



**Agenda Item: 6**

**REPORT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICE MANAGER, AFTERCARE**

**AFTERCARE SERVICE UPDATE**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an update on the Aftercare Service at the request of the Panel, with particular reference to education, training and employment issues.

**Information and Advice**

**Service Specification**

2. The service provides a Personal Adviser service to young people leaving the care of the Local Authority. Management of the service is provided by 1 part-time CSM, 2.5 FTE Team Managers, 8 FTE qualified Social Workers and 12 FTE unqualified Personal Advisers. The staff group is largely stable although over the past months we have carried up to five full time vacancies. It is a County wide service currently operating from three base offices.
3. The team becomes involved with looked after young people from age 16. The aim of the Personal Adviser at this stage is to get to know the young person while they are still in care, help them to develop skills they will need in adult life and to help them make plans for their adulthood after the age of 18yrs.
4. Once the young person is discharged from care, the Personal Adviser becomes responsible for co-ordinating and reviewing services to them through the Pathway Plan.
5. The Team are currently working with 240 care leavers, 230 of whom are over 18, in addition to 135 young people in care aged 16 and 17.

**Education, Employment and Training update**

6. Ensuring that care leavers have the skills to support themselves in adult life through work is a key objective of the team. To provide additional support in this key area we have three specialist workers, Education, Employment and Training Advisers (EETA) to offer advice to team colleagues and provide extra one to one support to young people who need it. This support can range from providing information about grants to young people going to university to providing information and direct support to those who are accessing basic skills courses.

7. The majority of care leavers are able to access mainstream apprenticeships, college courses and work and support varies from bi-monthly phone calls to check all is well through to liaison with college tutors or employment providers to help sustain placements if things are going wrong. For example, one young man was unemployed for a year but was helped to get a voluntary placement to increase his confidence and develop experience, given support to write a CV, job search and interview skills and finally got a permanent position in a cake decorating company doing an administration role.
8. Other successes include;
  - 2 young people successfully completing apprenticeship programmes and achieving NVQ Level 2 awards, one of whom has been nominated to carry the Olympic Torch in Nottingham 2012
  - 2 asylum seeking young people have achieved Level 1 awards in accountancy and arts
  - 8 young people are studying at university doing a variety of courses including dance, teacher training, youth and social work, nursing, ICT, and psychology.

### **Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)**

9. Not all young people are ready for work or training for a number of reasons and the EETAs monitor the current EET situation of every care leaver so that the most needy can be targeted.
10. Currently 157/230 or 70% of care leavers aged over 18 are engaged in some form of education, employment or training. This has been a fairly consistent percentage for a number of years. One of our biggest challenges is how to impact on the young people who are NEET. Whilst a number of these are temporarily NEET due to being pregnant, choosing to stay at home to care for young children, in custody or between temporary jobs, the EETAs report that approximately 40 of the young people who are not engaged could be described as the most entrenched, hard to influence young people, some of whom have multiple barriers to learning and getting work such as mental health issues, drug misuse issues, chaotic lifestyles.
11. These young people may be facing long term unemployment and welfare dependency. For them, the focus of our work may be supporting them to understand how to deal with social welfare agencies to ensure they are appropriately housed, in receipt of and able to sustain benefit claims and other forms of advice and support once they reach the age of 21 and Aftercare services end.
12. For many, the promotion of self esteem, resilience, and the development of positive social and emotional behaviour is the focus of intervention with paid work being a longer term objective. The team tries to engage these young people in imaginative ways and we have positive examples of successful intervention for example, two young people who were not work ready were invited to be involved in our recruitment panels for social work staff. They have since then gone on to work in a charity shop as a volunteer and the other to undertake a basic skills course. All recruitment for Aftercare staff involves a young person being a member of the main interview panel.

13. Other individual support plans include young people undertaking voluntary work with Age Concern, a second hand furniture project and gardening for an elderly neighbour.
14. We have also held a work inspiration event at Mansfield Folkhouse at which young people had the opportunity to hear from youth and play workers about their jobs. We have also organised two participation events in December 2011 which 40 young people attended and engaged in positive activities with a life skills theme. In addition 10 asylum seeking young people have been involved in a photography project with Nottinghamshire Photography Hub which was a ten week visual arts programme tailor made for this group of care leavers.
15. We are currently in negotiation with the Princes Trust who have developed a programme of work that could be provided to this group of care leavers subject to funding agreements. The work proposal is attached as **Appendix A** for reference and views of the Panel would be appreciated. We believe that this programme could consolidate the activities described above with a partner skilled in working with this group of young people and with the resources to provide bespoke group work.

### **Other Options Considered**

16. This report is an information only report.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

17. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service 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 members note the report and makes any comments.

**Michelle Lee**  
**Children's Service Manager (Aftercare)**

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### **Constitutional Comments**

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

**Financial Comments (NDR 29/03/12)**

19. None.

**Background Papers**

None.

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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