

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

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SUPPORT FOR CARE LEAVERS TASK GROUP: PROGRESS REPORT

Report from: Phil Watson, Assistant Director Children's Social Care.

Author: Jo Cross, Head of Service, Looked after Children & Proceedings.

Summary

In August 2014, following a far reaching and extensive review the Support for Care Leavers Task Group made a number of recommendations to support improved outcomes for care leavers. The Task group considered 8 key lines of enquiry and heard evidence from a number of sources including young people.

This report and attached action plan (Appendix 1) summarise progress against each recommendation.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 Medway Council's Constitution (Chapter 4: Rules, paragraph 22.1 xiii) General terms of reference) provides that each overview and scrutiny committee has the responsibility to conduct service reviews and within the remit of this committee falls Children's Social Care.
- 1.2 The recommendations arising from the original Task Group review are consistent with the Council's Policy Framework and, as they can be met from within budget, were a matter for Cabinet discussion and approval.

2. Background

- 2.1 There is a raft of legislation supporting our work with care leavers including the Children Act 1989, the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Children and Young Person's Act 2008.
- 2.2 This legislation defines who should receive a service and how this service should be provided. To meet its statutory requirements Children's Social Care provides a discrete Leaving Care service for young people aged 18+. The service provides support to care leavers from a Personal Advisor (PA), which includes emotional and practical support, including; helping young people access suitable accommodation, helping them to access suitable

employment, education and training and helping young people gain the emotional resilience to make a successful transition to adulthood.

- 2.3 The Task Group review undertaken in 2014 was a clear measure of Elected Members commitment to this vulnerable group of young people. The Task Group Members were encouraged by the good practice seen by themselves and reported by others including recipients of the service. The findings of the Task group were first reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2015 and the recommendations were accepted by the Cabinet in April 2015. Ambitious targets were set for the service.
- 2.4 In September 2015 Ofsted undertook a review of Children's Social Care. Within this review there were a number of key judgements including one specifically relating to the "Experiences and progress of care leavers".
- 2.5 The overall judgement for Children's Social Care from the inspection was requires improvement. However the discrete judgement for the Care Leavers service was good. Services to care leavers was the only aspect of Children's Social Care that received a judgement of good.
- 2.6 The inspection report noted that; "Care leavers benefit from high-quality independent support from their personal advisors". They further noted that; "The team manager provides strong and supportive leadership".
- 2.7 The report stated that "Councillors and the Lead Member for Children's Services are proactive in championing the cause and care leaver's views. A recent comprehensive scrutiny report has been instrumental in helping to drive further improvements to the service".
- 2.8 The attached Action Plan (Appendix 1) provides an update on the progress made against the recommendations of the review thus far.

3 Key Findings and Analysis

- 3.1 The Ofsted inspection findings show that between July 2013 (when Children's Social Care received a judgement of inadequate) and September 2015 significant progress has been made in relation to the services provided to and the outcomes for care leavers.
- 3.2 Despite this positive judgement the service remains ambitious for care leavers and is working to further improve outcomes for young people in a number of key areas.
- 3.3 Ensuring that young people are in suitable employment, education or training (EET) remains a key priority for the service since we know that this supports an effective transition into young adulthood and beyond. Data is monitored each month on the EET outcomes of young people aged 19, 20 and 21 and for the year to 01 November 2015, 47% of the reporting group were in some form of education, employment or training. This exceeds our performance of 45% for the year 2014/15 but falls short of our stretch target of 55%.
- 3.4 To ensure improved performance the Leaving Care service are working closely with young people from the age of 17 and have developed excellent links with a number of agencies supporting young people including the

Princes trust, Medway Youth Trust, Job Centre+ and the Virtual School. In addition we are working with Medway HR team to develop more apprentice opportunities within the Council and our partner agencies. Personal Advisors work closely with young people and support them to develop essential work related skills including producing a CV, interview skills and building emotional resilience.

