

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on Wednesday, 18 January 2017

Electoral Division affected: (All Divisions);
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Support to Care Leavers (Appendix A refers)

Contact for further information:

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Executive Summary

This report outlines what social, emotional and practical support is provided to care leavers and what action has been taken following the Ofsted inspection in September/October 2015 which found services to care leavers to be inadequate. It outlines the change in service delivery with the development of a discrete service/teams for care leavers and provides an outline of ongoing work to continue to improve services to care leavers. The report also provides information on improved performance against national performance indicators and again outlines plans in place for continued improvement and the role of the local authority as corporate parents and how it is exercising this function.

Recommendation

The committee is asked to note the actions taken since the Ofsted inspection and the improvements made. It is furthermore asked to agree its commitment to the care leavers pledge and their role as corporate parents in promoting the welfare of care leavers

Background and Advice

It was acknowledged prior to the Ofsted inspection by Children's Social Care Senior Management Team that services to Care Leavers needed improving. As a result it engaged in phase 2 of the New Belongings Programme in March 2015, with this concluding in March 2016.

The New Belongings programme set out 5 core components to achieve its aims in improving services and outcomes to care leavers. These being:

1. **Survey local care leavers to understand priorities of improvement** – 101 care leavers in Lancashire completed the questionnaire, the returns highlighted a number of improvements needed such as better preparation for leaving care, information on Rights and Entitlements, better access to their leaving care workers Personal Advisers (PA's) and support.

We have responded to the above survey and Ofsted findings by

- Developing a county resource for 'Independent Living', which is being piloted over the next 3 months and is to be launched in April 2017. Care leavers have been consulted throughout and are members of the working group that is developing this resource.
 - Rights and Entitlements guide was provided to all care leavers following the inspection. However, it was identified that this needed to be updated and to look at better ways on ensuring this information gets to care leavers which is easy to access. Care leavers have been consulted throughout and have taken part in the development of the new guide, which is being launched in March 2017. The draft was shared at a recent Corporate Parenting Board Meeting to again get their initial feedback which was positive. An Elected Member from the Corporate Parenting Board was involved in the development day with care leavers looking at how easy it was to access relevant information. This has led to the proposed website which is being developed which will hold all the necessary information to inform care leavers.
 - We have created three Professional Personal Adviser (PPA) teams, which is a discrete service for care leavers. Previously Personal Advisers held generic caseloads which included children in need and child protection cases as well as care leavers. All workers have attended training specifically on Care Leaver legislation, policy and procedures. Care Leavers have also facilitated in delivering this training. We are exploring the possibility of co-location with Housing colleagues to further offer a more effective and co-ordinated service.
 - We are developing a care leaver mentoring scheme. There are two schemes being progressed. One is an LCC staff scheme and the other is a collaboration with UCLAN students which will provide care leavers with better access to support.
2. **Conduct a review of the role of the Personal Advisers** - As outlined above three PPA teams have been created, North, Central and East. All workers including social workers in the PPA teams and Social workers in the Children in Our Care (CIOC) teams have attended care leaver training focusing on policy, procedure and Rights and Entitlements. As outlined care leavers have also facilitated in delivering this training. This has provided care leavers with better support.
 3. **Establish a forum of care leavers to help the authority in shaping decisions about changes to services** - Lancashire now have a care leaver forum which meets on a monthly bases, over the last 12 months the forum have been consulted and help develop the Rights and Entitlements Guide, Living Independently Guide and Lancashire's Care Leaver Strategy. We also have two Lancashire care leaver representatives for the Young People's Benchmarking Forum, this is a national organisation and partners the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum.-see below for more details on the NLCBF and its aim.
 4. **Prepare and plan for improvement based on understanding of local needs gained from the three previous steps** -Throughout the New Belongings process and the improvement plan it was obvious that Lancashire due to its size has different challenges and different resources from one district to another. Therefore the improvement plan had to set a series of

pilots in localities which still continue within Lancashire's care leaver plan, examples of this are:

- Lancaster/Morecambe -Partnership work with the local council run leisure services, care leavers have free access to the leisure centre, thus improving on physical and mental health, this work is now continuing county wide.
 - Preston, Wyre and Fylde - Care leaver Mentoring Scheme, LCC staff and UCLAN students will mentor a care leaver, improving support networks, this will continue county wide over the next 12 months if successful.
5. **Obtain the support of senior leadership** - Care leavers is a priority for the Cabinet, the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) and Local Authority Senior Management Team. Care leavers also attend the CPB and express their views and challenge practice. Children's Social care Senior managers have and continue to attend the care leaver forum so lines of communication are open and views listened to which enable us to see 'how we're doing'.

From March 2017 a further survey will be completed with care leavers to get their views on how they feel the new PPA service is going, it is envisaged that we will use the New Belongings survey again as we will get a good measure of any areas that still require improvement as well as what's going well. In the meantime care leavers have access to the care leaver forum, also care leavers at 21 complete an exit evaluation and are able to express their views on that.

National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum (NLCBF) - Lancashire are now members of NLCBF, it is a network promoting the development of quality leaving care services in member local authorities and partner organisations through a process of benchmarking and shared learning, with an ultimate aim of achieving the best outcomes for care leavers. The Young People's Benchmarking forum sits alongside NLCBF, Lancashire have two care leaver representatives that attend meetings with other professionals and care leavers from other local authorities across the country, the main aim is to share ideas and good practise so this can influence change in their local authorities. In December our two representatives attended an event in London and discussed ongoing projects and work in Lancashire with 32 local authorities.

