

21st June 2021

Agenda Item: 16

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND SOCIAL
WORK****ESTABLISHMENT OF A PLACEMENT STABILITY YOUTH WORK TEAM****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report seeks approval to establish a 12-month pilot from September 2021 for a youth work placement stability team, promoting placement stability for Children Looked After in Nottinghamshire County Council's care.

Information

2. The Young People's Service has offered youth work interventions to Children Looked After experiencing placement instability since March 2020. This followed a 25% comparative increase of placement change requests likely due to COVID-19 restrictions.
3. Youth work interventions have been requested by the Fostering Service, Children's Residential Homes and the Placements & Commissioning Team at Complex Case Meetings. Capacity within the Young People's Service has been made available by refocussing normal provision due to COVID-19 restrictions.
4. Youth Workers offer a tailored intervention for Children Looked After who would not otherwise proactively work with professionals. This approach offers a trusted relationship, safe space, engaging activities and a shared power dynamic.
5. The shorter and medium-term results of this youth work have demonstrated a positive correlation with increased placement stability (see **Table 1**). Of 57 Children Looked After engaged in tailored youth work interventions, **75%** were considered stabilised in the short term, with **89%** experiencing one or zero placement moves by October 2020¹.

Table 1 Young People's Service COVID-19 Engagement and Efficacy between March and June 2020

	Number of Children Looked After	Percentage
Referred to YPS at Complex Case Meetings	82	100%
Accepted YPS interventions	57*	78%*

¹ Current data does not demonstrate if these moves were planned or unplanned.

Signposted to other professionals	7	8.5%
Engaged in tailored youth work interventions	57	69.5%
Engaged in tailored youth work interventions considered stabilised at Complex Case Meetings	43	52.4%

** Some Children Looked After were unable to participate due to shielding and/or self-isolation.*

6. The success of a youth work led approach to supporting placement stability during COVID-19 has been clear, with strong anecdotal feedback from professionals supporting the statistical evidence. It is recognised however that:
 - the efficacy of the approach outside of COVID-19 circumstances has not been fully evidenced
 - the longer-term impact of youth work on placement stability has not been fully evidenced
 - many factors around placement stability are unique to individual Children Looked After, requiring further data analysis for both the wider cohort and individuals engaged
 - the potential for this approach to incur cost avoidance through de-escalation of placements, thereby positively impacting Placement and Commissioning's future budget pressures, has not been fully explored.
7. It is therefore proposed to pilot a placement stability youth work team for 12 months, from September 2021, further exploring the non-financial and financial benefits of a youth work led approach to placement stability.

Proposed Pilot

8. The pilot will employ 2 full time equivalent (FTE) Youth Workers for 12 months. 1 FTE Youth Worker will work in residential homes (internal and external) and 1 FTE would work within fostering settings; both Youth Workers will have a focus within the Mansfield district.
9. The proposed operating model would build on experience gained supporting placements during COVID-19, for instance:
 - Complex Case Meetings between the Young People's Service, Fostering Service, Residential Homes and Placements & Commissioning would identify Children Looked After who may benefit from a tailored youth work intervention
 - the Young People's Service would approach identified Children Looked After with a short term (typically 12 weeks) offer of tailored youth work intervention building on their strengths and aspirations
 - during the tailored youth work intervention, Children Looked After would be stepped down into universal youth work provision to offer and provide longer term contextual support outside of their placement by their local Youth Worker
 - Complex Case Meetings would continue to monitor the short and longer-term impact of the tailored youth work intervention.
10. Youth Workers would offer tailored youth work interventions to Children Looked After aged 10+. It is anticipated that 2 FTE Youth Workers could offer between 12 and 16 Children Looked After, dependent upon complexity, 12 weeks tailored youth work at any one time.

