

10 January 2018**Agenda Item: 5****REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES &
CULTURAL SERVICES****UPDATE OF THE LEAVING CARE SERVICE AND PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY
FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS IN
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE, 2018-21****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an update on the work of the Leaving Care Service, which provides advice, support and guidance to young people over the age of 18 who have left the care of the Local Authority.
2. To provide an update on the Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in Nottinghamshire for the period 2018-21.

Information and Advice

3. Most young people are referred to the Leaving Care Service from the Looked After Children's (LAC) team. Many will have been in care for a substantial period of their childhood, but a growing number are coming into care in their mid-teens. Many will have had childhoods characterised by repeated intervention from social care and multiple carers within their own families. Many of these children display very challenging behaviours and are ill equipped for independence and adult life.
4. As a very vulnerable cohort of young people, looked after children and care leavers fall within the Health & Wellbeing Board's ambition to "*give everyone a good start in life*", within the second Nottinghamshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy; this is particularly in relation to improving life chances, keeping children and young people safe and ensuring that these young people are happy and healthy.
5. Young people may receive services from the Leaving Care Service from the age of 18 to 21 years. Where the young person remains in education or require support related to training or employment, support from the Leaving Care Service extends up to 25 years of age.
6. The current establishment of the service is 13 full-time equivalent (FTE) Personal Advisers (PAs) and 2 FTE Achievement Advisers who provide specialist advice regarding education, employment and training, though they are not social work qualified. The Service is split into two teams, Leaving Care North (based at Meadow House) and Leaving Care South (based at Sir John Robinson Way). The Service has two social work qualified Team Managers and a social work qualified Service Manager who works part-time.

7. As at 14 November 2017, the Service are currently supporting 313 young people¹.

Transitional Personal Adviser Pilot

8. There is growing concern that many young people coming out of care are ill prepared for adulthood and so are more likely to be socially excluded in many areas of independent life. Young people coming out of residential care are most likely to be at risk and so need extra support to make sure they are ready and able to leave care successfully.
9. Following approval at Children and Young People Committee on 18 September 2017, a “Transitional Personal Advisor” pilot programme was introduced to provide intensive support for children in residential care preparing for adulthood. This pilot was agreed initially on a 12-month basis, on an invest-to-save basis.
10. Three experienced Personal Advisers were identified to provide intensive support to a small group of young people aged 16 and 17 to support their planned migration from residential care into semi supported accommodation before the age of 18 years. 13 young people have been identified so far, 8 of whom have begun to develop their independence plans. The pilot began in mid-September and the initial progress review is due in May 2018.
11. The Transitional Personal Advisers (TPAs) have the time and flexibility to work around the young person. They will make contact at weekends, work later to support young people after college, and support with practical tasks, such as preparing a meal.
12. The TPAs are able to build positive relationships with the young people through intensive contact as well as working more imaginatively and creatively.
13. However, the Leaving Care Service continues to face the challenge of meeting increased demand:
 - There has been an increase in the number of children who are looked after in Nottinghamshire by 69% from 2009 (490 children) to 2016 (830 children), compared with a 16% increase nationally (from 2009 with 60,900 children to 2016 70,440 children);
 - There has been a 28% rise in the last 3 years for those care leavers aged 19-21 eligible for support according to the DfE definition in Nottinghamshire (from 235 care leavers reported in 2013, to 300 care leavers in 2016), compared with a 3% decrease nationally (27,220 care leavers in 2013 to 26,340 care leavers in 2016);
 - There is a further 13.5% increase in care leavers for Nottinghamshire for recently published figures for 2016/17 (from 300 young people in 2016 to 342 young people in 2017);
 - The complexity of cases has also increased with:
 - Care leavers not in education, employment or training due to illness or disability rising from 10% (25 young people) to 18% (55 young people) in the last 3 years;
 - 37% of Nottinghamshire care leavers (111 out of 300 care leavers) were admitted into care aged 16+, compared with 14% of children coming into care within this age group nationally.

¹ This cohort represents the number of young people who are open to the Leaving Care Service; this is not the same as the cohort of young people who are eligible for leaving care support under the DfE definition

