

**16 May 2023****Agenda Item 10****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, HELP, PROTECTION AND CARE****CARE LEAVERS ANNUAL REPORT****Purpose of the Report**

1. The report provides an annual update to the Corporate Parenting Panel in relation to Nottinghamshire young people identified as care leavers.

**Information**

2. The Council operates a joint Looked After and Leaving Care Service overseen by one Group Manager and two Service Managers.
3. The Leaving Care Service has 4 full-time equivalent (FTE) Team Managers split into geographical areas of support identified as North (Newark & Sherwood/Bassetlaw), Central (Mansfield/Ashfield), South (Broxtowe/Gedling/Rushcliffe) and Countywide (incorporating the Transitional Personal Advisor Service, Achievement Service and 21Plus Service). Also incorporated within the Leaving Care Service is the specialist Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) Team which is overseen by one Team Manager and is multi-disciplinary made up of both social workers and personal advisors.
4. The last standard inspection of Nottinghamshire's Children's Service was in October 2019, which resulted in a Good 'overall effectiveness' judgement and a Good judgement for 'the experience and progress of children in care and care leavers'. Ofsted's [Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services \(ILACS\) framework](#) was updated in December 2022 so that from January 2023 there is a separate judgement for the 'experiences and progress of children in care' and 'the experiences and progress of care leavers'.
5. In 2018, Nottinghamshire's Leaving Care Service launched a [Local Offer for Care Leavers](#) as required under the Children and Social Work Act 2017. This co-production partnership offer involves the seven district/borough councils as well as partners within health, education, police, youth justice, probation, voluntary sectors, and regional/national business partners. Nottinghamshire's Local Offer for Care Leavers continues to be one of the national leading offers with the early introduction of Council Tax exemption for care leavers until their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, priority social housing, local connection restrictions being removed, and free access to leisure centres. In addition, the Leaving Care Service expanded its offer to care leavers around employment, education, and training by re-launching an updated Achievement Service and [Achievement Offer](#).

6. The three-year [Looked After and Leaving Care Service Partnership Strategy](#) was launched in 2022, identifying the Council's partnership working and commitment to their responsibilities as corporate parents and the corporate parenting principles.
7. As of 31 March 2023, the Leaving Care Services supports 913 former relevant care leavers and 298 looked after/relevant 16/17-year-olds. There are also 99 qualifying care leavers aged 18-20 years who are not entitled to a named personal advisor but who can access general support, advice, and guidance from the Leaving Care Service in accordance with the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

Age	Numbers of Care Leavers
16 - 17 years*	298 (of which 61 are UASC**)
18 - 20 years	524 (of which 43 are former UASC)
21 - 24 years	389 (of which 76 are former UASC)

\*Legally identified as being a looked after child but also allocated to a Leaving Care Personal Advisor

\*\* Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

8. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 also placed a requirement to extend personal advisor support to those care leavers aged 21 - 24 years old. The Council used the additional burdens grant from the Department for Education to develop its own bespoke 21Plus Service and Nottinghamshire is one of the only local authorities within England and Wales to have a dedicated team for those care leavers aged 21 plus. The Council proactively contacts young people over 12 times per year (the legal requirement is once per year), with offers around employment, education, and training, tips around cost of living, birthday cards, and [interactive newsletters](#). The Council has been approached by other local authorities in respect of the 21Plus Service and how they can replicate it within their area, as well as currently developing its own 21Plus Local Offer for Care Leavers.
9. Within the County-wide service there are 1.5 FTE Homelessness Prevention Personal Advisors funded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The aim of this role is to proactively address the higher numbers of care leavers presenting as homeless or with a risk of homelessness. The Council has identified care leaver champions within each of the district/borough councils housing and homelessness teams and regularly participates in the regional homelessness forums. Through grant funding a Care Leaver Emergency Accommodation flat has been commissioned with the Council's partners within the Nottingham Community Housing Association, which allows young people who are homeless and who have ongoing issues around maintaining tenancies to have intense wrap-around support for 12 weeks to break the cycle of homelessness before being issued with a new social housing tenancy and continuing floating support. This has prevented care leavers from being street homeless in Nottinghamshire or having to use bed and breakfast accommodation via homelessness presentations to their local council. This has been recommissioned for a further 12 months from April 2023.
10. Recommissioning of Supported Accommodation Providers within the County took place in the last 18 months by the Placements and Commissioning team. This was to help improve the quality of provision and increase the availability of suitable, supported accommodation for care leavers in Nottinghamshire. This has also linked with the Government's new Staying Closer Staying Connected agenda and will see multi-disciplinary teams/support within Supported Accommodation Providers, including dedicated mental health practitioners and substance misuse workers.

