

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – 19th October 2015

Title of paper:	Care Leavers Annual Report	
Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):	Alison Michalska, Corporate Director for Children and Adults , Helen Blackman Director of Childrens Social Care	Wards affected: ALL
Report author(s) and contact details:	Sharon Clarke, Service Manager, Children in Care Team Lynn Pearce, Senior Personal Advisor Alan Monaghan, Senior Personal Advisor	
Other colleagues who have provided input:	Tina Thurley - Principal Analyst	
Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s) (if relevant)	9 th September 2015	
Relevant Council Plan Strategic Priority:		
Cutting unemployment by a quarter		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Cut crime and anti-social behaviour		<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure more school leavers get a job, training or further education than any other City		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Your neighbourhood as clean as the City Centre		<input type="checkbox"/>
Help keep your energy bills down		<input type="checkbox"/>
Good access to public transport		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham has a good mix of housing		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham is a good place to do business, invest and create jobs		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham offers a wide range of leisure activities, parks and sporting events		<input type="checkbox"/>
Support early intervention activities		<input type="checkbox"/>
Deliver effective, value for money services to our citizens		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):		
This report outlines the work undertaken and progress made by the Leaving Care Service since the Ofsted Inspection in March 2014. It is the Annual Report on the service, to update the Board on services provided to young people transitioning from care into adulthood.		
Recommendation(s):		
1	The Board continues to support and understand the duties required by the Leaving Care Service.	

1. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Nottingham City Council has a duty to provide services to those young people defined as Care Leavers under the Statutory Guidance; The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations; Volume 3, Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers, The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, Children and Young Persons Act 2008.

1.2 Research and practice shows that young people who have been looked after will have the best chance to succeed as adults if those providing transitional care and support take the following principles into account

- Is this good enough for my child?
- Provide a second chance if things do not go as expected.
- Is the support package tailored to a young person's individual needs?

These are the principles which Nottingham City Council's Leaving Care Service uses to underpin the service they deliver to our Care Leavers. The service endeavours to ensure each young person is provided with a service that is tailored to meet a young person's needs, which is reviewed to ensure their transition into adulthood is successful.

1.3 The Leaving Care Service provides services to those young people as defined under the Act as Eligible, Relevant or Former Relevant. Recent amendments to the Guidance also determines services must be provided to persons qualifying for Advice/Assistance.

- Eligible young people are those young people currently looked after and have been looked after for a period of 13 weeks or periods amounting to a total of 13 weeks which began after age 14 and ended on reaching 16.
- Relevant young people are those young people who are:
 - o Not looked after.
 - o Aged 16/17 and before this, ceased to be looked after as an eligible child.

This includes those young people (16/17) who were detained/secured or detained under the Mental Health Act in hospital and had been looked after for a period or periods amounting to 13 weeks after reaching age 14.

Regulation 3 also states that a child who has lived continuously for six months or more with a parent/carer whom the child now ceases to live with be treated as a Relevant child.

- Persons qualifying for Advice/Assistance are defined as persons aged between 16 and 21, whereby a Special Guardianship order was in force.

1.4 Nottingham City Council has a duty to provide and sustain young people defined as Care Leavers with suitable accommodation. The Act defines suitable accommodation as the following:

- That which is reasonably practical and suitable for the young person with regards to their needs.

- That which the responsible Authority finds satisfactory with regards to the character and suitability of the landlord/provider.
- Accommodation that complied with Health and Safety legislation.
- That which takes into account young people's views, training, education and employment needs.

The Act also places a duty on the Council to take steps as far as is reasonably practical, to identify sufficient accommodation within its area to meet the needs of Care Leavers.

