update – report to Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee on 17 March 2014

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0472