



**18 September 2017**

**Agenda item: 14**

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND SOCIAL WORK**

### **INCREASE IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PERSONAL ADVISOR POSTS**

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

1. The report seeks approval to establish an additional 3 FTE (full-time equivalent) temporary Personal Advisor posts (Grade 5) within the Leaving Care Service to support the planned migration for young people from residential care into semi supported accommodation before the age of 18 years. It is proposed that this will be a 12 month pilot.
2. It is proposed that an update report on the progress of the pilot will be brought to Children and Young People's Committee in May 2018.

#### **Information and Advice**

##### **Background**

3. As of August 2017, there are 791 young people who are 'looked after' by the Local Authority. Of these, there are 32 young people aged 16 and 17 years in residential placements in Nottinghamshire. There are also an additional 52 young people under the age of 16 years in residential establishments.
4. A large proportion of young people in residential care are older and may have been in care for some time. As a result of difficult and abusive childhoods, many young people present with high levels of challenging and risk taking behaviour. Some of these young people remain in high cost residential placements until they reach 18 years (average cost of £3,241 per week), with some being placed away from their families, communities and support networks. This can lead to young people feeling isolated and therefore requiring a great deal of support to develop their independent living skills.
5. There are currently 13 FTE Personal Advisors (Grade 5) within the Leaving Care Service who work with young people between the ages of 18-21 years (25 years if they have a disability or are in full time education) to support them in their transition to independent living. The Local Authority has a statutory duty under Section 3 of the Leaving Care Act 2000 to appoint a Personal Adviser to act on a care leaver's behalf, in order to ensure that appropriate plans and support are in place to give the young people the best possible opportunities as they enter adulthood.

6. This report proposes an earlier intervention, with investment in 3 FTE temporary Personal Advisor (Grade 5) posts to work on an intensive basis with a small cohort of young people aged 16 and 17 years to support them at an earlier age in their transition to adulthood and independent living. It is proposed that this is piloted for a period of 12 months, in order to fully determine the impact of an earlier intervention on the outcomes for these young people.
7. By working intensively with them at an earlier stage, these young people will be supported to safely transition from residential care into semi-supported accommodation, offering whatever tailor made support they require around independence skills and becoming resilient adults.
8. It is also anticipated that this will also result in a cost saving, with the average cost of semi supported accommodation being £1,750 per week (£1,491 less than residential care per week).

### **Role of Personal Advisors (PAs)**

9. The main function of the 3 FTE PAs within the pilot will be to undertake intensive direct work with a small number of young people aged 16 to 17 years who are currently placed in residential care. These young people will be supported in all areas to safely move into semi-supported accommodation; this includes supporting them to develop their independence skills, such as problem-solving, personal care, budgeting, understanding the dangers of risk-taking behaviour and working with these young people around decision-making and responsibility. The aim is that these young people are supported to develop their resilience, so that they begin to develop better coping mechanisms and problem solving skills as they become adults.
10. Working with the young person's Social Worker and Independent Reviewing Officers, the PAs will have responsibility for developing a bespoke plan and package of support for a young person moving into semi-supported accommodation before the age of 18 years. The PAs will promote and support contact with birth family and extended family and friends in order to develop a support network for the young person.
11. It is proposed that each PA will work with small number of young people (up to five) to allow them to work intensively with each young person on a daily basis.

### **Other Options Considered**

12. Consideration has been given to utilising the 13 FTE Personal Advisors who are currently employed by the Leaving Care Service to pick up this work. However, caseloads are currently very high, with PAs working with an average of 17 young people aged 18-21 years each.
13. As the piece of work required is intensive and time consuming, it would therefore not be possible for the current PAs to manage the level of engagement required to successfully migrate a cohort of 16 and 17 year olds from residential care into semi-supported accommodation. This could result in the young people selected remaining in high cost residential care for too long, with poor quality transition planning.

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

14. In introducing the three additional PA posts the benefits will be:
- improved planning for independence and transition to adulthood
  - the selected 16 and 17 year olds will receive intensive support from experienced and skilled staff
  - staff have time to spend with young people, in order to build significant relationships and therefore achieve objectives
  - bespoke packages developed around the individual, rather than having to utilise the resources available
  - an increased chance of positive outcomes – by having the right plan at the right time for the young person
  - the development of independence plans that are meaningful – in both the short and longer-term
  - successful transitions leading to stable placements post 18 years, with staff they have positive relationships with
  - intensive practical support in place at the right time
  - a significant reduction in placement costs due to earlier exit from high cost residential units and young people being more prepared for adulthood/independence.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

15. 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 services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of young people and adults at risk, 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.

## **Financial Implications**

16. The proposed establishment of additional temporary Personal Advisor posts is on an invest-to-save basis.
17. The establishment of an additional 3 FTE temporary Personal Advisor (Grade 5) posts will be at a cost of £92,565 in total (£30, 855 each including on-costs). It is not envisaged that these posts will be required on a permanent basis; moving forward, the cohort of young people aged 16 and 17 years in residential care will be reviewed to assess the level of need.
18. In introducing the additional PAs, the ambition will be to exit young people from residential care at least six months earlier than is currently happening. From analysis of the potential cohort, it is assumed that a minimum of six young people will successfully make the transition to semi-supported accommodation during the 12 month pilot period (two young people per PA), which costs £1,491 less than residential care per week.

19. In transitioning six young people from residential care to semi-supported accommodation, there is an anticipated saving of £232,596 as a result of the lower cost provision.
20. The invest-to-save initiative therefore is expected to make an overall saving of £140,031 over the course of the 12-month pilot, when accounting for the cost of the investment.
21. If there are any costs which fall into the 2017/18 financial year, these will be contained within the Children's Social Care budget.

### **Human Resources Implications**

22. If the proposal is approved, the 3 FTE Personal Advisor posts will be recruited on a full-time basis for a period of 12 months. This would allow for a secondment opportunity from within the Local Authority.

### **Implications for Service Users**

23. The proposal would mean that affected service users are introduced to another professional, which may require a period of adjustment for that young person. However, it is felt that there are clear long-term benefits to the young person as they will be given support to equip them to move into adulthood and develop their independent living skills.
24. There will be ongoing monitoring throughout the pilot to assess its effectiveness. This will include a survey completed with the young people involved in the pilot to understand the impact of the scheme.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That:

- 1) Committee approves the establishment of an additional 3 FTE temporary Personal Advisor posts (Grade 5) within the Leaving Care Service to support the planned migration for young people from residential care into semi supported accommodation before the age of 18 years.
- 2) an update on the progress of the pilot be reported to the Children and Young People's Committee at its meeting in May 2018.

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**Constitutional Comments (LM 01/09/17)**

25. The Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the contents of the report.

**Financial Comments (SAS 04/09/17)**

26. The financial implications of the report are contained within paragraphs 16 – 21 above.

**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 Act 2000

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

All.

C1023