

2 March 2015**Agenda Item: 8****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. Young people are introduced to the Leaving Care service at age 17½ years and are supported until 21 years. Should young people remain in higher education or wish to return to education, they are entitled to services up until 25 years. Statutory duties regarding this group of young people are contained in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and service delivery is subject to guidance and regulations from the Department for Education which was last revised October 2014.
3. There has been no change to the team structure or specification since the previous report to this Sub-Committee on 22 September 2014. The staff group of 13 Personal Advisers and 2 Achievement Advisers remains stable. Management cover is provided by 2 Team Managers (1.6 full-time equivalent (fte)) and 1 Children's Services Manager (0.5 fte). In October 2014 one Team Manager moved on a temporary basis to manage a Looked After Children Team and her position has been filled by a Social Worker from the Looked After Children Team on a secondment basis.
4. Over the past year the numbers of young people the Team is working with has increased from 290 to 325. 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 25. The service has case responsibility for 279 over 18 year olds and offers additional advice to 46 under 18s who remain the responsibility of the looked after children service until they reach age 18 years.
5. 81% of the young people we support are White British. This figure has remained consistent over the past year. We work with 32 young people who were unaccompanied asylum seeking minors and who are waiting for the outcome of appeals. These young people are mostly from Afghanistan or Syria.

6. There is a fairly even gender split of young men and women receiving services with slightly more young men receiving services.

Performance Data

7. An annual performance report (National Indicator 148) is provided to the Department for Education relating to accommodation, education, employment and training and whether young people are still supported by the service.
8. The 2013/14 report saw a change in how and what is reported. Overall, of 235 care leavers identified in the prescribed cohort (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 the Government to the data collection criteria.
9. Our latest local data (as of December 2014) indicates that 200 (72%) of our over 18s are engaged in some form of education, employment or training.

Recent Developments

10. The North Team has a significant number of young parents. 32 young people have young children or are pregnant. In order to increase their employability in the future, links are being made with Children's Centres to facilitate greater involvement with these young families and nine are now engaging in parenting skills development.
11. A training event has been instigated by the Leaving Care Team with local Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) colleagues to ensure that care leavers are flagged up for additional support in terms of accessing the DWP work programmes to support young people in moving off benefits into work and training.
12. A Traineeship Programme has been developed in the Leaving Care Team in partnership with NCC Skills for Employment. Young people will be able to have a four week work experience placement in the service followed by, if appropriate, a Traineeship of 100 hours over a six month period to include functional skills study provided by Skills for Employment. Two young people have expressed an interest in the scheme so far.
13. We have recently been awarded the From Care2Work Quality Mark for our work in supporting young people with education training and employment. This is a Government approved nationally recognised quality standard which acknowledges work in employability support for young people.
14. The availability and affordability of suitable accommodation continues to be a major challenge for the team in ensuring that young people are able to secure housing post care but over the last six months we have maintained a reasonable level of stability in this area.
15. The 16+ Accommodation Commissioning Strategy led by the placements team seeks to address the key issues of supported housing and transition to tenancies for care leavers. It is envisaged that a tender will be in place by August 2015.

16. The Staying Put policy, which allows young people to remain with foster carers over the age of 18 up to 21 years, continues to be very successful. Placement numbers have increased from 19 to 26 over the last six months. As previously outlined in the March report, the Government Grant for Staying Put does not cover all costs but these have been absorbed by the current Leaving Care budget.
17. This is a national issue and various organisations such as the Fostering Network and the Association of Directors of Social Services are lobbying Government for increased funding due to the excellent outcomes that young people achieve due to Staying Put.
18. In October 2014, a Personal Adviser from the Leaving Care Service attended the Annual Conference of National Care Leavers' Week 2014 held in Westminster accompanied by two unaccompanied asylum seeking child care leavers from Nottinghamshire. In partnership with The Care Leavers' Foundation and Prince's Trust, the annual conference aims to celebrate and raise awareness about care leavers and opened with a keynote address from Edward Timpson MP, Children's Minister.
19. The day was a great experience for all involved; our two care leavers engaged extremely well and did an outstanding job of representing Nottinghamshire's Leaving Care Services. A number of key workshops were attended including *Care leavers and mental health* and *Engaging care leavers in service delivery*.
20. In December, three Leaving Care staff led a seminar on the needs of care leavers at Nottingham University for Social Work students. The feedback was extremely positive and we hope that this has raised the profile of the Council with the students in terms of their future employment, and promoted the needs of care leavers to a group of future social workers.
21. Two seasonal events were held in December attracting 40 young people. The events gave young people the chance to meet other care leavers and Personal Adviser staff and engage in independence preparation exercises. Feedback is always a focus of these events and young people were positive about services being received. One issue raised was that the Home Establishment Grant of £2,000 is insufficient to furnish a home. This issue needs consideration.
22. Links with the Children in Care Council are being revisited. A Personal Adviser has been identified to link with the Leaving Care Sub-Group and we will be asking the group to comment on our leaflets to young people and to contribute to a newsletter that is to be produced for care leavers.
23. In January 2015 staff from Barnardo's undertook a peer review of the service in order to support our preparation for Ofsted inspection and initial feedback was positive. One observation they made was that the link between the Corporate Parenting Sub Committee and the service needed to be more robust and this is currently being taken forward and will be reported on at a future Sub-Committee meeting.

Other Options Considered

24. This report is for noting only.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

25. This report is for noting only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

26. 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

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

Financial Comments (SS 02/02/15)

28. 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 22 September 2014

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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