- 3.5 A further key performance indicator relates to the provision of suitable accommodation for care leavers. Our current performance shows that there are 86% of our care leavers living in suitable accommodation, an improvement on our 2014/15 performance of 78%. To ensure improved performance in this area we have worked closely with our colleagues in Commissioning Services to procure a range of accommodation providers providing varying levels of support. In this way young people are supported to make a transition into semi-independent living before assuming a tenancy. We do not encourage young people to bid for a tenancy until we believe that they are emotionally and practically ready to do so.
- 3.6 At the time of the inspection there were 15 young people in prison. Most of these became looked after at a later age (typically post 16) when offending behaviour was already entrenched. However, with partners including Probation, the Youth Offending Team and Adult Social Care we are undertaking a review of service provision to young people in prison to ensure that we understand the care history of these young people so that in the future our edge of care and allied services provide preventative services to other looked after young people. In addition, we are developing the Medway “offer” to young people in custody. This will entail the development of policies and procedures to ensure that care leavers in custody have access to appropriate support whilst in custody and post release. This review will conclude by 1 February 2015.
- 3.7 Finally, to ensure increased, meaningful participation and engagement with care leavers, telephone surveys will be undertaken by the Participation Service on a quarterly basis. Findings will then form the basis of a “You said we did” briefing to all care leavers. The findings will also be reported to the Children’s Social Care management group to ensure that feedback regarding service improvement and development is embedded throughout our services.

4. Risk management

- 4.1 The impact of the recommendations in this report are solely focused on improving positive outcomes for Medway’s care leavers through a range of actions, and as such no risks are identified to delivery.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 No specific consultation has been undertaken for the preparation of this update report. However, the Leaving Care service continues to engage with key stakeholders including care leavers and this will continue as we progress further the Task Group recommendations.

6. Implications for Looked After Children

- 6.1 This report is solely focused on improving outcomes for looked after young people and care leavers. Implementation of the recommendations will continue to secure positive outcomes for these groups and will support the Corporate Parenting role of the Committee.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this update report.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this update report.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to note the progress made against the Task Group recommendations.
- 9.2 The Corporate Parenting Board continue to review progress against the Task Group recommendations annually.

Lead officer contact

Jo Kavanagh, Leaving Care Team Manager.
Email: Jo.kavanagh@medway.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Care Leavers Task Group Action Plan

Background papers

This update report has been produced using the Task Group report and the “Support for Care Leavers Task Group” report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 25 March 2015 - <http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/Support%20for%20Care%20Leavers.pdf>

ACTION SHEET FROM SUPPORT FOR CARE LEAVERS REVIEW

Endorsed by Cabinet on 14 April 2015

	ACTION	COMMENT/STATUS UPDATE
1.	The future Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) include within its Children in Care section, information on health outcomes and needs data for Care Leavers and recommend the Council and Medway CCG ensure a focus on care leavers when commissioning services using evidence about their needs by using the JSNA.	<p>The inclusion of information on health outcomes and needs will be included as part of current work to update the Looked After Children chapter.</p> <p>The 16+ Homelessness and Care Leaver Commissioning Action Plan clearly identifies areas as to where improvements in Health outcomes are being prioritised.</p>

	ACTION	COMMENT/STATUS UPDATE
2.	<p>The Council and Medway CCG work with provider agencies to develop and implement all age pathways that help bridge the gaps caused from transition from children to adult services (e.g. CAMHS, AHDA, SEN).</p>	<p>A multi agency Transition Forum meets regularly to review young people aged 16+ who have complex needs relating to their mental health and/or disability who do not meet Adult Social Care (ASC) thresholds. The Forum reviews a range of cases; offers advice and support and agrees the transfer of cases where this is in the best interests of the young person.</p> <p>The remit of the forum has now been expanded to include those cases where the criteria for transfer to ASC have been met.</p> <p>SPFT (CAMHS provider) / KMPT (Adult mental health) have developed a transition protocol to ensure successful transfer of young people whom meet the KMPT thresholds.</p> <p>Oakfield Psychology service has been commissioned to deliver therapeutic support for Care Leavers who do not meet KMPT thresholds. This service will go live from 01st October 2015.</p> <p>This action remains under review to enable us to evidence the impact of this work.</p> <p>Medway Council and Medway CCG are collaborating to implement Medway's Emotional Wellbeing Strategy for Children and Young People and Medway's CAMHS Local Transformation Plan. The development of Medway's new service model for Children and Young People's Emotional Wellbeing is also in progress. There is a focus throughout these workstreams on the development of robust pathways which bridge any potential gaps at transition points.</p>

