

19 June 2023**Agenda Item 7****REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES****PROVISION OF SUPPORT TO LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN TRANSITIONING
OUT OF THE CARE SYSTEM****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of the report is to:
 - identify the range and depth of support offered to Nottinghamshire Looked After Children as they transition out of the care system
 - examine the transition arrangements within other authorities and to learn about best practice
 - make recommendations to further develop transition arrangements to provide the best possible outcomes to young people transitioning out of the care system.

Information

2. The Council operates a joint Looked After and Leaving Care Service overseen by one Group Manager and two Service Managers. There are five teams within the Looked After Children's Service and a specialist Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children's team.
3. As of 31 March 2023, there were 965 looked after children who were the responsibility of the Council, of these, 597 were open to the Looked After Children's Service. Children with a long-term plan of being looked after have an allocated Social Worker from the Looked After Children's Service. The other looked after children will have an allocated Social Worker from the Children with Disabilities Service, one of the District Child Protection teams or the Court team. Of the 597 children open to the Looked After Children's Team:

Age	Number of Children and Young People open to the Looked After Team
0 – 5 years	5
6 – 10 years	98
11 – 13 years	116
14 – 15 years	117
16 – 17 years	261

4. The social workers within the Looked After Children's teams will regularly review and explore options in relation to children returning to the care of birth family members or connected people and will also discuss Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) with children's foster carers. Discussions in relation to children's care plans will also take place at their looked after reviews or at the Care Planning Support and Assurance Panel which is chaired by the Group Manager for Strategic Safeguarding and Independent Review.
5. The last standard inspection of Nottinghamshire's Children's Service was in October 2019, which resulted in a **Good** 'overall effectiveness' judgement and a **Good** judgement for 'the experience and progress of children in care and care leavers'. Ofsted's [Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services \(ILACS\) framework](#) was updated in December 2022 so that from January 2023 there is a separate judgement for the 'experiences and progress of children in care' and 'the experiences and progress of care leavers'.
6. To ensure a smooth transition for a looked after child to leave care, conversations take place with the young person, the professionals who support them and the people who are important in their lives. The Pathway Plan is completed over the few months following the young person's 16th birthday so that possible options can be discussed. Sometimes more than one plan needs to be made depending on what the young person wants.
7. If the young person wishes to remain in the care of their foster carer post-18, discussions will take place with the foster carer and a Staying Put arrangement can be agreed. Foster carers can receive a payment until the young person's 21st birthday. As of 31st March 2023, there were 39 young people in Staying Put arrangements.
8. Some young people living with foster carers wish to progress to semi-independent accommodation. Under the Staying Close Staying Connected agenda foster carers are encouraged to keep in touch with the young person so that they can maintain positive relationships. Support workers from residential homes are also encouraged to stay in touch with young people when they move from the home to semi-independent accommodation.
9. Any young people with disabilities who meet the criteria for adult services will be referred to the Preparing for Adulthood team. Most of these young people will have an allocated Social Worker from the Children with Disabilities service. Following assessment, if the Preparing for Adulthood team agree that the young person meets the criteria, a Social Worker from this team will work alongside the young person's allocated Social Worker to identify appropriate accommodation options at an early stage. The Children with Disabilities Service and the Preparing for Adulthood team have developed good working relationships and will strive to achieve a smooth transition for the young people that they are working with into adult services.
10. The Transitional Personal Advisor (TPA) service can work with young people aged 16 or 17 on a short-term basis to assist with the move from residential homes where they receive a high level of support to semi-independent accommodation. This proactive approach is effective when working with young people with complex needs or those who do not manage change well. The TPA will work intensively with the young person to support them with the move and to assist with independent living skills. This service has attracted national interest from having featured as good practice within the 'Children and Young People Now' journal (**Appendix 1**).

11. Many 16/17-years-olds who are looked after will be receiving support from both the Looked After and Leaving Care teams. The Personal Advisors from the Leaving Care teams work alongside the Social Workers from the Looked After teams to help young people with a successful transition into adulthood. All will have an allocated Personal Advisor by the time they are 17½ years old. The Council's Leaving Care Service will continue to support young people until their 25th birthday (and sometimes beyond).
12. Of the 261 young people aged 16/17-years-old, 102 are currently living in independent / semi-independent accommodation, 41 of whom are Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children.

