

Corporate Parenting Board

Meeting to be held on 10 September 2020

Report of the Head of Vulnerable and Challenging Groups

Electoral Division affected: (All divisions)

Lancashire Young People Education, Employment and Training (EET)/Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET): Virtual School and Children in our Care (CIOC) and Leaving Care Service

(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:

Audrey Swann, Tel: 01772 531857, Headteacher of Vulnerable and Challenging Groups, Lancashire County Council, Email: audrey.swann@lancashire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

This is a background report, the presentation that will be presented alongside this report and subsequent action plan will outline the practical steps required. The Corporate Parenting Board and partners alongside the County Council need to accept this is a priority and support an increase in Education, Employment and Training (EET) for Children in our Care and Care Leavers by providing opportunities and resources to allow this to happen.

Recommendation

The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to support this report.

Background and Advice

The Virtual School has a statutory duty to support and champion those children and young people in care to their local authority and care leavers. One of the key duties of the Virtual School is to ensure that across the Local Authority 'Top priority is given to creating a culture of high educational aspirations and that the authority strives for accelerated progress and age-related attainment or better for looked-after children'.

The duty to promote the educational achievement of a looked-after child extends to looked-after young people aged 16 or 17 preparing to leave care. It is expected that although clearly focused on children aged between pre-school and 18, Virtual School Headteachers should work with care leaving teams to ensure the education of those transitioning from care is supported at both a strategic and individual level. For those between 16-18 years, the Virtual School Headteacher should liaise with the young person's Personal Adviser during the initial transition to leaving care services

to ensure the adviser understands the young person’s educational goals and support needs.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 stipulated that advice and support needed to be available for all eligible care leavers until the age of 25. This included the provision of a Personal Advisor for each young person to assist with preparation for adulthood and independent living. This included support when required in relation to education and employment. The Local Authority must also provide a published care leaver offer to support and sign post young people to services and advice and guidance available to them.

It is good practice and expected by Ofsted, for the Virtual School to work closely with leaving care services and contribute to providing advice, guidance and support in relation to education, training and employment to care leavers beyond the age of 17 and in Lancashire we extend our support when required to care leavers up to the age of 25.

Care Leaver Education, Employment and Training (EET) data:

Education, Employment and Training (EET) data is extracted from Liquidlogic Children's Social Care System (LCS) based on the keep in touch (KIT) codes inputted by Personal Advisors/Care leaver support workers. Data reflects those care leavers in education, employment and training as recorded on Liquidlogic Children's Social Care System (LCS).

Lancashire data:

Age Group	FEB 18	JUNE 18	OCT 18	FEB 19	JUNE 19	OCT 19	FEB 20	JUNE 20
17-18	54.7	59.4	56.7	54.6	51.1	47.7	52.4	46.7
19-21	45.6	47.7	47.6	44.6	43	43.8	45.7	39.8

Comparative Data:

Please note: The comparator data cohort only looks at care leavers classified as 'Former Relevant aged 19-21' **however** the data we have in the getting to good includes Relevant/Former relevant/qualifying/eligible care leavers, so should be treated with caution. Data is the % of young people in Education, Employment and Training (EET).

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Change from previous year
Lancashire	37	41	40	43	50	+7%
North West	46	48	49	50	51	+1%
Statistical Neighbours	47.9	47.8	46.2	49.14	49.86	+0.71%
England	48	49	50	51	52	+1%

Current role of Virtual School in supporting Children Looked After (CLA) and Care leavers into Education, Employment and Training (EET)

- Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance is provided for all children looked after in year 10 and 11 in Lancashire schools. This is through a named Employment Officer attached to each school and working directly with each looked after child, with their agreement. Meetings are usually one per term but these may be increased for identified young people who require more support especially during year 11. Support includes agreeing a Career Action Plan, advice on career routes and qualifications, application form/curriculum vitae writing and may include access to work experience, where necessary. Transition support is offered and intended destinations are collated and followed up in September with actual destinations. Anyone Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) at this point moves into the Employment and Support Team's post 16 support package.
- Post 16 team lead post: role includes tracking of care leavers up to 18 (year 12 and 13) in relation to Education, Employment or Training (EET), progress, attendance and wellbeing, advice and support to relevant education providers i.e. Further Education colleges on Personal Education Planning, strategies and information, working with Further Education and Higher education partners to develop their offer for care leavers, developing programmes and events to help young people, relevant professionals and carers to aim for higher education and/or higher level apprenticeships. Chairs Further Education Forum and member of the Further Education Young People WellBeing Strategy Group.
- Since 2018 the Employment and Support Team have merged with the Virtual School, consisting of a Team Manager and 9.4 full time equivalent (fte) qualified Employment Officers. Roles includes Careers advice, guidance and support to year 10 and 11 children looked after in Lancashire schools, direct 1-1 case work/support for care leavers into education, training and employment up to 25, working with Lancashire County Council services, businesses, training providers to identify training, work experience/volunteering and employment opportunities including Apprenticeships for care leavers. Funding support to reduce barriers to employment for young people and potential employers. Tracking of outcomes for young people supported and those in higher education. Providing events and programmes for young people, professionals and carers to increase knowledge and understanding of career routes and raise aspirations, Supporting partnership working with higher education partners.
- Working with Leaving Care Service on a number of events and programmes with Further Education and Higher Education partners.
- Development of the Children Looked After and Care Leavers Education, Employment and Training Plan 2018 with range of key services.