	ACTION	COMMENT/STATUS UPDATE
3.	<p>Personal Advisors receive additional support and training to provide: -</p> <p>a. Promotion of healthy lifestyles advice, including emotional wellbeing (engaging with Public Health on contributing to this via workforce development)</p> <p>b. Information on how to access support services where necessary.</p>	<p>A strategy is in place to recruit staff who work with/ have contact with groups at risk of health inequalities to the A Better Medway Champions programme. No members of this workforce have been recruited to date but active attempts to recruit continue.</p> <p>In addition, information and support sessions have been delivered directly to Personal Advisors on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General overview of Public Health - Smoking cessation (including smoking in pregnancy) - Mental health promotion - Oral health (planned) <p>Healthy lifestyle sessions, which include the delivery of information on how to access health improvement services, have been delivered directly to young people leaving care.</p> <p>The team have developed positive working relationships with a range of agencies including Open Road, Public Health, Probation and the Princes Trust.</p> <p>Personal Advisors work closely with the Leaving Care Nurse to address issues of sexual health, emotional well being and overall healthy lifestyle.</p> <p>Any concerns a PA has about the health needs of young people are referred to the Leaving Care nurse.</p>

	ACTION	COMMENT/STATUS UPDATE
4.	<p>The committee noted and supported the changes being proposed in relation to commissioning to improve choice and availability of accommodation and support options and Cabinet agreed that the impact and success of this be reviewed in six months time.</p>	<p>The LAC&P service worked with partners in Commissioning to develop a range of supported accommodation options for care leavers providing a range of support types, including 24 hour support. All providers have clear quality standards and outcome measures. It is too early to assess the impact of this new provision on outcomes for care leavers but reviews will be carried out in 6 months time.</p> <p>Young people were involved at each stage of the tender process. Young people's feedback was used to inform the development of the service specification e.g. establishing taster sessions in semi- independent accommodation.</p> <p>Young people were also engaged in tender evaluation process by undertaking site visits to all Supported Accommodation premises.</p>

	ACTION	COMMENT/STATUS UPDATE
5.	<p>Partnership Commissioning (on behalf of Children Social Care) and Housing Services:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. review the newly commissioned supported accommodation and floating support arrangements to ensure compliance and that care leavers are being supported appropriately. b. Monitor allocations policy to ensure adequate and appropriate priority is being awarded to care leavers. c. Review the provision of arrangements where care leavers are provided with temporary housing to ensure that it is meeting demands and conforms with relevant standards and that targeted support is provided. 	<p>a) As above the newly commissioned supported accommodation has only recently come on-stream and the impact on outcomes for young people will be reviewed and reported for Committee in 6 months time.</p> <p>b) The leaving Care team work closely with the allocations team in Housing to ensure that suitable accommodation is provided for care leavers when they are assessed as being ready to take on their own tenancy.</p> <p>c) See a) and above. All supported accommodation providers now have clear quality standards and outcome measures in their work with care leavers. Support is provided to meet the assessed needs of the individual care leaver and young people will be offered “taster” sessions in supported accommodation to ensure that they understand what living in supported accommodation is like and that they are emotionally ready to take this next step.</p> <p>In addition on 25th September 2015 – A Housing and Young People’s workshop was held to go through the housing bidding process and to address general concerns as to moving into ‘social housing’ when leaving care.</p> <p>A further workshop is being held in six months to assess what improvements have been made as a result.</p> <p>A Care Leavers’ support pack is currently being developed as a result of the workshop.</p>

	ACTION	COMMENT/STATUS UPDATE
6.	Children's Social Care work with Children in Care Council and Care Leavers to develop a checklist of things that carers need to support looked after children to develop skills to be able to carry out by the age of 16 to help with their transition into independence (e.g. cook 7 simple nutritious meals, register with a GP, manage a budget).	This work is ongoing and should be completed by 31 March 2016.
7.	To assess the resource viability of appointing at a low level of involvement, a PA to each looked after child when they reach 17 to co-work with the young person's Social Worker to build a relationship with the young person to improve transition arrangements and experience of the young person.	<p>All care leavers are now allocated to a PA at the age of 17. The PA undertakes targeted work with the young person in conjunction with their allocated SW. Typically this work relates to sourcing suitable education/employment and training opportunities where the young person is at risk of being NEET (not in education, employment or training) and supporting them to make the transition to semi/independent living.</p> <p>We recognise that a PA should be allocated at age 16 and we are reviewing our team structure, capacity and management to ensure that this can take place by April 2016 at the latest.</p>
8.	To set up a multi-agency hub for Care Leavers, possibly in partnership with another agency, to provide access to a one-stop-shop of support services, as well as informal and comfortable space where the young people can meet.	The service is finalising a contract with the Princes Trust to provide workshops for care leavers from the Princes Trust site one day a week. The contract is near completion. We hope to further expand this partnership during 2016/17, to develop a space where the team can meet and work with young people on a more frequent basis.