- 1.5 The Placement Service commissions accommodation from private providers for semi-independent living and Nottingham City Council also has a range of semi-independent provision within its residential estate. We do therefore provide a range of accommodation which reflects the diverse needs of its Care Leavers. This includes:
- Enabling young people to remain in the accommodation in which they lived whilst in care i.e. staying put.
 - Foyers – supported housing.
 - Small group homes.
 - Independent accommodation with support.
 - Shared accommodation with/without support.
- 1.6 As the majority of young people approach their 18th birthday, they will be working towards gaining their own tenancy. The Leaving Care Service works closely with Nottingham City Homes (NCH) who are extremely supportive of Care Leavers. There is a robust housing protocol which enables Care Leavers to be a priority for housing, with the aim being to ensure our young people are provided with good, quality accommodation.
- 1.7 Personal Advisors work closely with NCH Housing Patch managers to ensure young people are provided with the necessary support to sustain their own tenancies. NCH will share information if young people are struggling and there may be a risk to their tenancies. NCH provides support to young people regarding finances and is well accessed by young people. They have also provided apprenticeships to Care Leavers. Their work with Nottingham City Council has recently won themselves, and our Care Leavers, National Awards.
- 1.8 Current performance with regards to Care Leavers and suitable accommodation continues to be good. The only issue affecting performance is that the Department of Education will not accept custody as suitable. Performance currently stands at 90.5% (See Appendix 1 CL-7(R).)
- 1.9 There remains a national focus on young people 'Staying Put'. The Leaving Care Service has recently reviewed its policy and financial arrangements to make a complicated system easier for carers/young people to understand. The number of young people 'Staying Put' in their foster placements, residential homes (if appropriately registered) and within our residential semi-independent estate.

This allows young people to stay in placements post-18 if they wish to, if assessed as not yet ready for their own tenancy, particularly vulnerable or in appeal with

respect to their immigration status. This includes a dedicated Personal Advisor to those young people exiting residential care. We currently have 10 young people “Staying Put” which is a significant increase since the Ofsted Inspection.

- 1.10 The Placement Service is reviewing the current commissioning strategy to ensure we can continue to offer appropriate accommodation and in conjunction with the Leaving Care Service quality assuring all commissioned accommodation.
- 1.11 Making the transition to adulthood can be difficult for children in care, but one that can also help young people assert their own identity. The Leaving Care Service provides support to enable young people to choose how they furnish their own homes by providing a ‘Setting Up Home’ grant to ensure they have appropriate equipment and household items. This is assessed on an individual basis so that resources are allocated appropriately.
- 1.12 The Leaving Care Service has embedded the use of the ‘Life Skills Booklet’. This tool helps identify gaps in independent skills so that appropriate support can be put in place.
- 1.13 The Leaving Care Service employs a qualified Social Worker, whose role it is to identify those young people who would qualify for Adult Services. The Transitions Worker has proved very beneficial in ensuring that our most vulnerable Care Leavers access the appropriate Adult Service in a timely manner.
- 1.14 The Leaving Care Service are required to review Pathway Plans and support Care Leavers as they make their transition to adulthood, which is irrespective of other services provided i.e. if they are disabled, in custody or an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC). The Act required Pathway Plans be implemented and reviewed for all Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant young people.
- 1.15 Each young person’s Pathway Plan sets out the actions to be undertaken by the Local Authority, young person, their carers and the full range of Agencies so each young person is provided with the services they need.

The Leaving Care Service, following the Ofsted Inspection, reviewed its Pathway Plan and has changed the format to produce a plan which is specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely which incorporates the wishes and feelings of young people. Performance with regards to Pathway Plans for Care Leavers is monitored closely and a monthly report is issued.

- 1.16 All young people eligible for a Pathway Plan must be allocated a Personal Advisor (P.A.). These are not necessarily qualified workers but have to possess the necessary skills and expertise to work with Care Leavers. Regulation 8 sets out the function of a P.A. This includes providing information, support in relation to finances, housing, health, education, training and employment. They are the key professionals for co-ordinating Care Leaver support. They remain allocated to a

young person until they are 21 or 25, if in full time education. P.A.s are required to visit young people statutorily every 8 weeks.

The Care Leaver Service is managed by two Senior Personal Advisors and has nine Personal Advisors. A tenth Personal Advisor is commissioned by the NCHA to provide services to young people who do not wish to engage with N.C.C. Staff. This P.A. will be brought back in-house as it is currently felt to be inefficient. The team also has the transitions Social Worker and three Futures Workers are also based there.

- 1.17 The Leaving Care Service recognise that the number of young people engaged in training, education and employment is not at an acceptable level. Work has been undertaken to improve performance.

