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**Report of Rachel Farnham, Head of Children’s Social Care, Children and Young People’s Service, Durham County Council**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

None

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 This report is to explain the Custody Project being run by the Care Leavers Service. The progress of this project and the next steps are detailed.

**Executive summary**

- 2 The Custody Project was set up as there are 13 young people in custody who are Care Leavers in County Durham. There are additional Care Leavers from other areas of the country within Durham Prison which is a holding prison for young people awaiting their sentence or to be moved to other prisons.
- 3 We wanted to ensure that we reached out to these young people so that they understand the local offer and the support they are entitled to as Care Leavers.
- 4 We wanted to ensure that young people in custody got the support that any good parent would give when they are in custody.
- 5 We wanted to ensure we increase our ability to work with staff in the prison to continue care planning for the young person in custody so that we support them well when they are there and are able to plan for their release.
- 6 So far, we have set up monthly sessions within Durham Prison and have had 38 young people attending. This has consisted of the Care Leavers we have there and Care Leavers from other areas of the country.
- 7 We have linked Care Leavers from other areas of the country with their own local authority and been able to remind them to access their Local Offer.

- 8 We have continued positive links with some of our own Care Leavers in custody and re-established links with others, ensuring that they all understand the role of the Young People's Advisor and the Local Offer.
- 9 We have developed a positive link with the Care Leaver Lead within the prison, she is also now providing her own groups for Care Leavers to attend.
- 10 Examples of changes we have made for young people are, that staff in the prison understand the needs of Care Leavers better, practical support has been given such as ensuring a young person has trainers, a young person who was living on the streets is now actively working with us again.
- 11 Next steps are to ensure that the custody offer is robust to all of our Care Leavers in custody. We want to make links with other prisons.
- 12 Other authorities in our region are now copying our custody model and making links with prisons in their areas. We are reaching out to them so that we can be directly involved in their prison sessions, to see our Care Leavers and ensure they are offered support.
- 13 We are seeking to directly build our own links with Wetherby Young Offender Institution so that we can build our custody offer at an earlier stage of the transition to being a Care Leaver as not only Care Leavers serve their sentences there but also some of our young people in care.
- 14 We want to establish a young people group in Durham Prison which will help inform our future practise. The group would tell us what works well for them and help us understand the factors that have meant they end up in custody so we can work with our partners in the Youth Offending and Probation Services on earlier effective interventions.
- 15 We are involving Durham Prison in our Peer Mentoring Project, working with them to develop a Peer Mentor scheme within the prison.
- 16 We are offering a Peer Mentor to young people in custody outside of our area so that even if they don't have active support from a Young Person's Advisor they have someone to visit them who can offer support and advice.
- 17 We are completing an audit of all our young people in custody, to look at the factors that led them to being in custody and to ensure we have a base line custody offer developed for all young people in custody. This audit will be completed by June 2024.

## **Recommendations**

18 Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to:

- (a) Note the progress of the Custody Work the Care Leavers Service are doing and agree the future plans.

## **Background**

- 19 As part of the Care Leavers Service Development Plan linked to national priorities, we wanted to ensure a consistent offer for all Care Leavers in custody.
- 20 The Team Manager contacted Durham Prison to facilitate a link with the Care Leaver Lead. It was decided to pilot a session which the Team Manager attended with a Young People's Advisor. Care Leavers in Durham Prison who would be invited to attend the session were identified.
- 21 This was a well-attended session and it became clear that Care Leavers were asking about the Durham Local Offer and what their own local authority could offer. This formed the basis of the work plan.

## **Main implications**

- 22 We are able to better the Pathway Plan for Durham Care Leavers in Durham Prison as we now have the access to be able to build on our relationships with them, ensuring that they know about the Local Offer and what support their YPA can offer
- 23 We are able to provide practical support so that Care Leavers are not disadvantaged due to birth family members not offering support, such as providing them items such as trainers to wear in prison.
- 24 We are able to direct Care Leavers from other authorities to their own local authority and ensure they understand their rights as a Care Leaver.

## **Conclusion**

- 25 The Custody Project within Durham is leading the way regionally to ensure that Care Leavers in custody understand their rights and have access to support and effective Pathway Planning.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications, this project has been agreed by the Durham Prison Service and sits within the guidelines for professional visits.

### **Finance**

There are no financial implications other than those in providing Care Leavers with practical support which sits within the Care Leavers budget.

### **Consultation**

Young people are consulted during visits so that we understand the impact this has had on them and a more formal consultation group will be developed in the New Year.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

There is equal access for all Care Leavers within Durham Prison, regardless of which authority they come from.

### **Climate Change**

Staff car share when attending visits to limit the impact on climate change.

### **Human Rights**

The Human Right to Liberty and Security is referenced as we seek to ensure that Pathway Planning takes place to ensure the young person is well supported back into the community and any cycle of criminal activity is addressed.

### **Crime and Disorder**

The Custody Project should have a positive impact on reducing reoffending.

### **Staffing**

The existing team from the Care Leavers Service are supporting young people with this project.

### **Accommodation**

The custody project takes place within Durham Prison.

### **Risk**

There is no risk to young people or staff as the visits take place with the support and involvement of prison staff and within their safety guidelines.

### **Procurement**

No implications.