11. At the end of Quarter 3 (2022-2023 period) the Council has:

Percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation (19-21)			
Current Period	Current value	Target	Current RAG
Q3 22/23	86.6%	83%	GREEN

12. Within the last 12 months, the Council has built upon its relationships with the Youth Justice Service and Probation/Prison Services in a co-production review of Nottinghamshire Policies, Procedures and Guidance for care leavers involved within the criminal justice system. This has explored improving links within the transition from Youth Justice Service and Probation for care leavers, as well as identifying the Council’s Local Offer for Care Leavers who are in or leaving custody around resettlement in the community and reducing re-offending. A specific Local Offer for Care Leavers involved with the Criminal Justice System is being co-produced to ensure that young people are given the best opportunities to break the cycle and access positive opportunities when in or leaving custody. This builds upon the Council’s work in preventing the criminalisation of children in care and the work undertaken by the Nottinghamshire Children in Care Police Officer.
13. The Transitional Personal Advisor Service operates countywide and focuses on intense short-term transitional support to looked after 16/17-year-olds when moving from high-support residential or privately commissioned accommodation to the supported accommodation model. This is a proactive and radical approach to ensuring young people with some of the most complex needs avoid the cycle of homelessness when transitioning from looked after to being a care leaver and some increased levels of independence. This promotes better outcomes for young people after they have left care in relation to the accommodation journey, as well as acting as a significant cost reduction to the Council. This has attracted national interest from having featured as good practice within the ‘Children and Young People Now’ journal (**Appendix 1**).
14. The Council is currently participating in a study commissioned by the Integrated Care Board and being led by the University of Bristol as part of improving health outcomes for care leavers. This was originally going to take place in 2020 but was put on hold due to the Covid-19 restrictions. Two selected teams within Leaving Care (South and North) have completed six on-line training modules around general health (including mental health and emotional health and wellbeing) and how to better support care leavers around this. Working alongside health partners and the Children in Care Lead Paediatrician, the study groups have engaged with some face-to-face learning around tools in which to discuss health and avenues to access ongoing support for care leavers. In the next 9-12 months, care leavers will be asked to participate and feedback on their health to measure any increase in their health outcomes and support from their Personal Advisors around this. Once this study is completed, the whole of the Leaving Care Service will be able to access the training briefings if this has been identified as improving outcomes for care leavers.
15. The Council has continued to promote engagement and feedback from care leavers around the support and services provided. There is regular attendance at the Children in Care Council, as well as embracing new ways for young people to keep in touch and communicate with the service. This has seen the introduction of the Mind of My Own app

for care leavers, the Notts Next Steps App and other social media applications such as WhatsApp being accepted as a form of communication and keeping in touch. The Council has accessed the Holiday Activity Fund to be able to provide activities and nutrition to care leavers during school holidays by arranging activities such as go-karting, spa day, Christmas Market, and attending various pantomimes, summer concerts (Splendour festival) and ice hockey. The current plans for 'Springfest' consists of a supervised axe-throwing activity and virtual reality gameplay. There is active encouragement and participation with other Council events such as the annual Virtual School's celebration achievement event in June with dedicated Leaving Care awards being issued. The Council continues to co-fund alongside health the You Know Your Mind fund to facilitate a different conversation with care leavers about mental health and emotional health and wellbeing. This continues to have a practical and immediate impact on young people in reducing isolation, improving stability in accommodation and support, as well as enabling young people to self-identify what helps them feel better when it comes to their own wellbeing.

16. Since the re-launch of the Council's Achievement Service, there has been an increase in opportunities for young people both within education and in the world of work. Over 50 young people have applied and engaged with Higher Education since September 2022 and young people's successes are actively marked and celebrated.
17. At the end of Quarter 3 (2022-2023 period) the Council has:

Percentage of care leavers in education, employment or training (19-21)			
Current Period	Current value	Target	Current RAG
Q3 22/23	57.3%	49%	GREEN

