

11 January 2016

Agenda Item: 6

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS STRATEGY 2015-18 UPDATE

Purpose of the Report

1. To update the Sub-Committee on the progress of the annual action plan for the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2015-18.

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*. The strategy was approved by Policy Committee in June 2015.
3. This strategy builds on the commitment to multi-agency working which is evidenced by the successes of the 2012-2015 strategy. The refreshed strategy now includes care leavers, because we recognise that our 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 will be reviewed each year by looked after children, care leavers and professionals.

7. Each year, the annual action plan will focus on a number of key outcome statements, which provide a vehicle for the multi-agency LAC and Care Leavers Strategy Group to drive improvement in the selected focus areas. The progress of the annual action plan can be found in **Appendix A**.

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 & 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 our colleagues and young people in the three Local Authority mainstream residential homes
 - Barnados' Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) workers have increased from one to three and Barnados 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
 - in relation to the school progress of LAC, Nottinghamshire County Council has consistently out-performed statistical neighbours and England's average for the past four years
 - following an audit of the LAC service, 79% of cases were graded as good or outstanding
 - 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
 - implementation of a weekly 16+ supported accommodation panel
 - involvement of looked after young people and care leavers in the commissioning process for residential block purchase and post-16 supported accommodation
 - 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
 - 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
 - training for Fostering staff has been reviewed, and bespoke crisis intervention solution-focused training is being commissioned; the 2015/16 training programme for foster carers already provides information about managing behaviour positively with therapeutic parenting.

Areas for Continued Improvement

9. Areas that require continued focus and improvement include:
 - improve access to CAMHS and mental health support to care leavers

- 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 CSE
- improving the timeliness of Pathway Plan reviews, with a themed audit of Pathway Plans being undertaken
- increasing the care leaver representation at the Children in Care Council
- improvement required in relation to the recording of children and young people's views, with a more formalised method for feedback.

Other Options Considered

10. This report is for noting only

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

11. This report is for noting only

Statutory and Policy Implications

12. 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

13. The strategy and 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

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

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the update on the progress of the annual action plan for the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2015-18 be noted.

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Constitutional Comments

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

Financial Comments (SS 26/11/15)

16. 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 Children and Young People’s Committee on 18 May 2015

Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2015018 – report to Policy Committee on 17 June 2015

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0740