Activity and Impact:

Success Outcomes

2019/20

Success Event	Private Sector	Lancashire County Council or other public sector	Total
Work Placement	45	36	81
Apprenticeship	18	16	34
Employment (full time)	13	10	23
Employment (part time)	21	8	29
Total into employment opportunities			86
College/Training Provider or University course			54
Employability Support Course			45

2018/19

Success Event	Private Sector	Lancashire County Council or other public sector	Total
Work Placement	53	32	85
Apprenticeship	10	21	31
Employment (full time)	16	3	19
Employment (part time)	20	10	30
Total into employment opportunities			80
College/Training Provider or University course			41
Employability Support Course			44

Just some examples behind the figures:

- S has completed her Care Assistant Apprenticeship secured work as a care assistant and now has aspirations to become a nurse.
- R has completed his Business Admin Level 3 Apprenticeship and achieved a distinction within Lancashire County Council.
- C has completed his Business Admin Level 2 Apprenticeship and is now specialising by doing a Level 3 Facilities Apprenticeship.
- R is completing their Business Admin Apprenticeship but has secured permanent work in Lancashire County Council.
- J has secured permanent work in Lancashire County Council after a short level of support.

- A has completed his Apprenticeship and was successful in applying for an Auto Cad technician role
- B has completed his Level 2 Apprenticeship and now has secured work with the company who are further training him to Level 3.

We have recently recruited two new Employment Officers (1.8 full time equivalents (fte)) to further increase capacity in the team and in preparation for future caseload management. These are fixed term posts but are needed for the expansion of the Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in schools for 20/21 academic year. Often the easiest part is to secure employment but then the role of the Employment Officer is to work with the young person to sustain employment which can be very challenging. An Apprenticeship is a minimum of two years commitment in most disciplines.

Salary contributions, transport and training funding is imperative to getting our young people on the career ladder. All the funds spent in 2019/20 (just over £600k) have provided 92 of our young people a salary contribution in employment. We have been able to fund 1-1 tuition for our young people to get extra support with the functional skills, re-sit these or support for asylum seekers with English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). We have funded Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) cards, fork light truck training, security licences and beauty courses opening up employment opportunities in the industry of choice for our young people. We have also been able to give them a helping hand in having the correct equipment and work wear to do the job once they get an opportunity.

Future Plans

There are future plans to develop the work of the team and to further expand knowledge of our work;

- Working with schools for Careers, Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) from Academic year 2020 working with Year 9/8 in options year for an additional support around this transition point.
- Training sessions for Personal Adviser teams to make sure we target our limited resources into young people ready for the step into employability by empowering them with level 1/pre-employability information and courses across Lancashire that they can self-refer into.
- Continued training of designated teachers, social work academy and children's social care staff on our offer of support and recording on Liquidlogic Children's Social Care System (LCS).
- Building links across the Foster Carers network and informing of our support for the children in their care.
- Continue with careers training, one qualified and four team members on the Level 6 careers qualification plus the other five undertaking a certificate in careers employability to refresh skills in Oct/Nov 2020.
- Being part of the Life Skills work in regards to employability around Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) with Leaving Care Team.

- Development of an Employment and Support Team 'Employability programme'. A focussed intense 16 week programme to be developed for implementation potentially in January 2021 on employability skills. This will shift focus of the Employment Officers to work with those ready to go into the jobs market in a short space of time. This will need a shift in the type of post 16+ referrals coming through and to upskill Personal Advisers in the opportunities across Lancashire on the pre-employment programmes to refer to. This will link in to units of Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) so work can be accredited and young people on the programme to be code P3 (less than 16 hours of training per week) to acknowledge their commitment to the training programme.

