

Purpose

1. To supply Members of the Care to Independence review with information concerning a range of issues that impact on the successful transition of young people leaving the care system to live independently.

Information

2. On 26 April 2010 the Health and Wellbeing Standing Committee agreed to include in the scrutiny work programme a review of the transition services available for young people leaving care.
3. The review will examine current processes for the transition from care to independence for young people; this will include the planning process for the transition and the support available to live independently. Members will consider a number of issues that are important for young people when making this move including financial support, education, training and employment, health and accommodation.
4. Every looked after child has a formal review at intervals as specified in national guidance. These reviews are chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer who is not involved in the operational management of the case, to ensure that an independent review of the child/young person's care plan takes place. The reviews continue until the young person leaves care. Mike Law, Independent Reviewing Officer, and Pam Rosseter, Group Manager, Quality Assurance and Safeguarding, Children, Families and Cultural Services, will attend the meeting to discuss with Members this process and how these young people are assisted and safeguarded throughout the transition.

5. Specialist support services for children looked after are provided by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). CAMHS aims to improve the mental health and well being for all children and young people aged 0 – 18 and has an involvement in the pathway planning process for young people leaving care. The importance of mental health support for young people at this time is essential as these young people have to deal with trauma related to their earlier life in addition to the prospect of living alone at a young age and this needs careful preparation and appropriate support. Yvonne Cottingham, Team Manager Co-ordinator, County CAMHS, Children Looked After and Adoption Team, Children, Families and Cultural Services will attend the meeting to discuss how these young people are assisted at this time.
6. The local authority has a duty for arranging and funding accommodation for relevant 16/17 year old care leavers. This usually takes place in some form of supported accommodation. Care leavers over the age of 18 have a right to accommodation provided by the district housing authority. In addition there is a supported lodgings scheme which allows young people when they reach 18 to remain with their foster carers. The percentage of care leavers at age 19 in suitable accommodation has improved by 10% since 2007 and is now above the national average at 95%.
7. Some of these young people live in accommodation provided by housing providers who hold contracts with the County Council provided by the Supporting People funding. This budget is currently facing acute financial pressure and is currently under consultation as to the level of future funding available. Judi Juno, Commissioning Officer Supporting People, Adult Social Care and Health will be attending the meeting to inform Members how the Supporting People budget commissions accommodation for care leavers, and the possible impact of potential funding cuts.
8. Information concerning the provision of appropriate accommodation placements for young people in care, and how the transfer of this responsibility to the Aftercare team operates, will be available at the meeting

9. Michelle Lee, Aftercare Service Manager, Children, Families and Cultural Services, will also attend the meeting to answer Member's questions.
10. Members are asked to consider the future work programme and identify any other information they would like to receive before the conclusion of this review.

Recommendations

11. It is recommended Members of the review:
 - i. consider and ask questions about the information provided and discuss any issues arising
 - ii. consider issues which may require additional information and agree any areas around the future work programme.

Councillor Fiona Asbury

Vice Chair, Health and Wellbeing Standing Committee.

Background papers:

Nil