

Children Services Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on Wednesday 18 October 2017

Electoral Division affected: All

Tracking of Care Leavers: Overview of New Process

Contact for further information:

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Executive Summary

As corporate parents it is the Local Authority responsibility to support our children looked after (CLA) and Care Leavers and enable them to become independent and successful adults. A key element of this is access to education and training that leads to positive outcomes. A review of the current offer of support is in process to develop more effective systems and practices.

Recommendation

The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee are recommended to:

- 1) Note and comment on the report
- 2) Discuss and identify potential opportunities to increase supported employment and training for CLA/Care Leavers across Lancashire

Background and Advice

Each year approximately 160 looked after children complete their statutory school education and leave school. They are also beginning their journey to leaving care with the aim of living independent lives. Many of these young people have come into care quite late in their school life, after experiencing significant issues and trauma. Some may have been in care for longer periods but have experienced a number of home placements, and subsequently, school moves. As a result a significant proportion will achieve well below the national average expected attainment – this is reflected in the national data.

In addition life experiences can also impact on their self-worth, confidence and communication skills. All these factors can affect their ability to access education and training and achieve positive outcomes.

In Lancashire we have been able to support the majority of Year 12 CLA/Care Leavers into some form of positive education or training in the September following leaving school. This has been through initiatives such as the Career Information Advice and Guidance service commissioned by School Forum and delivered by Well Being and Early Help services and the work of the Employment Support Team, as well as the support of each Care Leavers Social Workers and more recently Personal Advisors. However there remains a number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) even at this early stage and the number of care leavers who then move into being NEET increases in each year group - with those in the post 18 age group being of particular concern.

The development of a clear 'learning offer' for CLA/Care Leavers is a priority for the Local Authority and the key services have been working together to develop a more defined system of support with clear processes and practices.

It is recognised that the key elements to address this are: earlier career advice and guidance, more effective planning, better tracking of progress to identify problems early and plan for next steps, clear pathways for support, increased opportunities for supported work placements. Developments to date:

- Currently all Year 12 and 13 Care Leavers are tracked each month in relation to education, employment or training (EET). This identifies any who remain or have become NEET and what support is being provided and actions identified. This has provided a more effective and accurate sharing of information on individuals in 'real time'.
- All Year 12 and 13 CLA/Care Leavers now have a Personal Education Plan updated 3 times a year. These are read and quality assured by a member of the Virtual School Team to ensure plans are in place and to identify any support required.
- Employment Support Team now provide support exclusively for CLA/ Care Leavers. The team is working more closely with other services and the proposal is to merge this function into the Virtual School to enable a new model of enhanced support to be put in place.
- The Local Authority has agreed a new post in the Virtual School to lead on Care Leavers.
- The Local Authority is on the Strategic Board of Future U - which commissions activities and support for vulnerable groups of young people, such as Care Leavers, to support more to enter higher education.
- A multi-service panel will meet in each area - North, South, East - to consider local trends, issues and needs as well as addressing individual cases as needed.

The continued development of the 'learning offer' is now being managed and monitored by the Permanence and Corporate Parenting Board, chaired by the Director of Children's Services.

Consultations

Well Being Early Help, Children's Social Care and Employment Support Team colleagues.

Implications

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

Failure to increase the number of Care Leavers who progress and sustain positive education, training and employment will lead to a continuing high number who remain NEET. This impacts on health and well-being as well as economically, possibly for the long term and the subsequent impact on their families and the wider communities.

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		
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