

19 March 2018

Agenda Item: 7

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND SOCIAL WORK

PROPOSAL TO RECONFIGURE LEAVING CARE SERVICE

Purpose of the Report

1. To request approval for the reconfiguration of the Leaving Care Service and the Looked After Children Service to become one co-located service to support care leavers from 16 years of age under co-working arrangements and, in line with recent legislation, for support to continue until age 25 years where requested by young people.
2. To request approval for an increase in the Leaving Care Service establishment by 1 full-time equivalent (FTE) Team Manager (Band D) and 4.5 FTE Personal Advisers (Grade 5) on a permanent basis.

Information

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. Currently, young people may receive support from the Leaving Care Service from the age of 18 to 21 years. Where the young person remains in education or requires help related to training or employment, support from the Leaving Care Service extends up to age 25. However, recent changes in legislation require support to continue until age 25 regardless of a care leaver's circumstances, as detailed below.¹
5. The current establishment of the service is:
 - 13 FTE Personal Advisers (PAs)
 - 3 FTE temporary Personal Advisers, approved until June 2018
 - 3 FTE Transitional Personal Advisers (TPAs), approved until September 2018
 - 2 FTE Achievement Advisers, who provide specialist advice regarding education, employment and training
 - 1.6 FTE Team Managers
 - 0.5 FTE Service Manager.

¹ Children and Social Work Act 2017

6. The service is split into two teams, Leaving Care North (based at Meadow House) and Leaving Care South (based at Sir John Robinson Way). Apart from the Team Managers and Service Manager, practitioners are not social work qualified.
7. As at 5 February 2018 the service supports 322 young people.
8. 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 61% from 2009 to 2017, compared with a 19% 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
 - following the Children and Social Work Act 2017, local authorities will be required to appoint a Personal Adviser for care leavers who request one up until the age of 25, regardless of whether the young person intends to pursue education or training. This also entails a duty to carry out an assessment of the young person's needs and to provide the necessary advice and support, including a pathway plan if requested. This provision is due to come into force on 1 April 2018 and the service will be writing to all care leavers previously ineligible for support to notify them of this change
 - 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.
9. 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. 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.
10. This is a gap in provision highlighted by the growing number of young people who are displaying significant emotional and mental health problems - children in care across the UK are four times more likely than their peers to have a mental health difficulty - which the Personal Advisers have to support. This group of young people, who are growing in number, have the greatest levels of need and complexity of all children and young people. They have persistently experienced a substantial loss of mental health and wellbeing support at this critical point in their young lives.
11. Of the 322 young people working with a Personal Adviser, 170 or 52.8% 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. This presents a significant additional burden to the welfare state which is estimated to be approximately £56,000 in public finance costs over the working lifetime of the young person.²

12. Young people in care have often had difficult lives and have to start living independently much earlier than most of their peers. In 2013, 50% of young people in the UK were still living with their parents at the age of 22; however, young people must leave care by their 18th birthday and some move straight into independent living. Therefore, care leavers face the added challenge of coping with the demands of independent living at a young age, which include managing finances and maintaining a home, often without support from families. Without effective housing support in place care leavers face significant challenges such that in 2010, 25% of those who were homeless in the UK had been in care at some point in their lives.
13. These pressures have impacted upon both the number of young people entitled to support from the Leaving Care Service and the challenge in providing support which meets their complex needs. In order to meet increasing demand, caseloads of Personal Advisers have increased, which means the support young people are receiving is less focussed and task oriented.
14. The current transfer point (at 18 years) between the Looked After Children Service and the Leaving Care Service is not appropriate and represents too big a step for many young people. Efforts by managers and staff to respond to needs are currently welcomed by young people but some may feel abandoned having reached a 'cliff edge' at the point they leave care. This is due to the nature of the changing relationship from statutory social work support to Leaving Care Personal Advisor support, alongside the loss of the Independent Reviewing Service.
15. Transfer arrangements do not currently reflect the reality that the transition from a Social Worker to a Personal Adviser takes time in order to develop the necessary knowledge and trust of a positive relationship between the young person and support services. Failure to provide an adequate foundation for 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.
16. On 18 December 2017, Children and Young People's Committee approved an additional 3 FTE Personal Adviser posts on a temporary basis until June 2018 in order to address increasing demands. Despite the considerable efforts and sustained commitment of practitioners, services remain demand or crisis led. 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. A reconfigured service to address these concerns and realign provision to ensure legal compliance will require further changes to those already agreed.
17. Following the Ofsted focused visit on the experiences and progress of care leavers in Nottinghamshire in January 2018, inspectors highlighted a number of strengths across Nottinghamshire's services for care leavers, as well as a number of areas for improvement. Included in those areas highlighted for improvement were high caseloads

² Department of Education, National Audit Office Care leavers' transition to adulthood, July 2015

in the service causing frequent crisis rather than planned provision and transition and planning for adulthood and independence starting too late.

