



Report of Rachel Farnham, Head of Children's Social Care, Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report is to inform Corporate Parenting Panel of the findings gathered from the annual feedback survey completed by our care leavers. Findings include what our care leavers think about the support they receive, what is working well and areas for further service development.
- 2 To inform the panel of how the outcomes of this survey will feed into development plans for the Care Leavers Service.
- 3 To inform the panel of changes in future surveys to help us better understand the views of individual groups of care leavers, dependant on such factors as age and cultural needs.

Executive Summary

- 4 Hearing and responding to the voice of the young person is at the centre of how we practice in Durham. Undertaking this survey and hearing from as many care leavers as possible about their experience of the service is a key way of the young person having their voice heard.
- 5 To achieve this survey, we identified a two week timeframe where the care leavers service would send the survey out to all young people and also take a targeted approach why young people's advisors sought to gain the views of as wide a range of young people as possible including unaccompanied asylum seeking young people.
- 6 The care leavers service manager developed the questions for this survey based on key priority areas within the care leaver service, such as ensuring young people have health summaries and focussing on understanding whether there are important relationships in the young people's lives.

- 7 The survey will be completed annually to provide us with evidence which drives further service improvement consistent with our Quality Assurance Framework. We hope to develop the next survey alongside young people as outlined in the report.

Recommendations

- 8 Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to:
 - (a) Note and consider the content of this report
 - (b) Agree with the report recommendations
 - (c) Agree that the survey be repeated annually.

Background

- 9 We are committed to an annual survey which is shared with Care Leavers to reflect the priorities of the service and to take into account learning from any previous surveys completed.
- 10 The survey was created by the Service Manager for the Care Leavers service with the support of Participation & Engagement Officer, Safeguarding and Professional Practice. The survey was created as a SNAP survey by our Consultations team allowing for both easy access and submission, as well as young people being able to complete and submit independent of their worker.
- 11 Alongside the use of the SNAP survey, Young Peoples Advisors (YPAs) contacted young people directly and recorded their feedback.

Methodology

- 12 The survey was completed during a two-week window and was launched to coincide with Celebrating Practice Week, 26th February 2024.
- 13 The survey was either completed independently with a link being sent by text or the young person was supported by their Young Person's Advisor to complete either in person or during a telephone conversation.

Findings

- 14 In total, 71 surveys were completed by our care leavers out of a possible 327 representing a 22% return, which is a positive response for optional surveys.
- 15 The positives identified within the service were:
 - (a) 93% of our care leavers said they agreed that they found it easy to contact their worker.
 - (b) 94% said they had a good relationship with their worker. This corresponds with 97% of the responding stating that they had positive relationships with those people who are important to them.
 - (c) 92% agreed that they had someone to talk to about their worries.
 - (d) 82% were aware of how to access mental health emotional wellbeing support should they need it, with only 2% saying they didn't know. This is a reflection of how Young People's Advisors have supported our young people to facilitate this.

- (e) 89% of young people said they had the opportunity to tell the worker what they would like in their plan. Whilst being positive, it does highlight a need to understand further why and when this isn't the case and look to achieve an even higher return on this indicator at the time of the next survey. The care leaver service now uses My World, My Plan when meeting with young people to ensure their views influence their plan and there is a report going to CSCMT to ask for agreement that this can also be used as a pathway plan review tool for care leavers. We would expect the greater use of this tool to improve this feedback.
 - (f) A real highlight of the responses we received was that 95% said they agreed that their worker did what they said they would, which is fundamental to building relationships, trust and supporting positive development and change.
 - (g) 94% of respondents said their worker helped them understand things.
 - (h) Overall, 96% of those who responded said they were 'Happy' or 'Very Happy' about the service they receive. One young person told us "The service is amazing, and I couldn't ask for a better support worker. She has helped me through a lot of my problems and been there for me when no one else was."
- 16 In respect of whether care leavers were aware of their entitlements as reflected in the local offer the responses reflected strength. These being:
- (a) 83% of respondents were aware of the Care Leavers Local Offer meaning 17% were either unsure or not aware.
 - (b) 84% said they knew how to get access to support to get into Education, Training or Employment.
 - (c) 83% said they knew where to get help with finance.
 - (d) 82% said they were happy with where they lived and it met their needs well.
- 17 The aspect of The Care Leavers Offer which was less well known was in relation to how to acquire their health summary with only 58% agreeing and 16% stating that they don't know. As the survey does not break the responses down into age ranges, it is difficult to know whether the recent drive on achieving health summaries for 17 year olds who will now be care leavers is reflected within the 58% and whether older care leavers who did not receive this level of support to gain their health

summaries are within the 16%. This is an area of development for the survey next year.

- 18 Other aspects from the survey response where we feel there is learning would be related to what young people tell us about their overall experience and key transitions. 78% said that their transition from having a social worker to having a Young Person's Advisor was well managed with 7% of respondents disagreeing and stating that it was not. This is a key area of development jointly for the Children Looked After and Care Leaver Service, again we don't understand which age range was less satisfied and whether UASC were more satisfied when they do not change teams as they become care leavers.
- 19 73% of young people said their worker had helped them to understand why they were unable to live with their family and 27% saying they had not. It is not clear from the survey if those 27% wanted or needed more support to understand or not but may well be something YPA's need to check in with their young people about early on in their involvement. This is another already identified area of development, as part of the Regional Care Leavers Young People's Board, the Care Leavers Service Manager and Head of Children's Social Care are committed to working with young people to ensure when they leave care, they receive a Later Life Letter if they want this, to ensure their social worker explains their time in care including why they could not live with their family.

Conclusion

- 20 Our young people have told us, through the survey, that there are many strengths in our services for care leavers. This is consistent with audit findings, anecdotal feedback and the recent Focused Visit by Ofsted's findings in relation to our Care Leavers Service (November 2023).
- 21 We are committed to further developing this survey as an important part of our Quality Assurance process. Ensuring young people's voices are heard and this leads to positive change.
- 22 The areas young people have identified as being less strong are already priority areas for the Care Leavers Service Development Plan, these being transition planning to being a care leaver and health summaries and there will be a continued focus on these areas over this year.
- 23 For next year's survey we will work with the Connect group running every two weeks at Stanley Hub to ensure the survey is developed as below:
 - (a) Young people developing what they want to know linked to care leaver service priorities and how young people should be asked.

- (b) What groups of young people we want to understand, including their age ranges and cultural backgrounds
 - (c) What time of the year to complete the survey and how we will do this including using the participation groups we already run.
 - (d) How to ensure those young people who give less input into our service development can be reached and involved in the survey.
- 24 The Care Leavers Service will write to every care leaver ensuring they understand the results of this survey and are able to give any further views or be involved in future participation.
- 25 The results of this survey will be included in this years' Care Leavers Development Plan.

Author

Lesley Baldry

Tel: 03000 264 443

Lee Peacock

03000 269 444

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications.

Finance

There are no budget requirements.

Consultation

A group of care leavers have been consulted and there are plans to expand and grow this consultation to ensure wider views are considered as the survey develops.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The service continually seeks to address inequalities and the survey is designed to further support and address equality and diversity for our Care Leavers. All care leavers were given opportunities to complete the survey and support was offered to those who may have additional needs.

Climate Change

No impact.

Human Rights

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Crime and Disorder

Not affected.

Staffing

Existing staff will support the Survey.

Accommodation

No additional accommodation is required.

Risk

Safeguarding of all young people will be a priority of the group, which is supported by Children's Social Care Staff. Surveys were confidential and voluntary.

Procurement

No implications.

Appendix 2: Summary of Findings

Attached as a separate document.