

Corporate Parenting Panel

28 January 2022

Supporting Care Leavers into Education, Employment and Training



Report of Linda Bailey, Strategic Lead: Progression and Learning, Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To update members of the Corporate Parenting Panel on the support available to Care Leavers to enable them to progress into Education, Employment and Training.

Executive summary

- 2 A number of measures are being implemented to support Care Leavers into Education, Employment or Training. These include transition support for young people aged 15 to 16 through the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools, the introduction of a new DurhamEnable (Supported Employment) Service, continued support provided through the DurhamWorks Programme, and further embedding of the Durham County Council Pathway for Young People - incorporating a Sessional Employment Programme, Kickstart placements and Apprenticeships.
- 3 Outcomes from these actions are closely monitored and this report contains the latest performance data in relation to the participation of Care Leavers in Education, Employment and Training. This report also contains an outline of future priorities.

Recommendation

- 4 Members of Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to:
 - (a) Note the information contained in this report.

Background

- 5 A number of measures are being implemented to support Care Leavers into Education, Employment and Training, as well as to enable Durham County Council to fulfil its responsibilities as Corporate Parent, including
- (a) Support for Looked After Children to enable them to make a successful transition from Year 11 into post-16 learning.
 - (b) Continued support for Care Leavers through the DurhamWorks Programme.
 - (c) Introduction of a new DurhamEnable (Supported Employment Service) for Care Leavers who have learning, physical and mental health barriers.
 - (d) Measures to support young people (including Care Leavers) whose employment prospects have been adversely affected by COVID-19.
 - (e) Processes to provide more employment-based opportunities for Care Leavers within the Local Authority through the Durham County Council Pathway for Young People.
 - (f) Delivery of a Pupil Premium Plus pilot scheme, to support the sustained participation of Care Leavers in Further Education.

Transition Support

- 6 In conjunction with support that Looked After Children receive in relation to their academic attainment, a range of other measures are in place to support their transition into post-16 Education, Employment and Training, through the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools. These include individual careers guidance with a Progression Adviser; access to group based activities to prepare them for leaving school; as well as intensive mentoring support. Progression Advisers also attend PEP reviews to ensure there is a partnership approach to transition support.
- 7 During the academic year 2020/21, a total of 800 young people in year 11 who were identified as being at risk of NEET (not in Education, Employment or Training) have been supported through the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools. This includes 34 Looked After Children. Initial information shows that of these, 28 (82.4%) have progressed into a positive Education, Employment or Training destination.

DurhamWorks Programme

- 8 DurhamWorks provides Care Leavers with support to enable them to progress into and remain in Education, Employment and Training. Through this Programme, Care Leavers receive wrap-a-round support from a Specialist Progression Advisor and have the opportunity to undertake bespoke activities to motivate and prepare them for employment. A DurhamWorks Grant has also been available to SME businesses to support the employment of young people – including Care Leavers.
- 9 Since its inception, 664 young people who have been supported by the DurhamWorks Programme have identified themselves as being Looked After or a Care Leaver. Of these, 478 young people have completed the Programme, with 354 (74.1%) of young people progressing into an Education, Employment or Training destination.
- 10 DurhamWorks and the Young People's Service hold monthly clinics to review and agree actions to support Care Leavers who are NEET into a positive destination.

DurhamEnable

- 11 DurhamEnable is a new Supported Employment Service for those aged 18 and above who have learning, physical and/or mental health barriers to employment. The Service has received ESF funding to support 900 County Durham residents between February 2021 and December 2023.
- 12 There are currently 69 participants being supported through the Programme, 5 of whom are Care Leavers. To date, 21 participants have been supported into employment, including one Care Leaver.

Durham County Council Pathway for Young People

- 13 Work is continuing to further embed the Pathway for Young People, which was developed to provide more opportunities for Care Leavers within Durham County Council.
- 14 A new Sessional Employment Programme offers Care Leavers the opportunity of paid work experience. Opportunities are identified which meet the talents, interests, and aspirations of each individual Care Leaver. A Sessional Employment Co-ordinator was appointed in July 2021 to facilitate the programme, an Implementation Plan has been developed and is currently being implemented. To date, 9 Care Leavers have been engaged onto the Programme and are being supported to find an appropriate placement.