14. This has impacted upon the number of young people entitled to support from the Leaving Care Service. In order to meet increasing demand, caseloads of Personal Advisors have increased, which means the support young people are receiving is less focussed and task oriented support.
15. The capacity of the Service to assess and address need and provide support is limited. The service was last reviewed in 2013 and the establishment has not increased in line with demand. Despite the considerable efforts and sustained commitment of practitioners, services are currently demand or crisis led.
16. Many of the young people have experienced extensive trauma and disruption throughout much of their childhood, and preparation for adulthood is not given sufficient priority.
17. CAMHS support ends for looked after children at age 18 and there are no statutory services for those care leavers over the age of 18 who have mental health needs but do not meet the criteria or threshold for adult services. This makes the needs of young people complex, which the Personal Advisors have to support. This group of young people, who are growing in numbers and levels of need, have the greatest levels of need and complexity of all children and young people. They have persistently experienced a substantial loss of support at this critical point in their young lives.
18. The current transfer point (at 18 years) between the Looked after Children (LAC) Service and the 18+ services is not appropriate and represents too big a step for many young people. Transfer arrangements do not currently reflect the reality that transitions take time to develop knowledge, skills and trust in the support services.
19. Efforts by managers and staff to respond to needs are currently welcomed by young people but some feel abandoned having reached a 'cliff edge' at the point they leave care. Failure to adequately support young people leaving care will incur increased cost to the welfare state and impact upon adult services and health provision as this group of young people transition into adulthood.
20. As a consequence of the above challenges and increased demand, a review of the service is underway that will lead to the establishment of an improved Leaving Care Service to begin working with children when they reach the age of 16.

Audit Activity

21. The work of the team is subject to the Department's Quality Management Framework. In Quarter 2 2017/18, all 7 cases from the Leaving Case Service that were audited by managers across the Department were graded as 'Good'. A recent diagnostic review of the Leaving Case Service identified that the current audit tool did not focus sufficiently on outcomes for children leaving care and so a revised audit tool is being developed.

Accommodation

22. As at 14 November 2017, 92% of the young people open to the Leaving Care team were reported to be in suitable accommodation at their last birthday.
23. Young people's accommodation needs vary when they leave care, from those who need an additional period of intensive support through to those who move to their own tenancies or university accommodation.

Staying Put

24. The Staying Put Scheme allows for young people to remain living with their former foster carers post 18 years for as long as the two parties want the arrangement to continue. During this financial year, 38 young people over the age of 18 years have been able to Stay Put with their foster carers. Of these, there are 20 current placements plus 4 young people whose placement converted to Shared Lives through Adult Social Care and Health.
25. Of those remaining placements, only 1 ended in an unplanned way – the rest moved on to their own accommodation or university. This type of arrangement is extremely positive for young people in terms of outcomes. Placement stability needs to be a key focus for all involved in fostering and planning for looked after children.

Supported Accommodation

26. Care leavers continue to access accommodation through the Supported Accommodation Provision (SAP) model through the Family Service. The team have built up excellent links with the SAP team and we ensure that a Leaving Care Team Manager attends each weekly allocation and problem solving meeting. These meetings include the managers of all the Supported Accommodation Projects.
27. Whilst many young people do very well in this core and cluster accommodation model, there are some young people who have very challenging needs and require more intensive support. For example, 'TL', a young woman aged 18 who has moved into supported accommodation through the SAP model. Due to her mental health issues and significant self-harm, the Leaving Care Service are financing additional support from the housing provider to support TL over weekend periods.

Custody

28. There are 9 young people in custody, with 6 currently sentenced for offences ranging from sexual assault to arson. These young people are amongst the most troubled of our care leavers and we ensure that contact is maintained. This is particularly important when there are no relatives visiting.
29. The team sends a representative to the Ministry of Justice Regional Care Leavers group, which has been set up to ensure that prisons have a greater awareness of the needs of care leavers – a particularly vulnerable group within the prison population.

Education, employment and training

30. Of the 313 young people working with a Personal Adviser, 170 or 54.3% are in some form of education, employment or training (EET). This continues to be a challenging area of work given the educational experiences of many children in care. Where young people have already disengaged with education it is very difficult to re-engage them as adults. Issues such as lack of confidence, poor literacy skills and school moves will impact on motivation and ability to engage in post 18 EET.
31. The Virtual School has identified 16 to 18 year-olds as an area for development and a new Virtual School partnership approach will aim to support better outcomes for our care leavers.²

² The Virtual School, based within the Education, Learning & Skills Division, is responsible for monitoring and tracking the educational outcomes of looked after children

32. The Achievement Advisers' work focuses on those young people who are not in employment or training. These young people often have multiple issues and are usually claiming benefits. The benefit system and claims process can be complicated and rigorous. As a result, many of our most vulnerable young people will find it very difficult to meet certain requirements and will be the subject of sanctions. The team has built up excellent working relationships with the Department for Work and Pensions, and joint training events have been held to increase knowledge about the needs of care leavers within local Job Centre offices so that young people are supported more appropriately.

