



REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

LEAVING CARE SERVICE UPDATE

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide the Committee with an update on the Leaving Care Service. The service is part of the Throughcare Service and provides advice, support and guidance to young people who have left the care of the Local Authority and are over the age of 18 years.

Information and Advice

2. Young people receive services from the Leaving Care Team from the age of 18 to 21 years. Should young people remain in higher education or wish to return to education, they are entitled to services up until 25 years. Statutory duties regarding this group of young people are contained in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and service delivery is subject to guidance and regulations from the Department for Education which were last revised in October 2014.
3. There has been no change to the team structure or specification since the previous report to this Committee on 14 September 2015. September 2015 to March 2016 was a difficult period with four posts unfilled due to sickness and vacancies. In order to support the service the team manager's hours were increased to full time on a temporary basis and an agency worker was employed. One team manager has gone on secondment to the placements team and two new personal advisers have now been appointed.
4. Since the previous report the number of young people open to the service has remained stable at 344. The Improvement Plan produced in Autumn 2015 predicted that numbers would begin to fall but this has not proved to be the case. A new demand modelling report has been developed to support predicting demand.
5. The team continues to work hard to support young people into education, training and employment. Of the young people aged 18 years and above who are engaged with the service, 62% are involved in some form of education, training or employment activity. This can range from voluntary work to undertaking a degree. Two young people are currently applying for Masters degree courses in teaching and international development. Of those who are not engaged, some are unable to work or attend college due to illness or parenthood, but 24% are not engaged due to other reasons. These reasons largely relate to entrenched difficulties such as social, emotional and behavioural problems which have led to poor academic outcomes. Leaving care support for these young people is often focused on maintaining accommodation and providing practical support

with daily living and independence skills. For these young people, being able to engage in any form of education, training or employment is a long term goal.

6. Between October and December 2015 the service provided a 100 day work experience opportunity for one of Nottinghamshire's care leavers in partnership with NCC Skills for Employment. This was a valuable opportunity for the young woman involved and she was able to learn day to day office procedures, develop skills such as timekeeping, communication skills and gain an understanding of issues such as confidentiality, professional boundaries and behaviour in the workplace. She worked alongside personal advisers and contributed to work on exit interviews. The team is now in the process of organising another work experience placement.
7. The availability and affordability of suitable accommodation continues to be a challenge for young people leaving care. The Family Service oversees the allocation of supported accommodation placements within the current funded portfolio. The Supported Accommodation Panel meets weekly to ensure that young people aged 16 to 21 years in priority need are able to access the placements available. The Leaving Care team has a representative manager at each meeting to promote the needs of care leavers. This new model is proving to be very successful in maintaining some of the most challenging young people in supported accommodation. As well as allocation of accommodation on a needs led point system, the meetings are an opportunity for problem solving of the most complex young people with accommodation providers, commissioners and stakeholders working together to prevent homelessness and to move young people on in a positive way following a period of support to develop life skills.
8. The Staying Put policy, which allows young people to remain with foster carers from the age of 18 up to 21 years, continues to be very successful. Placement numbers have increased from 19 to 32 over the last year. A snapshot figure for April 2016 showed 33 young people in some form of Staying Put arrangement with a further three planned. Nottinghamshire's grant allocation has risen for the year 2016/17 from £134,115 to £201,173. The total spend for 2015/16 was £255,624 which exceeds the grant allocation but is largely contained within the overall Leaving Care Service budget.
9. Pathway Plans are completed by social workers in the Looked After Children Team for young people in care from the age of 16 years and continue to be reviewed by Personal Advisers from the Leaving Care Team post 18. The plans are reviewed at least every six months and the quality and timeliness of pathway planning is improving. An internal team audit completed at the end of March 2016 identified that 86% of plans were completed within timescales. The Quality Management Framework audit report (October – December 2015) for Children's Social Care fieldwork teams reported that four out of the seven cases graded as good or outstanding were in the Leaving Care team. A themed Pathway Plan audit was undertaken by the Quality and Improvement team and Independent Reviewing Officers between October and December 2015 with 83% of those cases audited in Leaving Care graded at good or outstanding.
10. There continues to be a challenge in the provision of accessible emotional wellbeing and mental health services for care leavers between the ages of 18 and 21 years. If there is a formal mental health diagnosis then access to adult services is well planned and timely, however, a proportion of Nottinghamshire's care leavers have poor mental health (sometimes resulting in self harm) but no diagnosis. Progress has been made and the

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) LAC team now offer consultation to the Leaving Care Service. Negotiations are currently taking place with Adult Services and Health commissioners to identify Nottinghamshire care leavers as a priority group for assessment and the Future in Mind contract for 2016/17 has also identified work with care leavers as a priority.

Other Options Considered

11. This report is for noting only.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

12. This report is for noting only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working 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 the update on the Leaving Care Service be noted.

Steve Edwards
Service Director, Children's Social Care

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Michelle Lee
Children's Services Manager, Leaving Care
T: 01623 433433
E: michelle.lee@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments

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

Financial Comments (SS 19/05/16)

15. The financial implications of the report are contained within paragraph 8 above.

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 – report to Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee on 14 September 2015

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0824