

18 December 2017**Agenda Item: 5****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND SOCIAL
WORK****LEAVING CARE SERVICE UPDATE AND PROPOSAL TO INCREASE THE
STAFFING ESTABLISHMENT****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an update on the work of the Leaving Care Service, which provides advice, support and guidance to young people over the age of 18 years who have left the care of the Local Authority.
2. To request approval for a temporary increase in the establishment of the Leaving Care Service, of 3 full-time equivalent (FTE) Personal Advisor (Grade 5) posts for six months initially, pending the outcome of a review of the permanent structure and establishment of the Service.

Information and Advice

3. Most young people are referred to the Leaving Care Service from the Looked After Children (LAC) team. Many will have been in care for a substantial period of their childhood, but a growing number are coming into care in their mid-teens. Many will have had childhoods characterised by repeated intervention from social care and multiple carers within their own families. Many of these children display very challenging behaviours and are ill equipped for independence and adult life
4. Young people may receive services from the Leaving Care Service from the age of 18 to 21 years. Where the young person remains in education or requires support related to training or employment, support from the Leaving Care Service extends up to 25 years of age.
5. The current establishment of the service is 13 FTE Personal Advisers (PAs) and 2 FTE Achievement Advisers who provide specialist advice regarding education, employment and training but are not social work qualified. The Service is split into two teams, Leaving Care North (based at Meadow House) and Leaving Care South (based at Sir John Robinson Way). The Service has two social work qualified Team Managers and a social work qualified Service Manager who works part-time.
6. As at 14 November 2017, the Service is currently supporting 313 young people¹.

¹ This cohort represents the number of young people who are open to the Leaving Care Service; this is not the same as the cohort of young people who are eligible for leaving care support under the DfE definition

Transitional Personal Adviser Pilot

7. There is growing concern that many young people coming out of care are ill prepared for adulthood and so are more likely to be socially excluded in many areas of independent life. Young people coming out of residential care are most likely to be at risk and so need extra support to make sure they are ready and able to leave care successfully.
8. Following approval at Children and Young People's Committee on 18 September 2017, a "Transitional Personal Advisor" pilot programme was introduced to provide intensive support for children in residential care preparing for adulthood. This pilot was agreed initially on a 12-month basis, on an invest-to-save basis.
9. Three experienced Personal Advisers were identified to provide intensive support to a small group of young people aged 16 and 17 years to support their planned migration from residential care into semi supported accommodation before the age of 18 years. 13 young people have been identified so far, eight of whom have begun to develop their independence plans. The pilot began in mid-September and the initial progress review is due in May 2018.
10. The Transitional Personal Advisers (TPAs) have the time and flexibility to work around the young person. They will make contact at weekends, work later to support around college, and then do practical tasks, such as prepare and eat a meal together.
11. The TPAs are able to build positive relationships with the young people through intensive contact as well as working more imaginatively and creatively.

Leaving Care Service Establishment

12. However, the Leaving Care Service continues to face the challenge of meeting increased demand:
 - There has been an increase in the number of children who are looked after in Nottinghamshire by 69% from 2009 to 2016, compared with a 16% increase nationally;
 - There has been a 28% rise in the last three years for those care leavers aged 19-21 years eligible for support according to the DfE definition in Nottinghamshire, compared with a 3% decrease nationally;
 - There is a forecasted further 17.5% increase in care leavers for Nottinghamshire for 2017/18;
 - The complexity of cases has also increased with:
 - Care leavers not in education, employment or training due to illness or disability rising from 10% to 18% in the last three years;
 - 37% of Nottinghamshire care leavers were admitted into care aged 16+, compared with 14% of children coming into care within this age group nationally.