Proposed Establishment

18. It is therefore proposed that the Leaving Care Service and the Looked After Children Service are merged into one co-located service, split into two teams: LAC & Leaving Care North and LAC & Leaving Care South. Under this proposed structure, young people will be allocated a Personal Adviser from Leaving Care services from the age of 16 and will continue to receive support until the age of 25 if requested, regardless of whether the young person intends to pursue education or training.
19. The reconfigured service will contain distinct line management and accountability structures within each team – i.e. a Leaving Care PA is line managed and accountable to a Leaving Care Team Manager – but co-location and co-working will ensure more effective and streamlined support for young people as they transition to adulthood. Although managers would continue to work within their distinct areas, they would be expected to cover both LAC and Leaving Care work where necessary. This will enable both services to have a better understanding of the needs of the young people and take collective ownership for their outcomes from the age of 16.
20. Clear parameters with distinct roles and responsibilities will be agreed to define the practice of co-working between LAC Social Workers and Leaving Care Personal Advisers. These parameters will take into account the fact that each young person's plans are bespoke to their needs and will therefore require tailored ways of working.
21. As a result of the proposed reconfigured service and the demand pressures outlined in **paragraph 8**, it is forecasted that total caseloads will increase by 257, an 80% increase on current caseload. This increase is likely to be a worst case scenario as accurate predictions cannot be made for previously ineligible care leavers returning for support beyond age 21. It is also likely to present itself over the next four years as care leavers currently allocated a Personal Adviser experience continuing support until age 25.
22. The current average caseload of PAs stands at 20. In the worst case scenario following the forecasted demand and without an increase in the current establishment this will rise to 36. In order to create the necessary capacity to manage the increased demand in the immediate term:
 - an additional 1 FTE Leaving Care Team Manager post will be created on a permanent basis
 - an additional 4.5 FTE Personal Adviser posts will be created on a permanent basis
 - co-working arrangements will be agreed between LAC Social Workers and Leaving Care Personal Advisers for care leavers aged 16 and 17
 - demand and capacity of the service will be reviewed on a yearly basis until March 2022 as care leavers experience continuing support until age 25.
23. Subsequent to the proposed increase in establishment and ending of the 3 FTE Personal Adviser posts agreed on a temporary basis until June 2018, the service will comprise 17.5 FTE Personal Advisers.

Other Options Considered

24. Without a reconfigured service and the necessary increase in capacity, 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

25. The proposed reconfigured service will better prepare care leavers for their transition into adulthood by beginning support at age 16, consequently fulfilling the council's role as a corporate parent to achieve the ambitions for young people detailed in the new Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children & Care Leavers in Nottinghamshire 2018-21. Continuing leaving care support at 21 years of age until 25 years of age will make the service legally compliant.

Statutory and Policy Implications

26. 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

27. The cost of 1 FTE Team Manager (Band D) post is £53,845 and the cost of 4.5 FTE Personal Adviser (Grade 5) posts is £142,162. These together with the associated staff running costs for travel, mobile phones etc. will be met from the 2018-19 Leaving Care budget.

Human Resource Implications

28. The new posts will be recruited to in accordance with the Council's vacancy control protocol. Existing staff and recognised trade unions have been consulted on the changes arising from this report.

Implications for Service Users

29. The Personal Adviser role fulfils the statutory duty to support care leavers in their preparation for adulthood by developing independence on areas such as accommodation, personal finance, and personal health.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That Committee:

- 1) approves the proposed reconfigured Looked After Children and Leaving Care Service which supports care leavers under co-working arrangements from the age of 16 and continues support until age 25 where requested by young people.
- 2) approves the proposed increase in establishment in the Leaving Care Service by 1 FTE Team Manager (Band D) post and 4.5 FTE Personal Adviser (Grade 5) posts on a permanent basis.

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 (LM 21/02/18)

30. The Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the contents of the report.

Financial Comments (SAS 01/03/18)

31. The financial implications of the report are contained within paragraph 27 above.

HR Comments (BC 28/02/18)

32. The staffing implications are contained within the body of the 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.

Leaving Care service update and proposal to increase the staffing establishment – report to Children and Young People's Committee 18 December 2017

Increase in the establishment of Personal Advisor posts – report to Children and Young People's Committee 18 September 2017

Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children & Care Leavers in Nottinghamshire 2018-21

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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