

13 June 2016

Agenda Item: 11

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE**LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS STRATEGY UPDATE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update the Sub-Committee on the progress of the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2015-18 and to share the updated priorities for 2016-17.

Information and Advice

2. The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2015-18 sets out the Council's ambition as corporate parents to *ensure our looked after children and care leavers have all the opportunities that good parents afford their children.*
3. This strategy builds on the commitment to multi-agency working which is evidenced by the successes of the 2012-2015 Looked After Children Strategy. The Strategy was refreshed in 2015 and now includes care leavers, as it is recognised that the Council's corporate parenting responsibility does not end when a young person leaves care.
4. This strategy was developed by the multi-agency Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy Group, which includes members from children's social care, education and health. Looked after children and young people in Nottinghamshire were also consulted on a number of occasions as part of the development of the strategy.
5. The 2015-18 strategy aims to drive improvement in six outcomes for looked after children and care leavers in Nottinghamshire:
 - looked after children and care leavers are happy and healthy
 - looked after children and care leavers are safe
 - looked after children and care leavers achieve their potential
 - looked after children and care leavers are prepared for adulthood
 - looked after children and care leavers are listened to
 - looked after children and care leavers build positive relationships
6. Progress is expected across all outcomes over the course of the three years. In order to ensure that the associated planned activity is realistic, deliverable and focused, the Strategy Group developed an Annual Action Plan, which is reviewed each year by looked after children, care leavers and professionals. The progress of the Annual Action Plan for 2015-16 can be found in **Appendix A**.
7. Each year, the Annual Action Plan focusses on a number of key outcome statements; this provides a vehicle for the multi-agency LAC and Care Leavers Strategy Group to drive improvement in the selected focus areas. The Annual Action Plan has been reviewed for 2016-17 and will focus on the following outcomes:

Children and young people:

- have good emotional wellbeing
- have support with their mental health needs when they need it
- have their health needs assessed when they enter care
- have a safe place to live
- are safe from sexual exploitation
- do not go missing from care
- are safe from bullying
- make good progress each year in school
- leave school with good GCSE results
- remain in education or training, or move into employment after leaving school
- have the best start in life
- are supported to develop meaningful plans to help them prepare for the future
- have the practical skills needed to live alone
- can access support to prepare for parenting at the right time
- are involved in making plans and giving feedback about their care
- are involved in making plans about their future
- have a chance to talk to their social workers alone
- are supported to maintain meaningful contact with their birth families (where appropriate)
- have an understanding of safe and positive relationships
- have as few changes of social worker as possible.

Key Successes

8. Key successes of the Strategy to date include:

- care leavers are given their health histories (or 'health passport') when they leave care
- a new countywide health consent form has been agreed by all stakeholders and implemented
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) referrals are risk assessed and any urgent self-harm referrals are seen as per the self-harm protocol; the service offers a follow-up community appointment within seven days
- monthly CAMHS consultations continue with colleagues and young people in the three Local Authority mainstream residential homes
- Barnardo's Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) workers have increased from one to three and Barnardo's have extended their specialist service to include care leavers
- the completion of missing return interviews is sound, and the timeliness of completing return interviews is improving
- hotspot meetings are proving effective in addressing the most prolific missing children
- a dedicated full-time Social Work Practice Consultant has commenced work focussing on the improvement of the quality of pathway planning across LAC and Leaving Care, with a specific emphasis on cases transitioning to the leaving care team
- in 83% of LAC cases audited, the involvement of children and young people in making plans about their future was graded as good or outstanding
- the quality and timeliness of pathway planning is improving. An internal team audit completed at the end of March 2016 identified that 86% of plans were completed within timescales. A themed Pathway Plan audit was undertaken by the Quality and Improvement team and Independent Reviewing Officers between October and

December 2015 with 83% of those cases audited in Leaving Care graded at good or outstanding.

- placement support to young people fostered by Local Authority foster carers has been strengthened by confirming the permanent roles of fostering family workers; these workers are involved in identity work and direct work with young people, as well as supporting foster carers in maintaining placements at times of challenge
- the use of 'Getting Ready for Adult Life' workbooks has been embedded with young people in preparation for leaving care
- a work experience scheme has been developed for Nottinghamshire's care leavers in partnership with NCC Skills for Employment
- there is increased life story work evidenced on files and this is supported by an increase in scrutiny by Independent Reviewing Officers.

Areas for Continued Improvement

9. There continues to be a challenge in the provision of accessible emotional wellbeing and mental health services for care leavers between the ages of 18 and 21 years. If there is a formal mental health diagnosis then access to adult services is well planned and timely; however, a proportion of Nottinghamshire's care leavers have poor mental health (sometimes resulting in self harm) but no diagnosis. Progress has been made and the CAMHS LAC team now offers consultation to the Leaving Care Service. Negotiations are currently taking place with Adult Services and Health commissioners to identify Nottinghamshire care leavers as a priority group for assessment and services have also identified work with care leavers as a priority.
10. Additional areas that require continued focus and improvement include:
 - additional focus on social workers undertaking Missing Return Interviews to specifically ask about unprotected sexual activity, in order to address sexual health needs of young people at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation
 - increasing the care leaver representation at the Children in Care Council
 - improving the number, quality and timeliness of Personal Education Plans
 - ensuring that 16-18 years olds who are not on roll at sixth forms in school have access to education, employment or training.

Other Options Considered

11. This report is for noting only.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

12. This report is for noting only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

13. 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 children 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.

Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults Implications

14. The Strategy and Annual 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

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

RECOMMENDATION/S

That:

- 1) the update on the progress of the action plan for the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2015-18 be noted
- 2) the priorities of the Annual Action Plan for 2016-17 be noted.

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For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments

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

Financial Comments (SS 17/05/16)

17. 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.

Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2015-18 – report to Policy Committee on 17 June 2015

Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2015-18 – report to Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee in 11 January 2016

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0828