Previously, RISE was commissioned to provide opportunities for young people, however both Nottingham City Council and Ofsted recognised this as a poor investment in terms of outcomes and the contract ceased in April 2015.

The Service is now piloting an EET P.A. role for a year. The role of this P.A. is to work alongside Personal Advisors, EET Providers, voluntary organisations, Futures and internal Departments to work with young people to ensure they are engaged with education, training or employment.

The EET P.A. will offer ASDAN qualifications, timetables and opportunities based on young people's needs, particularly those young people who are further disadvantaged regarding opportunities such as young mothers, young people coming out of custody and those young people who struggle emotionally.

The EET P.A. will also work closely with the Youth Offending Team to share resources, learning and practice. Early signs are that this has been successful amongst some of our more disengaged young people.

Performance stands at 63.5% (see Appendix 1, CL-8(R))

The Nottingham Labour Manifesto 2015 includes the following pledge . It will offer permanent jobs or apprenticeships within the City Council to at least 10% of care leavers and encourage further employment opportunities for them across the city,

- 1.18 The Leaving Care Service leads on an employability multi-agency meeting where opportunities and issues can be shared. This includes the expansion of apprenticeship opportunities ring fenced across Departments in the City Council building, on the success of award winning schemes already in progress.
- 1.19 The Leaving Care Service has an excellent relationship with Futures. There are three dedicated Futures workers who are considered part of the team. They attend team meetings and the employability meetings to ensure that the learning/training pathways of young people are captured.
- 1.20 The Leaving Care Service are working hard to ensure the participation of Care Leavers in delivering appropriate services.

A new Care Leavers group known as 'Your Voice' has been formed. They meet as a group to look at issues which affect them and have the opportunity to feedback about their experiences as Care Leavers. Strong liaison occurs with the Children in Care Council and recently members of the group fed back into the first Children in Care Council's corporate meeting which was very successful.

Also a new 'Your Voice' questionnaire has been devised to gain feedback from as many Care Leavers as possible to gain their views about the Service and how this could be improved. This survey will also feed into the Annual 'Have Your Say Survey' which also captures Care Leaver's views.

- 1.21 Care Leavers are entitled to have full medical information as they leave care and this is now a Government requirement. The Health Passport (known as Important Health Information following consultation with Care Leavers) has been implemented. There have been issues in these being produced in a timely way, but the Leaving Care Service is working closely with the Looked After Medical team to improve performance. Performance is approximately around 20% which Health are aware needs significant improvement.

The Service recognises the importance of ensuring young people have their necessary health information, and monthly meetings are now being held to ensure this is monitored closely.

There is also a recognition that Care Leaver's emotional well being needs to be included in their health information. Research clearly shows that loneliness/social isolation is a clear factor in determining a young person's well being, and that children in the care system do not often engage with services offered prior to leaving care.

Work is to be undertaken with Care Leavers to gain feedback as to why they will not engage with current services/what could be offered and what they require as they leave care.

- 1.22 The Leaving Care Service is responsible for safe guarding Care Leavers. They work closely with the Children in Care Police Officer, YOT, Police, Probation and other relevant agencies to ensure that if there are concerns, then the relevant support is implemented to mitigate against further risk.

2. BACKGROUND (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)

- 2.1 The Board have a corporate duty to understand and promote the services that Nottingham City Council has to undertake legally to promote the outcomes and opportunities of its Care-Leavers.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 None.

4. FINANCE COMMENTS (INCLUDING IMPLICATIONS AND VALUE FOR MONEY/VAT)

4.1 None.

5. **LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT COMMENTS (INCLUDING RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES, AND LEGAL, CRIME AND DISORDER ACT AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS)**

5.1 None

6. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Has the equality impact been assessed?

Not needed (report does not contain proposals or financial decisions) **X**

No

Yes – Equality Impact Assessment attached

Due regard should be given to the equality implications identified in the EIA.

7. **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION**

7.1 None

8. **PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT**

8.1 The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3 Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers

8.2 The Children (Leaving Care Act)

8.3 Children and Young Persons Act 2008