13. This has impacted upon the number of young people entitled to support from the Leaving Care Service. In order to meet increasing demand, caseloads of Personal Advisors have increased, which means the support young people are receiving is less focussed and task oriented support.
14. The capacity of the Service to assess and address need and provide support is limited. The service was last reviewed in 2013 and the establishment has not increased in line with demand. Despite the considerable efforts and sustained commitment of practitioners, services are currently demand or crisis led.
15. Many of the young people have experienced extensive trauma and disruption throughout much of their childhood, and preparation for adulthood is not given sufficient priority.
16. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) support ends for looked after children at age 18 years and there are no statutory services for those care leavers over the age of 18 years who have mental health needs but do not meet the criteria or threshold for adult services. This makes the needs of young people complex, which the Personal Advisors have to support. This group of young people, who are growing in numbers and levels of need, have the greatest levels of need and complexity of all children and young people. They have persistently experienced a substantial loss of support at this critical point in their young lives.
17. The current transfer point (at 18 years) between the Looked After Children (LAC) Service and the 18+ services is not appropriate and represents too big a step for many young people. Transfer arrangements do not currently reflect the reality that transitions take time to develop knowledge, skills and trust in the support services.
18. Efforts by managers and staff to respond to needs are currently welcomed by young people but some feel abandoned having reached a 'cliff edge' at the point they leave care. Failure to adequately support young people leaving care will incur increased cost to the welfare state and impact upon adult services and health provision as this group of young people transition into adulthood.
19. As a consequence of the above challenges and increased demand, a review of the service is underway that will lead to the establishment of an improved Leaving Care Service to begin working with children when they reach the age of 16.
20. In the interim period, it is recommended that the Children and Young People's Committee agree to the establishment of 3 FTE temporary Personal Advisor Posts (Grade 5) for a period of 6-months, pending the outcome of the Service Review.
21. The increase in establishment will ensure that young people are allocated to a Personal Advisor at an earlier stage, thus ensuring a smooth transition between services. It will also create capacity for the Personal Advisors to determine needs led plans, developed with young people.

Current Performance

Audit Activity

22. The work of the team is subject to the Department's Quality Management Framework. In Quarter 2 2017/18, all seven cases from the Leaving Care Service that were audited by managers across the Department were graded as 'Good'. A recent diagnostic review of the Leaving Care Service identified that the current audit tool did not focus sufficiently on outcomes for children leaving care and so a revised audit tool is being developed.

Accommodation

23. As at 14 November 2017, 92% of the young people open to the Leaving Care team were reported to be in suitable accommodation at their last birthday.
24. Young people's accommodation needs vary when they leave care, from those who need an additional period of intensive support through to those who move to their own tenancies or university accommodation.

Staying Put

25. The Staying Put Scheme allows for young people to remain living with their former foster carers post 18 years for as long as the two parties want the arrangement to continue. During this financial year, 38 young people over the age of 18 years have been able to Stay Put with their foster carers. Of these, there are 20 current placements plus four young people whose placement converted to Shared Lives through Adult Social Care and Health.
26. Of those remaining placements, only one ended in an unplanned way – the rest moved on to their own accommodation or university. This type of arrangement is extremely positive for young people in terms of outcomes. Placement stability needs to be a key focus for all involved in fostering and planning for looked after children.

Supported Accommodation

27. Care leavers continue to access accommodation through the Supported Accommodation Provision (SAP) model through the Family Service. The team has built up excellent links with the SAP team and it is ensured that a Leaving Care Team Manager attends each weekly allocation and problem solving meeting. These meetings include the managers of all the Supported Accommodation Projects.
28. Whilst many young people do very well in this core and cluster accommodation model, there are some young people who have very challenging needs and require more intensive support. For example, 'TL', a young woman aged 18 who has moved into supported accommodation through the SAP model: due to her mental health issues and significant self-harm, the Leaving Care Service are financing additional support from the housing provider to support TL over weekend periods.

Custody

29. There are nine young people in custody, with six currently sentenced for offences ranging from sexual assault to arson. These young people are amongst the most troubled of Nottinghamshire's care leavers and it is ensured that contact is maintained. This is particularly important when there are no relatives visiting.
30. The team sends a representative to the Ministry of Justice Regional Care Leavers group, which has been set up to ensure that prisons have a greater awareness of the needs of care leavers – a particularly vulnerable group within the prison population.