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

33. Many care leavers have significant mental and emotional wellbeing issues, which impact on their daily lives. Access to support from adult mental health services is based on strict eligibility criteria, medical models of mental illness, and mostly assumes voluntary engagement and participation in any support offered. There is no fast track for early assessment by adult services for care leavers, and where young people live outside of the county, there are additional barriers to accessing assessment and support.
34. There are a growing number of care leavers who have significant emotional and mental health issues but who do not meet the criteria for adult services. These are young people who may have significant self-harming behaviour, have Asperger's or autistic traits or have a childhood diagnosis of other behaviour disorders or learning needs that impact on daily life, such as Attention Deficit Disorder.
35. CAMHS support ends for looked after children at 18 and there are no statutory services for those care leavers over the age of 18 who have mental health needs but do not meet the criteria or threshold for adult services. This is a gap in provision highlighted by the growing number of young people who are displaying significant emotional and mental health problems.

Future Challenges

36. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduces the following duties to the Local Authority in respect of children in care and care leavers:
- The application of corporate parenting principles to care and pathway planning³
 - A requirement for the local authority to publicise its local offer for care leavers;
 - The right to support and advice for all care leavers up to the age of 25 years, including those in custody.
37. A Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children & Care Leavers for the period 2018-21 has therefore been drafted in collaboration with key partners, which include health commissioners, health providers, education, police, housing and children's social care. The Strategy is attached as Appendix 1.
38. As corporate parents for all looked after children and care leavers in Nottinghamshire, we want to provide our children and young people with the best possible start in life. As they prepare for adulthood, we want to inspire our young people to fulfil their own ambitions and dreams. For this reason, we have continued to integrate our strategy for our looked after

³ The local authority has a duty under the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of the looked after child and to "act as good corporate parents".

children and care leavers, to ensure the best possible support is provided as they reach adulthood.

39. Through this renewed Partnership Strategy, we want to deliver a genuine, multi-agency, child-centred strategy, accepting that there is more to do to ensure that all partners are accountable for outcomes. We want to make best possible use of our collective resources to achieve our shared ambitions. In collaboration with key partners, we want to use our collective commitment to give every looked after child strong foundations and support to thrive in adulthood.
40. Our *draft* vision for looked after children and care leavers is a simple one, and one that has been shaped by the children and young people we look after⁴:

We want our children and young people to have everything that good parents want and provide for their children. We will give our children strong roots of stability, love, encouragement, positive relationships and healing from past harm. We will give our children wings of resilience, ambition, aspirational goals and practical and emotional support into successful adulthood

41. Underpinning our vision are six ambitions that reflect the high aspirations and expectations that we, as corporate parents, have for every looked after child and care leaver:
- Looked after children and care leavers are safe and feel safe;
 - Looked after children and care leavers experience good physical, emotional and mental health & wellbeing;
 - Looked after children and care leavers fulfil their potential;
 - Looked after children and care leavers make a positive contribution to their communities;
 - Looked after children and care leavers have a successful transition to adulthood;
 - Looked after children and care leavers achieve sustained and fulfilling employment & economic independence.
42. It is proposed that new governance arrangements are created, in order to establish a governance model that ensures that all partners recognise and act on their responsibilities and our shared ambitions for looked after children and care leavers.
43. It is proposed that a “Looked After Children & Care Leavers Partnership Board” - a multi-agency group of senior officers - will be responsible for planning, reviewing and developing all aspects of our work with looked after children and care leavers, and providing support and challenge across the partnership. The Partnership Board will be responsible for developing and monitoring an annual ‘Delivery Plan’, identifying the key actions, timescales and intended outcomes across all partner members. The Board will hold its inaugural meeting in January 2018.

Other Options Considered

44. No other options have been considered

⁴ The draft vision and ambitions are still subject to change pending the closure of the consultation period

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

45. Operational and strategic activity in relation to Looked After Children and Care Leavers aligns with the ambition, *“to give everyone a good start in life”*, within the second Nottinghamshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Statutory and Policy Implications

46. 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.

Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults Implications

47. The strategy and action plan seek to strengthen support and practice which will ensure looked after children and care leavers continue to be safeguarded.

Implications for Service Users

48. Looked after children and care leavers will benefit from improved services and multi-agency working aimed at improving outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That Members of the Health & Wellbeing Board consider whether there are any additional actions they require in relation to the issues contained within the report
- 2) That Members of the Health & Wellbeing Board provide feedback on the vision and ambitions of the draft Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in Nottinghamshire, 2018-21
- 3) That Members of the Health & Wellbeing Board agree to receive the final Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in Nottinghamshire in 3 months' time, including recommendations regarding the role of the Board in the enactment of the Strategy and its ambitions

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Constitutional Comments (SLB 19/12/2017)

49. Health and Wellbeing Board 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 (SS 20/12/2017)

50. 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.

- Increase in the establishment of Personal Advisor Posts – Report to Children and Young People's Committee on 18 September 2017
- Draft Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in Nottinghamshire, 2018-21 – Report to Children and Young People's Committee on 18 December 2017

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All