- 15 The Kickstart Scheme was launched in Sept 2020 by the Department for Work and Pensions in response to the negative economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and aims to provide jobs for 6 months to young people aged 16-24 who are claiming Universal Credit. DurhamWorks has established a gateway to enable employers to recruit young people. Durham County Council has identified a number of opportunities across Services, with support being provided by a DurhamWorks Progression Worker. It was agreed that 6 of the opportunities within Durham County Council would be ringfenced specifically for Care Leavers. Two of these opportunities have been filled and a further 4 Care Leavers have successfully obtained non-ringfenced Kickstart opportunities.
- 16 Further action has been undertaken to enhance the existing measures that are in place to support more Care Leavers into Durham County Council Apprenticeships. This includes the ring-fencing of Apprenticeship opportunities specifically for Care Leavers, as well as delivery of bespoke training to support Care Leavers with their applications and to prepare them for the interview stage. There are currently 7 Care Leavers undertaking Apprenticeships within Durham County Council.
- 17 DurhamWorks is liaising with the Department for Work and Pensions to establish a number of 'Youth Hubs' across County Durham. These are spaces where unemployed young people can access a range of intensive support and provision to enable them to find a job. Youth Hubs are operating in Stanley and Peterlee, with plans to open a Youth Hub in Bishop Auckland in January / February 2022.
- 18 Increased awareness for Team Leaders / Managers – It was felt that Team Leaders / Managers may feel ill-equipped to employ care leavers and the need to increase their confidence was agreed. A number of briefing sessions to raise the profile of our role as "Corporate Parent" and to provide information on the range of support available have recently been delivered to Tier 4 and 5 Managers.
- 19 Support for individual Team Leaders / Managers – A further measure to enable individual Team Leaders/Managers to be more confident and comfortable in employing individual Care Leavers, was to ensure that a clear offer of support is established for each care leaver. This is currently available through their Social Worker, or Young Person's Advisor, or DurhamWorks member of staff. It has been communicated via the Tier 4 and 5 briefings but on appointment to any of the above programmes the key member of staff contacts the Team Leader/Manager to agree any support requirements and future contact levels.

- 20 Recruitment Policy - Durham County Council's Recruitment Policy outlines the Local Authority's responsibility as a Corporate Parent to young people who are leaving care and making the transition to adulthood. Care Leavers are guaranteed an interview, provided they meet the essential criteria for an advertised post.
- 21 The recruitment policy is currently in the process of being amended to include an Equal Opportunities statement to prompt managers to give further consideration to the appointment of Care Leavers.

Pupil Premium Plus Pilot

- 22 Durham County Council is taking part in a six month Pupil Premium Plus pilot scheme that is supporting Care Leavers in academic years 12 and 13 who are attending a Further Education College. As part of this programme, there is a dedicated Personal Adviser who is supporting a caseload of Care Leavers, to manage their sustained participation in Further Education. There is also a 'Keep In College' weekly incentive payment of £20 per week for Care Leavers who achieve over 80% authorised attendance. There are currently 58 Young People attending 14 different Further Education Colleges, who are accessing the Pupil Premium Plus offer.

Performance Data

- 23 The Local Authority, through the Progression and Learning Team, collects and reports the destinations of all young people aged 16-17 to the Department for Education on a monthly basis. This includes the number of those whose destination are 'NEET' and 'Not Known'.
- 24 The following table shows the performance data for young people aged 16-17, compared to the same period in 2020 and 2019 respectively.

	2021 (June)		2020 (June)		2019 (June)	
	All 16-17	LAC/CL	All 16-17	LAC/CL	All 16-17	LAC/CL
Total Cohort	10,691	118	10,204	146	10,012	115
Total EET	93.6%	76.3%	94.3%	83.6%	93.0%	68.7%
NEET	5.8%	22.0%	5.0%	16.4%	5.5%	31.3%
Not Known	0.6%	1.7%	0.7%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%
Combined NEET and Not Known	6.4%	23.8%	5.7%	16.4%	7.0%	31.3%

- 25 The number and proportion of 16-17 year old Care Leavers who are NEET has been decreasing over the past few years as demonstrated from 2019 to 2020. However, 2021 has halted this trend owing to the reduction in numbers of young people accessing participation opportunities, linked in part to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 26 Those whose destination is Not Known has followed a similar trend. The inability to conduct face-face work during significant periods as a result of the COVID pandemic undoubtedly contributed to a slight increase in 2021 compared to 2020.
- 27 The Looked After and Permanence Service (Children and Young People’s Services) also tracks and reports on the destinations of Care Leavers aged 17-18 and 19-21 to the Department for Education and comparative data is published on an annual basis. This data captures the destinations of Care Leavers at the time of their birthdays.
- 28 The following table shows the latest performance data for 17-18 year old and 19-21 year old Care Leavers, compared to the previous two years.

	2020		2019		2018	
	CL 17-18	CL 19-21	CL 17-18	CL 19-21	CL 17-18	CL 19-21
Total Cohort	84	175	79	156	62	160
Participating in EET	65% (55)	54% (94)	61% (48)	51% (80)	82% (51)	59% (95)
NEET	27% (23)	35% (62)	34% (27)	38% (60)	15% (9)	32% (51)

Department for Education: Children Looked After in England (including Adoption), year ending 31st March.

Future Priorities to Support Care Leavers

- 29 To support more Care Leavers to make a successful transition into post-16 Education, Employment and Training, the following priorities have been identified:
- Continue to work with senior managers to maximise the Durham County Council Pathway for Young people, including increasing the number and variety of opportunities being offered.
 - Co-ordinate the new ESF programmes (being delivered via DurhamWorks) from January 2022 to ensure Care Leavers continue to be a priority and benefit from the increase in employment focused opportunities.

Conclusion

30 This report has highlighted the actions undertaken to support more Care Leavers into Education, Employment or Training, including measures to support Care Leavers through the Durham County Council Pathway for Young People. However, it is recognised that further work is required, and to this end, the report has also highlighted a number of future priorities that aim to build upon the progress that has already been made.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

None.

Finance

None.

Consultation

None.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

1.0 FTE Progression Adviser post funded to support delivery of Pupil Premium Plus pilot programme. 0.5 Sessional Employment Co-ordinator post funded to support delivery of Sessional Employment programme.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

None.

Procurement

None.