Type of Accommodation	Number of 16/17-year-olds being supported by Looked After / Leaving Care
Living with Foster Carers	91
Living with Relatives/Friend as Foster Carers	18
Living in a Residential Home	50
Living in Independent / Semi-Independent Accommodation	102

13. The Council has commissioned supported accommodation provision (SAP) as a multi-disciplinary approach to supporting young people with their transition into independence. The SAP has different levels of support which are categorised as Core Plus, Core, and Cluster. Core Plus accommodation offers support to young people 24 hours a day and consists of smaller households. Core accommodation usually consists of larger, shared living environments with support on site that young people can access if needed. Cluster accommodation has the least amount of support and is used when young people are ready to move in with a small group of other young people and can experience what it would be like to move into their own tenancy.
14. The Children Looked After and Leaving Care Strategic Partnership Board meetings take place every other month and are attended by various partners across Nottinghamshire including health, housing, district/borough councils, police, youth justice, colleges and universities, care leaver champion(s), and individuals from the world of work and industry. The support and provision of services is discussed and agreed at the Board meetings. Discussions take place to identify how everyone can improve the offer to young people who are looked after and to care leavers. This has led to the development of the three year [Looked After and Leaving Care Service Partnership Strategy](#) (launched in 2022) which identifies the corporate parenting principles. There has also been the recent launch of the [Partnership Pledge](#), which explains how the 'partnership' will support looked after and care experienced children and young people across the County, led by the needs and wishes of young people.
15. In 2018, the Council launched its [Local Offer for Care Leavers](#). This co-production partnership offer involves the seven district/borough councils as well as partners within health, education, police, youth justice, probation, voluntary sectors, and regional/national businesses. Although primarily aimed at Nottinghamshire care leavers, the offer also relates to those looked after 16/17-year-olds who are preparing for their transition into adulthood and care leaver status. Nottinghamshire's Local Offer for Care Leavers

continues to be one of the national leading offers with early introduction of Council Tax exemption for care leavers until their 25th birthday, priority social housing, local connection restrictions being removed, and free access to leisure centres. In addition, the Leaving Care Service expanded its offer to looked after 16/17-year-olds and care leavers around employment, education, and training (EET) by re-launching an updated Achievement Service and [Achievement Offer](#).

16. The 21Plus Service is for young people that have experienced being in the care of the Council and are aged from 21 years until their 25th birthday. This unique and bespoke service helps to inspire and support care experienced young people to fulfil their ambitions and dreams during their transition into adulthood and beyond. The team responds to need and support requests, but also is proactive in keeping in touch monthly with young people to make sure they know they still have support post-21. Support includes dedicated homelessness prevention personal advisers, access to the Achievement Service and all of the Council's local offer benefits such as exemption from council tax and free leisure centre access.
17. Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are completed for all looked after children until their 18th birthday to discuss future education, training, and employment options for young people. This information can be included within Pathway Plans. Many young people have been attending employability briefings with businesses that the Achievement Service has made links with such as John Lewis, East Midlands Airport, Amazon, Boots, Nottingham Forest Football Club (**Appendix 2**), Nottinghamshire Police (**Appendix 3**), Keepmoat Homes, Sainsbury's, and Toyota etc. Young people can visit their work base, talk about available opportunities, job vacancies or work experience opportunities. Some young people wish to remain in education and follow a more academic pathway and through joint working with university partners support is offered around accessing higher education. Young people receive a generous financial support package if they wish to attend university. Over 50 looked after and leaving care young people have plans to enter or continue with higher education from September 2023.
18. Young people have obtained work experience and employment with some of the organisations that the Achievement Service has links with. The Care2Work programme encourages those looked after 16/17-year-olds who are not in employment, education, and training (EET) to attend briefings about entering the world of work, offering them motivation, tips, careers advice and work experience opportunities.
19. Representatives from the Leaving Care Service attend the Children in Care Council meetings to receive any feedback from the young people that receive support through the Leaving Care Service. Use of the Mind of My Own app is also encouraged to enable young people to give any feedback about the service that they receive.
20. Young people can continue to receive funding through the You Know Your Mind (YKYM) fund which is co-funded with health. This facilitates a different conversation with young people in relation to their mental health and emotional health and wellbeing. This continues to have a practical and immediate impact on young people in reducing isolation, improving stability in accommodation placements, as well as enabling young people to self-identify what helps them feel better when it comes to their own individuality and wellbeing.