Despite multiple changes and improvements to Lancashire's Leaving Care Service over recent years the proportion of our care leavers who are Not in Employment, Education and Training has remained similar throughout, currently sitting at 53.6%. As the Virtual School's report shows this is in line with our neighbouring authorities and our statistical neighbours, however that is no reason to accept such a high number of young people we are not supporting to achieve their potential. In reviewing the data and some of the cases of those who have achieved well and those who have not, some common themes have emerged:

- **Placements** - In all the data analysis and case reviews carried out for the this report it showed that young people with best Education, Employment and Training (EET) outcomes were placed in foster care at the time they left care. The highest proportion of Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) had been placed in 'other' placements prior to their exit from care, usually in the form of an independence/leaving care placement. The number of placement changes and the length of the final placement were also contributing factors to young people's Education, Employment and Training (EET) outcomes, with fewer placements and longer final placements being conducive with more positive outcomes.
- **Secondary School Disruption** - Young People who come into care between the ages of 11-15 make up our highest proportion of Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET). Two or more secondary school placements are also seen more frequently in our long term Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) than our university graduates. This would suggest that major disruptions like a change of school and family disruption during secondary years has a significant impact on Education, Employment and Training (EET) outcomes.
- **Social Work Stability** – The young people whose cases we reviewed who had been Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) the longest had more social workers throughout their time in care than the university graduate group. Social worker stability, continuity of planning and enduring relationships are key in achieving positive outcomes for young people.
- **Pregnancy and Parenting** – Of our long term Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) population as a whole (those who have been Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) for 6 months or more) the highest proportion are recorded as Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) due to

pregnancy and parenting. These young people only make up 16.8% of the Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) population but are Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) for the longest. Pregnancies among our care leavers appears to be increasing and access to sexual health services in Lancashire is an issue. Lancashire County Council are responsible for providing sexual health services since taking this over from the NHS in 2014, the budget for these services has been cut year on year since this time and last year saw the highest number of terminations in the county since records began. This lack of sexual health support in the county may be contributing to the number of young people in our service who are becoming parents. Once our young people are parents accessing employment becomes challenging due to the rising cost of child care.

- **Mental Health** – Another group who remain Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) longer than most is 'G4 – Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) due to illness or disability'. This group is mainly made up of young people who suffer with mental health issues. There is no exact data on the proportion of this group who are suffering with mental illnesses but it is widely reported by Personal Advisors that this is the most common reason they record G4 for a care leavers. The issues we face in supporting young people with Mental Health issues are; transitions from children's to adult service, supporting young people to engage with service once they are established, a lack of early intervention services that meet the needs of our young people and extra training required for Personal Advisors to support these young people.

Plans and Recommendations from findings:

- **Family Safeguarding Model and 13+ Teams** – Will have a focus in keeping families together safely, resulting in fewer children being accommodated. This will reduce the number of children who experience the disruption that being accommodated brings which will improve the prospects of those who remain in their families thus improving the Education, Employment and Training (EET) figures of the general population. It will also reduce the impact on resources that large numbers of children looked after have on the Children in Our Care and Leaving Care teams allowing for access to local placements and time for staff do undertake quality work with children and young people.
- **Increasing staffing** – A significant part of the Children's Social Care service redesign is increasing the numbers of social workers and Personal Advisors and reducing caseloads. Lower caseloads will improve the quality of work undertaken and in turn the outcomes achieved.
- **Placing Children in Families** - Implementing targets for the proportion of children looked after who are placed in foster placements, alongside a targeted recruitment drive for certain geographical areas to support children looked after remaining in their existing schools.
- **PA training** – Our current Personal Advisor workforce is experienced and stable, they have a vast array of pre-Personal Advisor experience and skills between them, however there is no consistency in their training and limited Personal

Advisor specific training to provide a baseline that would be required of every Personal Advisor. A training package for Personal Advisors, with accreditation would benefit the service and support retention.

- **Sexual Health Service and Child Care Support** – Sexual Health Service managers in Lancashire to attend Corporate Parenting Board to provide information on their offer and work with Children's Social Care to develop a specific offer for Care Leavers. Along with funding for Child Care to be considered as part of our financial offer to Care Leavers.
- **Mental Health Strategy** – The leaving care service are developing a mental health strategy with key partners to ensure that care leavers have adequate pathways to services and get the help they need. A cultural change within our organisation is also required, in order for us to stop viewing mental health issues as a barrier to employment and rather view employment as part of a treatment plan to support positive mental health.
- **Accommodation Strategy** – Education, Employment and Training (EET) outcomes are impacted by the stability and quality of young people's accommodation. Housing protocols for Care Leavers, The National Housing Project and recommissioning of housing services are all currently underway to enable us to provide better housing for young people.
- **Family Business** - Recruiting our young people to our 'family business' by creating more opportunities for our young people within our own organisation and within our contracts with others.
- **Culture** - Creating a culture of aspirations and meaningful occupation for care leavers, at every level of the organisation.

Conclusion

The contributing factors to our high Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) figures are complex and require a whole organisation approach, with buy-in at every level and every department. As corporate parents we wish to share the responsibility for our children's outcomes, while acknowledging the key role we must play in achieving this as Children's Social Care. We need to create an aspirational community and become corporate parents who offer exceptional opportunities to the children in our care and care leavers.