11. Within residential homes, the STARS Programme will work with 8-12 children per year whose residential placement is stabilised with a view to stepping them down into a placement with foster carers where this is in line with their care plan. Typically, around 10% of Children Looked After within residential homes would be at the other end of the spectrum, experiencing very challenging behaviours and increased instability (often experiencing 3+ placements per year). This 10% of the cohort accounts for around 18% of total placement spend annually.
12. It is this cohort that Youth Workers would offer tailored interventions to, aiming to prevent further placement cost escalation and de-escalate challenges within current placements. Feedback from Children's Residential Homes during COVID-19 to similar work has been extremely positive, highlighting the ability of Youth Workers to build trust and consistency, as well as promoting independence and a sense of normality for Children Looked After.
13. Within fostering settings Youth Workers would maintain placements through emotional and wellbeing support, enabling strengthened relationships. The agile, creative and strengths-based approach of Youth Workers has been shown to be particularly effective where Children Looked After are not responding to carers/professionals, risking placement destabilisation.
14. Complex Case Meetings would manage interdependencies between STARS, Fostering Family Workers and youth work interventions. Focussing the pilot within the Mansfield district would also enable these interdependencies to be further mapped in practice and identify where the Young People's Service can add additional value.

Anticipated benefits of pilot

15. The financial and non-financial benefits of each tailored youth work intervention would be monitored both during and after the 12-week interventions. It is anticipated that the below benefits will be incurred, but that more may be identified through the course of the pilot:

Benefit	Tracking Methodology
Reduction in average cost of placements	Placement Commitment sheets
Increased placement stabilisation	Placement Commitment sheets and Mosaic
Reduction in risk taking behaviours	Recorded by professionals on an individual basis
Reduction in criminal incidents	
Reduction in missing episodes	
Reduction in self-harm	
Reduction in Child Sexual Exploitation/Child Criminal Exploitation risk	
Attendance at open access provision	Youth Service attendance record
Relationship building	Testimony from key workers and Youth Worker

Other Options Considered

16. The establishment of a countywide placement stability youth work team was considered; however, it was agreed that evidence to support longer term financial and non-financial benefit of this approach would be invaluable in the first instance.

17. Continuing the current business model without youth work intervention was also considered, however it was felt that this would discount the positive outcomes achieved for young people, which were delivered as part of the Young People's Service's COVID-19 response.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

18. This proposal is recommended due to the successful delivery of tailored Youth Work intervention to help maintain and stabilise young people's placements during the pandemic. It is anticipated that this model can be scaled up to provide strong support for young people in care as well as ease current pressures on the social care workforce.

Statutory and Policy Implications

19. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance 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, smarter working, sustainability and the environment 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

20. The costs for this pilot will be up to £100,000, which includes on-costs and running costs over a 12-month period.
21. Recruitment is due to be completed by September 2021 and as a result the cost of the pilot will span two financial years. It is expected that the pilot will cost up to £60,000 in 2021/22 and up to £40,000 in 2022/23.
22. The cost of the pilot will be funded through temporary savings in the Youth, Families and Social Work budget.

Human Resources Implications

23. Recruitment and selection will be in line with Nottinghamshire County Council's employment procedures.

Implications for Service Users

24. This proposal aims to positively impact on a significant number of Children and Young People Looked After in the Mansfield district.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) To approve the establishment of a 12-month pilot from September 2021 for a youth work placement stability team, promoting placement stability for Children Looked After in Nottinghamshire County Council's care.

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Constitutional Comments (EP 25/05/21)

25. The recommendation falls within the remit of the Children and Young People's Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (LCD 28/05/21)

26. The costs for this pilot will be up to £100,000, which includes on-costs and running costs over a 12-month period.
27. Recruitment is due to be completed by September 2021 and as a result the cost of the pilot will span two financial years. It is expected that the pilot will cost up to £60,000 in 2021/22 and up to £40,000 in 2022/23.
28. The cost of the pilot will be funded through temporary savings in the Youth, Families and Social Work budget which is £60.498m.

HR Comments (BC 09/06/21)

29. The staffing implications are contained within the body of the report. The temporary posts will be recruited to in line with the Council's recruitment and vacancy control procedures.

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.

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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