18. Positive stories about care leavers (especially around employment, education and training) are regularly shared with partners within the Children Looked After and Leaving Care Strategic Partnership Board. There is a dedicated Business Engagement Achievement Adviser whose aim is to close the gap between young people and opportunities within the world of work. By co-producing Employability Briefings with regional and national business, such as Amazon, John Lewis, Boots, Keepmoat Homes, Center Parcs, East Midlands Airport, Nottinghamshire Police (**Appendix 2**), Nottingham Forest Football Club (**Appendix 3**), Toyota, and Sainsburys, employment and career opportunities to young people who previously were not able to visualise these have been demonstrated. This has also led to young people obtaining work experience and employment with these organisations as a result. The Council has continued to promote and support care leaver apprenticeships within the Council and within other organisations. The Council financially supports young people in apprenticeships by committing to topping up their apprenticeship salary to the national minimum wage for 21 years olds (irrespective of whether they are a younger care leaver). The Council's Care2Work programme has also been recommissioned from grant funding, encouraging those young people who are not in employment, education, and training to attend briefings about entering the world or work, careers advice and work experience opportunities.
19. The demands from the mandated National Transfer Scheme via the Home Office has seen a vast increase in the numbers of looked after children who identify as being unaccompanied asylum seekers. As such, this has caused an increase in pressure on the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children Team launched in January 2022 and the

numbers of former Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children care leavers. The Council has responded accordingly to these pressures by working with partners within Nottinghamshire and the East Midlands region to see where shared response, shared learning and making better use of alternatively qualified professionals. This has seen the team increase the number of Personal Advisors from 3.5 FTE to 6.5 FTE within the next few months, as well as identifying a specialist Achievement Adviser to ensure that employment, education, and training opportunities are available to these looked after children and care leavers. This expansion has been funded via the Home Office grant at no cost to the Council. There has been a recent meeting with Ofsted regarding the Council's Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children Team at which there was positive feedback in relation to this with Ofsted identifying that they *'really enjoyed'* their visit and had an *'interesting and extremely useful discussion'* with the UASC team.

20. The Council is proactive in recognising positives, being strengths-based, and celebrating the success of children and young people. Some examples of positive stories shared recently are:

A young person messaged their Personal Advisor to say *"thank you, you have been a massive help to me, so I just wanted to say thank you"*

A young person successfully secured full time employment at a local prison after getting support from their Personal Advisor and Achievement Adviser. The support was around the application, interview skills and even going out shopping with them to purchase their interview suit.

### **Future Service Developments**

21. The Council is currently reflecting on its services against the new Ofsted Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework to identify what the Council is proud of, how it can evidence its activities and to assess whether the services that are provided to young people are in line with the revised Ofsted expectation, which started with a Leaving Care Service Team reflection event in March 2023.
22. The Council has received a funding commitment from health partners to continue with the You Know Your Mind fund, as well as commission a mental health practitioner for Care Leavers within Nottinghamshire. It is expected that this service to be operational within the next 3-6 months.
23. The Local Offer for Care Leavers is being reviewed with consultation from young people in relation to what they think has the most value and impact on them. There will also be some more specific Local Offers targeted towards Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children, 21Plus, Care Leavers in/leaving custody, care leavers who are parents and the Achievement Offer to ensure that the Council is offering the best support to young people and meeting the requirements within the new ILACS framework.
24. The Council is waiting on the outcome of a funding request in relation to Staying Closer Staying Connected and if successful this will build upon plans around multi-disciplinary teams/support within Supported Accommodation Provision, including dedicated mental health practitioners and substance misuse workers to help offer immediate and bespoke support to care leavers experiencing their transition to adulthood and independence.

25. Better links have been made with Adult Social Care and the transition experience for care leavers from Children's Social Care to Adult Social Care is currently being explored as well as where the Council can close the gap for care leavers who need additional intense support but do not appear to meet the threshold for Adult Social Care interventions.

### **Other Options Considered**

26. The Council has a statutory duty within the Children Act 1989, Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and Children and Social Work Act 2017 to provide the services and support to care leavers until their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday and to produce an associated annual report.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

27. The Council has a responsibility to provide support, advice and guidance to care experienced young people in Nottinghamshire under current legislation as well as recognising corporate parenting responsibilities to children and young people in achieving better outcomes and supporting their aspirations.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

28. 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**

29. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That Corporate Parenting Panel considers the annual report on Leaving Care and advises of any further assurance or activities required.

**Amanda Collinson**  
**Service Director, Help, Protection and Care**

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### **Constitutional Comments (GMG 12/04/23)**

30. This report falls within the remit of the Corporate Parenting Panel under Section 7, Part 2, paragraph 36 of the Council's Constitution (see p.123).

### **Financial Comments (VC 02/05/23)**

31. There are no additional financial implications arising as a result of 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.

None.

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

All.

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