Education, employment and training

31. Of the 313 young people working with a Personal Adviser, 170 or 54.3% are in some form of education, employment or training (EET). This continues to be a challenging area of work given the educational experiences of many children in care. Where young people have already disengaged with education it is very difficult to re-engage them as adults. Issues such as lack of confidence, poor literacy skills and school moves will impact on motivation and ability to engage in post 18 EET.
32. The Virtual School has identified 16 to 18 year-olds as an area for development and a new Virtual School partnership approach will aim to support better outcomes for our care leavers.
33. The Achievement Advisers' work focuses on those young people who are not in employment or training. These young people often have multiple issues and are usually claiming benefits. The benefits system and claims process can be complicated and rigorous. As a result, many of the most vulnerable young people will find it very difficult to meet certain requirements and will be the subject of sanctions. The team has built up excellent working relationships with the Department for Work and Pensions, and joint training events have been held to increase knowledge about the needs of care leavers within local Job Centre offices so that young people are supported more appropriately.

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

34. Many care leavers have significant mental and emotional wellbeing issues, which impact on their daily lives. Access to support from adult mental health services is based on strict eligibility criteria, medical models of mental illness, and mostly assumes voluntary engagement and participation in any support offered. There is no fast track for early assessment by adult services for care leavers, and where young people live outside of the County, there are additional barriers to accessing assessment and support.
35. There are a growing number of care leavers who have significant emotional and mental health issues but who do not meet the criteria for adult services. These are young people who may have significant self-harming behaviour, have Asperger's or autistic traits or have a childhood diagnosis of other behaviour disorders or learning needs that impact on daily life, such as Attention Deficit Disorder.
36. CAMHS support ends for looked after children at 18 years and there are no statutory services for those care leavers over the age of 18 years who have mental health needs but do not meet the criteria or threshold for adult services. This is a gap in provision

highlighted by the growing number of young people who are displaying significant emotional and mental health problems.

Future Challenges

37. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduces the following duties to the Local Authority in respect of children in care and care leavers:
- The idea of corporate parenting principles;
 - A requirement for the local authority to publicise its local offer for care leavers;
 - The right to support and advice for all care leavers up to the age of 25 years, including those in custody.
38. These issues, along with the capacity challenges of the team in its current form, will need to be addressed in the Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2018-21 and in the review of the structure of the Leaving Care Service. This will ensure that statutory duties are carried out and that young people leaving care in Nottinghamshire have the best possible outcomes in their adult lives.

Other Options Considered

39. By doing nothing, the Council will be failing in its duty as a corporate parent. Failure to adequately support young people will incur increased cost to the welfare state and impact upon adult services and health provision as this group of young people transition into adulthood.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

40. The proposed increase in establishment is required to meet the increase in demand and to provide a service that is able to prepare young people adequately through the transition from children's to adult services.

Statutory and Policy Implications

41. 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.

Finance Implications

42. The cost of 3 FTE Grade 5 Personal Advisors for six months is £46,283. The additional cost in 2017-18 will be met by a request from contingency. The additional cost for 2018-19 will need to be taken into account in the Medium Term Financial Strategy when constructing the budget for 2018-19.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That Committee:

- 1) agrees to the proposed increase in establishment of 3 FTE temporary Personal Advisor (Grade 5) posts, initially for a period of 6-months.
- 2) supports the development of a 16+ Leaving Care Service and agrees to receive a further report on the establishment of a new service in April 2018.
- 3) considers whether there are any additional actions required in relation to the issues contained within the report.

Steve Edwards
Service Director, Youth, Families and Social Work

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Amanda Collinson
Group Manager, Fieldwork Services
T: 0115 8040792
E: amanda.collinson@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (SMG 07/12/17)

43. The Children and Young People's Committee has responsibility for ensuring that the County Council's children's services meet the needs of all children and young people, including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable. The proposals outlined in this report fall within the remit of this Committee.
44. The Committee is responsible for approval of departmental staffing structures as required. The Employment Procedure Rules provide that the report to Committee include the required advice and HR comments and that the recognised trade unions be consulted on all proposed changes to staffing structures (and any views given should be fully considered prior to a decision being made).
45. If the Committee resolves that any additional actions are required it must be satisfied that such actions are within the Committee's terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SS 05/12/17)

46. The financial implications arising from this report are contained within paragraph 42.

HR Comments (BC 4/12/17)

47. The staffing implications are contained within the body of the report. The new posts will be recruited to in line with the Council's vacancy control protocol.

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.

Increase in the establishment of Personal Advisor Posts – report to Children and Young People’s Committee on 18 September 2017

Draft Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in Nottinghamshire, 2018-21 – report to Children and Young People’s Committee on 18 December 2017

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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