

Corporate Parenting Board 18th January 2010

Title of paper:	The establishment of a 15 plus service for Children in Care and those seeking asylum.	
Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):	Satinder Gautam Director of Specialist Services	Wards affected:
Contact Officer(s) and contact details:	Julie Lewis – Head of Children in Care, Children’s Services, Sandfield Centre, Sandfield Road, Lenton, Nottingham NG7 1QH Tel: 0115 9150850 E-mail: julie.lewis@nottinghamcity.gov.uk	
Other officers who have provided input:	Winston Davidson – Service Manager Leaving Care Team Claire Knowles – Legal Services Lynn Robinson – HR Unison and affected staff and service users	
Relevant Council Plan theme(s):		
Choose Nottingham		√
Respect for Nottingham		√
Transforming Nottingham’s Neighbourhoods		√
Supporting Nottingham People		√
Serving Nottingham Better		√
Summary of issues (including benefits to customers/service users):		
<p>A review of leaving care services was undertaken during the period December 2008 – March 2009. The key requirements of the review were to determine whether Nottingham City Council are delivering services that are compliant with the Children and Young Person Act 2008 and meeting key recommendations made in the Government white paper, Care Matters: A time for change. The review process aimed to identify strengths and shortfalls in the current leaving care service and seek to make recommendations to develop service delivery and improve outcomes for young people in need of support in their transition through to adulthood.</p> <p>The agreement to the establishment of a 15 Plus service will address, identify shortfalls and ensure a service fit for purpose.</p>		
Recommendation(s):		
1	That the Corporate Parenting Board note and discuss the contents of the report.	

1 **BACKGROUND**

The **Care Matters: Time for change** white paper requires professionals in Social Care to consider effective ways of developing services to provide better outcomes through collaborative working and by strengthening Corporate Parenting responsibilities. These identified are:

- Young people want and need stability and continuity of care
- Corporate parenting must be shared across all agencies and at all levels in recognition that the range of social, educational, employment, physical and emotional health, practical, housing and general support needs of young people leaving care are so diverse
- Clear accountability for the delivery, and meeting, of outcomes must be in place
- Support in the transition to adulthood should be a needs led, and not an age based, process. Chapter 7 states we need “*a culture of responsible corporate parenting so that local authorities listen to children and provide them with a quality personalised service that is genuinely sensitive to their needs and aspirations*”
- Services to young people in the transition to adulthood should not be discriminatory, unless there are clear legal or formally assessed justifications for this
- Planning and reviewing for the transition from care (dependence) to adulthood (independence) is consistent, co-ordinated and rigorously scrutinised through independent oversight from Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO’s)

The **Children and Young Person Act 2008** reinforces several of the duties and powers already enshrined in the Children Act 1989 and the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

Proposals in respect of the 15 Plus service will ensure Nottingham City Council completes fully compliant pathway plans for all young people leaving care, within agreed timescales, with significant contributions from all agencies involved with a young person and overseen by a worker skilled in the task. This is a key priority to ensure recent criticisms raised through High Court case law and judicial review are not repeated as a result of future failings.

2 **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)**

- 2.1 The implementation of the 15 Plus service will address concerns re non compliance with leaving care legislation and will contribute to better outcomes for children in care.

3 **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Other local authorities were visited and benchmarking undertaken. However Judicial Review rulings has directed the way forward for Nottingham City Council to some extent Views acquired from young people are attached as Appendix 1

4 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING VALUE FOR MONEY)**

- 4.1 **2009/10**

Effect	W.E.F. 01/10/09 £	Full Year £
The estimated cost of the proposed structure	446,550	893,100
The following budgets are available to fund these proposals: Children’s Services		

Leaving Care Team	201,500	403,000
UASC Team	62,940	125,880
Pathway Planning Team	105,000	210,000
Virement of Agency Staff Budget	0	118,000
Connexions Service	41,440	82,880
Total	410,880	939,760
Saving		35,670

5 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES (INCLUDING LEGAL IMPLICATIONS, CRIME AND DISORDER ACT IMPLICATIONS AND EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS)

- 5.1 The past year has seen a number of cases where a local firm of solicitors in particular has raised threats of Judicial Review in correspondence with the Children and Adults Legal Team (Legal), some of which have resulted in actual Judicial Review proceedings. One major area of challenge has been that of Children's Services compliance with the Leaving Care Act 2000 and the Leaving Care Regulations 2003. Regrettably, such challenges in respect of pathway plans, assessment and the appointment of personal advisors have largely been successful as a result of failings in compliance with duties and responsibilities bestowed on Children's Services by this legislation.

Legal Services is continuing to advise Children's Services on this area to prevent further challenge and have been involved in the review of Leaving Care Services

6 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION

- 6.1 None

7 PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

- 7.1 Children Leaving Care Act 2002
7.2 Children Act 2004
7.3 Care Matters – Time for Change 2007
7.4 Children and Young People Act 2008

Appendix 1

Views acquired from young people

- 1.1 In all 12 young people were consulted during the review process. One group were receiving services from the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) team, another group had used the services provided by Vivian Avenue and the third group were those who had significant input from the Leaving Care team (LCT). There was a fairly wide consensus that support from individual workers in each of these teams was good to excellent, although views varied significantly with regard to other issues.

How the report addresses these comments:

- Discussion re 24 hour advice line
- Proposal re Welfare Right Worker
- Proposals re training

- 1.2 Although the general consensus was that the LCT provide a good service there were also some critical comments made by young people about the LCT.

How the report addresses these comments:

- Increased staffing
- Training for staff
- Improved protocols

- 1.3 The second area of concern was around benefits and financial support. This seemed to result from information being inadequately communicated to young people. Although there are several informative leaflets in several of the office bases it may be that too many assumptions have been made about how well information is understood. Discussion seemed to indicate a high reliance on “grapevine” information from other young people, rather than knowing who to consult and where and how the right person/agency could be contacted. Young people stated unhappiness with the complex, inconsistent and discriminatory (from their perspective) arrangements for financial support, although they did accept there were certain requirements they had to meet to qualify for assistance.

How the report addresses these comments:

- 24 advice line
- Welfare Rights Worker
- Joint training for staff

- 1.4 Young people made some other comments which have been taken on board as part of the review process and the report addresses these comments:
 - Proposals for relocation of the service
 - Training for staff
 - Increased staffing