21. There has been an increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) which has led to an increase in the number of Personal Advisors within the UASC team. The UASC Team works closely with partner agencies across Nottinghamshire and the East Midlands region to identify any shared learning, including how to make best use of alternatively qualified professionals within the team. Ofsted met with the team in March 2023 and issued positive feedback identifying that they *'really enjoyed'* their visit and had an *'interesting and extremely useful discussion'* with the UASC team.
22. The Group Manager and Service Manager from the Looked After and Leaving Care Service attend a Service Improvement Forum on a quarterly basis with colleagues within health. This meeting ensures that professionals work together to improve the health of looked after children and young people by progressing programmes of improvement informed by national guidance and locally identified pressures and challenges. The team is also proactive in the review and production of health's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for children in care and care leavers.
23. The Council has its own dedicated Children in Care Police Officer who has helped to co-produce a 10-point plan to help prevent the criminalisation of looked after children. If a looked after child/young person is involved within the criminal justice system, the Council's Youth Justice Service works closely with the Looked After and Leaving Care Services to encourage engagement and the best possible outcome for the young person. They support any transition from Youth Justice to Probation services.
24. In January 2023, the Council approved a motion determining that it would treat care experienced young people as if care experience were a protected characteristic, within the context of there being no legal ability to make care experience a protected characteristic. This helps formalise some of the current actions taken by the Council to support care leavers such as guaranteeing care experienced young people interviews for job opportunities and ensuring any appropriate adjustments are made to provide a fair opportunity.
25. Learning about and sharing best practice is promoted regionally through monthly meetings with regional leaving care leads across the East Midlands. The Looked After and Leaving Care Team managers have participated in reviews of practice and attend meetings to look at coproduction learning and to consider more effective ways of working with one another. Recently the Team Manager from the UASC team met with the Team Manager in Northamptonshire to share information about Nottinghamshire's processes and another Team Manager met with the Leaving Care Team Manager in Nottingham City to discuss the Nottinghamshire's 21 Plus team and Nottinghamshire's offer to care leavers. Managers have also been involved in a peer review of Derbyshire's Pathway Plans.
26. The Council has been successful with the Staying Close Staying Connected funding which will assist with plans for multi-disciplinary teams within the Supported Accommodation Provision (SAP). This will be in the form of dedicated mental health practitioner(s), substance misuse worker(s) and other professionals linked to residential homes and supported accommodation to offer targeted support for children and young people experiencing issues during their transition from care to adulthood and independence as a care leaver.

Future Service Developments

27. A joint Looked After and Fostering Team development morning was held in April 2023 focusing on strengths-based practice, working together in the best interests of the child and the new Ofsted ILACS framework. A further development day has been arranged for September and will include the Independent Reviewing Officers.
28. To continue to fund the You Know Your Mind programme, which is jointly funded with health. Health have also agreed to jointly fund a mental health practitioner for Care Leavers within Nottinghamshire and this post is currently being commissioned. It is expected that this service to be operational within the next 3 – 6 months.
29. The Local Offer for Care Leavers was published in 2019 and is now under review with a timescale to publish an updated Local Offer by December 2023. Consultations with looked after young people and care leavers in relation to what they think has had the most value and positive impact for them have started to take place through face-to-face feedback, a 'your views' stand at the Achievement Event in June 2023, on-line surveys, and consultation with the Children in Care Council, the No Labels group. The review will include an update of the Achievement Offer in relation to employment, education, and training, our offer to care leavers who are young parents, care leavers in and leaving custody, and the 21Plus service. These areas are all identified as specifically required within the new Ofsted ILACS framework. The reviewed offer will be presented for input and comment at the Children Looked After and Leaving Care Strategic Partnership Board alongside the feedback received from young people to then set the targets for future development of the Local Offer. Regional meetings have been arranged to discuss local offer agreements for care leavers residing in other local authority areas.

Financial Implications

30. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Children and Families Select Committee considers the report and advises of any further assurance or activities required around how transition arrangements could be further developed to provide the best possible outcomes to young people transitioning from care.

Councillor Tracey Taylor
Cabinet Member for Children and Families

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Constitutional Comments (GMG 26/05/2023)

31. This report falls within the remit of the Select Committee for consideration.

Financial Comments (VC 05/06/2023)

32. There are no additional financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

33. 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.

- [Nottinghamshire's Local Offer for Care Leavers](#)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All.

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