	ACTION	COMMENT/STATUS UPDATE
9.	Personal Advisors to receive additional support and training to be able to effectively signpost to MYT for specialist careers advice	<p>Completed. The monthly operational group for NEET continues to meet to review those young people aged 16+ who are currently not in education, employment or training.</p> <p>The contract with MYT is close to completion and they have recruited the full time PA located in the service who works with LAC and care leavers at risk of or who are NEET. It is anticipated this post will be in place within the service early 2016 and will focus on the LAC population.</p> <p>The PAs work closely with Medway Youth Trust and Mid Kent College regarding the support to young people to access careers advice.</p> <p>An event for young people was hosted to develop and promote the “Choices Guide”. http://www.yourchoiceinmedway.org.uk/young-people/16-19-yrs/</p> <p>The service also works with ‘Talent Match’ (Prince’s Trust) to support young people moving to EET and provide mentoring support for young people aged 18+ not in EET.</p> <p>An operational working group has been set up that tracks young people and regular reports/meetings are held with Head of Service to track activity.</p>
10.	Category Management to ensure that support with securing employment, education or training opportunities is built in more formally into future commissioning and contractual arrangements.	<p>This issue has been raised with colleagues and will continue to be monitored. The Council has initiated a ‘1 in a £1 million’ scheme whereby every provider who has been successful in a tender above £1 million is expected to take an apprentice. A new Leaving Care apprentice has been recruited to Partnership Commissioning and we are seeking to extend the programme further.</p>

	ACTION	COMMENT/STATUS UPDATE
11.	<p>That a Looked After Child's last Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting also include: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Personal Advisor so that ambitions and intentions are clear for transitional purposes b. Mid-Kent College (or any other relevant higher/further educational establishment, including the Russell Group Universities) and employers where the child is transferring on from a school, to ensure all information is shared and transition is smooth. 	Completed and on going.
12.	To recommend the Department for Education that guaranteed bursary funding should continue for students leaving care until they finish their education.	Not completed as this has not been a priority for action over the last 6 months. It will be reviewed over the final quarter of 2015/16.

	ACTION	COMMENT/STATUS UPDATE
13.	<p>Improve the offers of traineeships and apprenticeships in Medway to Care Leavers by working across the authority corporately to provide more wrap-around support to help them to succeed in these roles.</p>	<p>Ongoing. Young people continue to be a priority for apprenticeships across the Council.</p> <p>The Engagement Team has run courses for Care Leavers on CV writing and interview skills and we hope to continue these during 2016/17..</p> <p>On 25th September a workshop was held with Job Centre Plus and Care leavers on to how to apply for jobs.</p> <p>The Engagement Team has also recently recruited a Care Leaver to the team to support this ongoing work.</p> <p>The Prince's Trust is commissioned to offer a range of apprenticeships.</p>
14.	<p>Review current sufficiency of mentoring for Care Leavers in Medway and explore the feasibility of commissioning a mentoring scheme like the Care Ambassador Scheme in Hampshire County Council. Part of this review of mentoring will involve scoping the development of a scheme from across Medway Council staff.</p>	<p>Not completed. We will review the potential cost and feasibility of establishing a mentoring scheme in 2016/17.</p>
15.	<p>Support the idea around developing use of social media technologies including an app if financially viable, plus exploring other options including the use of Facebook, dedicated website or use of the existing Children in Care Council website and other models.</p>	<p>The Leaving Care Facebook page is now live on the internet. User name is Chaz Dickens and it will be promoted across all young people aged 18+.</p> <p>The Leaving care consultation group are exploring the creation of an App but these are expensive to develop and we will monitor this closely.</p>

	ACTION	COMMENT/STATUS UPDATE
16.	Work in partnership with the Participation Service to deliver a phone survey with Care Leavers to obtain full and meaningful feedback about their experiences of services to improve delivery.	Completed: the first survey will take place in January 2016.
17.	Within the existing complement and through a review of service, aim to provide dedicated administration support for the Leaving Care Team. Administration support to this team should be specialised and can act as triage, thereby helping to build the team's capacity in dealing with its Care Leavers, particularly if a low level of support is begun at 17 years old.	The review was undertaken but there is no capacity within CSC admin staff to provide dedicated admin support to the Leaving Care service. This will be considered in any subsequent admin reviews during 2016/17.
18.	In addition to the update report to the committee on progress in 6-12 months time, the Corporate Parenting Board should regularly monitor the implementation of this report and its recommendations.	The Corporate Parenting Board regularly reviews and considers services to care leavers. This report will be presented to CPB in January 2016.