

Corporate Parenting Panel

28 April 2023

Progress Report on the Care Leavers Strategy and Action Plan



Report of Jodie Henderson Practice Lead, Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council and Sharon Davey, Strategic Manager Children in our Care, Children's Social Care, DCC

Electoral division affected:

None.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report outlines the progress of the Care Leaving Service Action Plan and Strategy.

Executive Summary

- 2 The Children Act 1989 places duties on Local Authorities towards 'looked after' and previously 'looked after' children as they exit the care system. The service to young people who have been in the care of Durham Children's services is delivered to all young people aged between 16 and 25 who fall within the eligibility criteria. This criterion includes:
 - (a) **eligible child**, who is a child aged 16 or 17 and is currently Looked After or has been looked after by the Local Authority for 13 weeks since the age of 14;
 - (b) **relevant child**, who is a child aged 16 or 17 who has been Looked After for 13 weeks since the aged of 14 or who has been looked after since the age of 16 but is no longer Looked After;
 - (c) **former relevant child**, who is a young person aged 18-25 who has been an eligible or relevant child prior to becoming 18;
 - (d) **Or other qualifying care leavers**, who is young person who was Looked After for a period of less than 13 weeks since the age of 14 or was Looked After since the age of 16.

Recommendation

- 3 Members of Corporate Parenting Panel are recommended to:
 - (a) Note the content of this report.

Background

- 4 The offer from the leaving Care service is published in the Local Offer to Care Leavers which provides details of how support will be provided to young people with regards to:
 - (a) Where young people live; this includes all options, staying put, supporting lodgings, supported accommodation, living alone and university accommodation as well as advice to avoid homelessness and support for any housing issues;
 - (b) Money: help with managing money, help with benefits, setting up home money, and all other types of financial advice;
 - (c) Looking After themselves; Physical and emotional health advice and support, sexual health, drug and alcohol support, domestic abuse and healthy relationship advice, someone to talk to, smoking cessation and opportunities to get involved in things;
 - (d) Education employment and training; advice when thinking about leaving school, sixth form or college, work experience and part time jobs, learning to drive, apprenticeships or traineeships, going to university, getting a job.

Service Developments

- 5 The service continues to grow and develop, and we have recruited young persons advisors into the role to support with working with our young people from the age of 16.
- 6 The service is resourced to work with approximately 300 young adults at any one time with 2 teams of Young People's Advisors supported by 2 team managers and a Social Work Consultants and a service manager, to support the service with continuous improvement planning.
- 7 The staff group continue to report the structure working well and aiding them to focus on the needs of this group of young people. We have positive links with the community, partners, and young people. We have seen improvements with accommodation and education, training, and employment.
- 8 The service has as an established care leavers hub in the Sherburn Hill area of Durham. This is a well-used space which young people have taken a lead with determining what activities and groups will be provided. We are continuing to expand are care leavers hub, and there are plans to open a further two hubs within the next 12 months.

- 9 We have now developed a working participation group and scrutiny panel. We have also established a parents and child group and are currently developing a job shop to support young people into work.

Care Leavers Action Plan

- 10 Co-production of the Care Leavers action plan was identified as an essential aspect of the planning and a group of young people met to assess the DCC Local Offer to Care Leavers against national Local Offers and to develop the renewed action plan for 2023/2024
- 11 The action plan produced includes several areas of focus. The progress of these is recorded in detail in the plan but include
- (a) Pathway Plans and pathway plans needs assessments;
 - (b) Education, Employment, and training;
 - (c) Suitable accommodation;
 - (d) Improved health outcomes;
 - (e) Preparation for adulthood;
 - (f) Co-production;
 - (g) Training and development of young person advisors.

Continued Learning

- 12 Durham County Council care leavers service, is now an established member of the regional board for care leavers and we are committed to working with our partners to ensure that all care experienced young people have parity across the region, and explore all areas of best practice
- 13 The service is committed to the development of a Care experienced scrutiny group and is working with young people, Investors in children and participation and engagement support to develop this.
- 14 The Care Leavers are working with the care leavers covenant to understand and expand our local offer and ensure that our young people have access to a wide range of resources and activities that will enhance their lives and choices

Conclusion

- 15 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel will have an oversight and understanding of the Care Leaver Service and will be aware of the continuous developments within the service to ensure we strive to meet the needs of young people.

Authors

Rachael Riley Tel: 03000 262 214

Sharon Davey Tel: 03000 265759

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

We are bound by duties under the Children & Social Work Act / Children's Act to act in the best interests of children and young people.

Finance None.

Consultation None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The Young People's Service provides care and support to young people who identify as transgender, this forms 1% of the overall service group.

Climate Change None

Human Rights

Children and young people have access to the DCC complaints process

Crime and Disorder None

Staffing

The authority has a statutory duty to provide personal advisors to care experienced young people.

Accommodation

Should children and young people come into the care of the Local Authority, there is a need to ensure there is sufficient suitable placements

Risk

The risk of not providing the services and supports required by young people who have care leaver status is that they could be at risk of harm, either immediately or as a result of a failure to identify their needs and best support them to achieve their potential.

Procurement None

Appendix 2: Summary Presentation of Progress of Care Leavers Action Plan

Attached as a separate document