Education, Employment and Training (EET)

In addition to the above Lancashire County Council has made a commitment to offer all care leavers not in education employment or training (NEET) the opportunity of a work placement or apprenticeship. The latest November report for year 12 children looked after (Care Leavers 2016) from the Virtual Scholl Headteacher shows the following performance:

November Data: total 146 young people

College/ FE	School/6 th form	Apprent iceship	Training Provider	Employ ment- no training	Work Placement	NEET	Not availabl e for EET
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97 (66.5%)	16 (10.9%)	5 (3.45%)	5 (3.45%)	2 (1.38%)	2 (1.38%)	16 (10.9%)	3 (2.04%)
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NEET:

2 actively working with Employment Support Team

2 referred to Employment Support team

12 working with WPEH case workers to identify options- encourage to consider working with EST when appropriate.

Not Available for EET: 3

Safeguarding placement

Custodial

Specialist Therapeutic Setting

Ongoing tracking and support:

Teams involved: WPEH. CSC/Care Leavers- especially Personal Advisor/Virtual School/Employment Support Team

- Regular reports run to identify NEET and sent to the named WPEH Case Worker, Social Worker, PPA and Virtual School to be followed up.
- Termly PEP reviews (16-18).
- Attendance at the PA locality meetings of WPEH/Virtual School team member, to inform of the offer, discuss individual cases and build effective cross service working.
- Next Tracking report: January 2017.

Update on Employment Support Team support to CLA/Care Leavers.

Employment and Support Team have currently 124 active Children Looked After/Leaving care young people being supported. 42 of these are currently 'on hold' but this is due to a number of issues such as housing, illness, pregnancy, police involvement and contact is maintained to enable more active support and actions to be delivered when the young person is ready and able to progress.

For some of our young people with significant issues it can take 6- 12 months of support to enable them to access a programme successfully and move forwards on their employment journey.

Post 16 Young people who have started a placement between 1/4/16 – 3/11/16

32 in total

16 – WorkStart (18-24 year olds)

16 – Future Horizons (16-18 year olds)

NB – young people may have had more than one placement opportunity however we only record one placement for general statistical purposes currently.

Young people who have progressed on to paid employment following a placement between 1/4/16 – 3/11/16

14 in total

3 – employed (private sector)

7 – apprenticeships (private sector)

3 – employed (public sector)

1 – apprenticeship (schools workforce)

Year 11 pupils :

- All year 11 pupils informed of CEIAG/EST offer by letter.
- Jointly the Employment and Support Team and WPEHS have established and hosting of 3 x Year 11 events which are being delivered across the County, during November,
- 20 Year 11 pupils have already expressed interest in support from the Employment and Support Team and 7 have begun programmes.

We also provide a wider range of performance information to the Improvement Board in relation to whole cohort of care leavers. Below outlines the improvement in three key areas: keeping in touch, EET and Suitable accommodation:

	2015/15			
	Stat Neighbours	Lancashire	North West	England
In Touch		67.52%		85.62%
EET	49.90%	36.49%	46.97%	47.89%
Suitable Accom	83.90%	67.13%	82.42%	80.74%

	2015/16			
	Stat Neighbours	Lancashire	North West	England
In Touch	89.00%	86.75%	90.64%	87.32%
EET	49.80%	40.96%	47.95%	49.28%
Suitable Accom	85.90%	77.11%	85.55%	82.53%

	December 2016			
	Stat Neighbours	Lancashire	North West	England
In Touch		94.00%		
EET		50.70%		
Suitable Accom		89.20%		

In respect to corporate parenting the Government published its strategy to support care leavers – Keep on Caring – Supporting Young People from Care to Independence in July 2016 (Appendix 1). This outlines a range of initiative, including clear expectations for local authorities and wider government departments.

In response to this Lancashire has reviewed its Staying Put allowance and increased this to £222 which is higher than most local authorities in the region. It is hoped that this will encourage more young people to remain living with their foster carer rather than leave home at 18 which is an objective within the Government strategy.

Lancashire has also signed up to the Children's Society care leaver pledge <http://bit.ly/24VuOWt> and the CPB has been influential in championing the support for care leavers and in seeking support from District Councils to exempt care leavers

from Council Tax payments until they are 25. In line with this the CPB has challenged District Councils to look at its housing policies and to give prioritisation to care leavers and their needs. The local authority also has a Supported Accommodation and Learning Offer (SALO) Board which is again working with housing providers to look at more suitable accommodation for young people who are homeless and care leavers.

We have a robust action plan to address all the above areas which is continually monitored by Senior Managers. In addition the Improvement Board and Ofsted via their inspection monitoring visits will monitor the progress being made and the improved outcomes for care leavers.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

If we do not

Risk management

The risk of not improving services to care leavers is that Ofsted will continue to judge our services as inadequate and the DfE will consider what further action is necessary to make the changes required to improve the services. More importantly care leavers will not be receiving the support they require and will therefore be left vulnerable and at risk and will not make the progress and outcomes they are entitled to.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate