

### Membership

#### Councillors

● absent

- Fiona Asbury (Chair)  
Barrie Cooper  
Jim Creamer
- Bob Cross  
Vincent Dobson
- Tom Pettengell  
Mel Shepherd
- Keith Walker  
Chris Winterton (Vice-Chair)(in the chair)

#### Officers

Paul Davies – Governance Officer  
Helen Lee – Scrutiny Officer  
Ashley Jackson – Researcher  
Michelle Lee - Aftercare Services Manager, Children and Young People's Department  
Matt Wesson - Trainee Social Worker, Children and Young People's Department  
Karen Walters - Social Worker, Children and Young People's Department  
Gail White - Personal Advisor, Children and Young People's Department

### 1. Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on 12 October 2010, having been circulated were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

### 2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Asbury and Cross.

### 3. Declarations of interest

None.

### 4. Update on the Review (a) Pathway Plans

Matt Wesson gave a presentation on the preparation of pathway plans, which were a requirement under the Children Leaving Care Act 2000. Plans must have explicit objectives, show who is responsible for achieving each

action and the timescale for achieving it. The young person should be involved in the preparation of the plan. If a young person was uncooperative, this could not be an excuse for a poorly prepared plan. However any lack of engagement should be documented in the plan. A copy of a blank plan form was circulated. Each section of the plan required a contingency plan, in case the planned arrangements fell through or could not be financed. All parties signed up to the plan. The young person would decide who had access to the plan. Generally speaking, professionals would only access parts of the plan relevant to their role.

In response to members' comments and questions, it was stated that:

- The pathway plan was reviewed every six months, or sooner of necessary. Every plan contained a date for the next review. The Framework IT system reminded workers when reviews were due. Approaching 100% of young people were in contact with the service.
- Nottinghamshire's approach to the plans was consistent with practice elsewhere.
- What happened if a young person was not ready to live in the community? - A young person could stay with a foster carer after they reached 18, or while in full time education. The local authority had no duty to provide support after the age of 21. However, if there were concerns, the young person might be referred to other sources of support, eg health, Adult Social Care or district council tenancy support staff. The Aftercare Service could signpost young people to other sources of help, or receive updates on their progress. It was pointed out that by the age of 21, the service had been working for five years to prepare a young person for independence.
- Data protection requirements were followed when sharing information, and would only be over-ridden if there was a safeguarding issue. However, young people were advised that some landlords would only grant a tenancy if some background information was provided.
- The Supported Lodgings Scheme was currently funded from the Supporting People budget. This was expected to change to the Supported Lodging budget in 2011. Payments were made direct to the provider of the supported accommodation.
- Staffing in the Aftercare Team was relatively stable, and some young people would have the same worker for the five years they were in contact with the team.
- Most young people had some contact with their family. Parents might, for example, be involved in the pathway plan, and be given specific actions to take. It was for young people themselves to decide whether their relationship with their parents was good or not, although the service could advise on how to deal with problems.
- It was unusual for young people to refuse to cooperate with the service, or such behaviour might be short-lived and a way of testing boundaries.

## **(b) Financial Support**

Michelle Lee referred members to the paper which had been circulated, summarising the different forms of financial support available to care leavers. She explained that young people in care could not claim benefits. The authority paid a personal allowance at the same rate as Income Support. If a young person was in work or education, they could keep their wages or Education Maintenance Allowance. She gave details of the supported lodgings scheme, funds to help care leavers set up home, crisis payments and advice on budgeting. In reply to members' questions, officers explained:

- Any cuts to the Supporting People budget would have an impact on the availability of supported accommodation. The most expensive accommodation provided a high level of support, and reflected more than the cost of rent.
- Much work was done to prepare young people for budgeting once they were living independently. It was recognised that many young people learnt the hard way to budget, for example how to deal with the fortnightly payment of benefit cheques, or the higher costs of winter heating.
- If a young person missed a benefit cheque, for example, they would be encouraged to apply to the benefits office for a crisis loan. If that was refused, the Aftercare Team might help with a food parcel. Cash would only be given as a last resort.

## **(c) Care leavers who are parents**

Michelle Lee stated that the service was working with 27 young people who were parents. Six of them were young fathers, and 12 of them in education, employment or training. Some found parenthood a real spur, while for others it was filling an emotional gap, without a realisation of the drawbacks. Young people in care may have experienced abusive relationships, and may be young for their age. Not all required support with parenting. However referral to child protection services might be necessary if there were safeguarding concerns. The child might be allocated its own social worker, in which case the Aftercare Service could support the parent in their dealings with the social worker.

The service also worked with young people to prevent pregnancies, and helped young people access free contraception.

## **(d) Next meeting - 6 December 2010**

The next meeting would look at education and employment, practical skills for independent living, and meet some young people in care.

The meeting closed at 3.45 pm.

CHAIR