

## Corporate Parenting Panel

19 July 2024

### Care Leavers Service – Peer Mentoring Scheme



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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 Peer Mentoring Scheme and update Corporate Parenting Panel on the progress of the scheme including future developments.

### Executive Summary

- 2 One of the fundamental aims of the scheme is to benefit not only the young people being mentored but the young people and adults with care experience being the mentors. We hope the mentors themselves will feel more part of their local community, we hope that their own emotional wellbeing will increase alongside their confidence, and they will certainly build their CVs. The Peer Mentor Coordinator himself is an example of this as he has worked as an Independent Visitor.
- 3 The building of the scheme is rapidly progressing with ten mentors currently going through the recruitment process and seven young people waiting for mentors.
- 4 Training and development for mentors is now fully developed and all steps being taken are considered to be sustainable and to have little future cost. As the funding from the DFE ends in March 2025 our focus is to build a scheme which can then be funded by the Local Authority.
- 5 Moving forward we have the following aims for the next three months.
  - (a) A database to be built on which will be included the goals of all young people being mentored and their mentors and how we track whether these goals are achieved as part of the scheme.
  - (b) Continue to build our bank of mentors and increase the number of matches to young people.

- (c) Joint working with the Lifelong Links Project will take place to consider how the Peer Mentor Scheme can support a young person as part of that project and to ensure joined up working in terms of young people being supported.
- (d) An admin support worker to be in place supporting the team.
- (e) Continue to build the scheme in a sustainable way including building on the existing links within community, considering ways to bring the mentors and young people together as a group to build networks, increase support and confidence while being able to reduce activity costs and looking at resources and businesses so that the cost of activities is funded.

## **Recommendations**

- 6 Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to:
- (a) Note the progress of the Peer Mentoring Scheme and provide any comments.

## Background

- 7 The Care Leavers Service Manager placed a bid with the DFE on 25th August 2023 to gain funding for the Peer Mentoring Scheme, this bid was placed alongside a bid for the Lifelong Links Programme.
- 8 The service was informed that the bids for both projects were successful on 1st December 2023.
- 9 The funding gained from the DFE is as detailed below and ends on 31st March 2025.
  - (a) Financial Year 2023/2024: £44,209
  - (b) Financial Year 2024/2025: £158,385
- 10 The focus of the scheme is to support young people transitioning to leaving care to have support networks, feel part of their local community and to increase their confidence and emotional wellbeing.
- 11 The service aims to measure success from the voices of young people linked to stability in their first homes, feeling part of their local community and knowing where to gain support as well as being in education, training, or employment.
- 12 A project plan has been in place since December 2023, the focus for the first funding period until March 2024 was the following:
  - (a) Ensuring the scheme was understood and publicised.
  - (b) The recruitment of the Peer Mentor Coordinator.
  - (c) The recruitment of Peer Mentors.
  - (d) Initial identification of young people to be mentored.
  - (e) The recruitment of business administration support.
  - (f) Development of the training for Peer Mentors.
- 13 During the period from December 2023 to March 2024, the Care Leaver Service Manager started to develop the project with support from the Coordinator for the Independent Visitor Scheme within the Youth Offending Service.
- 14 We have ensured that the project is known about by producing a range of leaflets for mentors, professionals, and young people. The team is also working with other service areas to ensure they are aware of the scheme as well as advertising on North-East Jobs and on social media.

- 15 A Peer Mentor Coordinator was appointed in March 2024.
- 16 The Peer Mentor Coordinator has driven forward the recruitment of care experienced young people and adults by linking with our Care Leavers Connect Group and Durham's Participation Worker as well as making links with local businesses such as Amazon and within colleges and universities.
- 17 There are currently five care leavers and care experienced adults going through the recruitment and training process. There are five other mentors' being explored.
- 18 The team is working closely with the Coordinator of our Staying Close Team to identify young people moving into their first home and to offer them Peer Mentoring Support. Two young people engaged with Staying Close have expressed a wish to have a mentor.
- 19 A further five young people have been identified who wish to have a mentor.
- 20 A part time Business Administrator has been appointed and is progressing through the recruitment process.
- 21 Nick Barwick has been commissioned to deliver training and development for the scheme. His Peer Coordinator is mentoring the team Peer Mentor Coordinator and two other members of his team are attending Durham on the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd of July to deliver training to internal mentors. Sessions will be delivered to Social Workers, Personal Advisors and young people within Staying Close and the Peer Mentoring Scheme. An aspiration session will be delivered with 16-year-olds. The training that Nick and his team are delivering will be replicated and delivered internally in the future.
- 22 In the interim period the initial cohort of mentors are using Durham's own safeguarding training. This will continue to support the work that Nick Barwick delivers.
- 23 The service is developing trauma training with the support of Full Circle and our Emotional Wellbeing Worker. Trauma training for mentors is critical to ensure that they remain emotionally healthy and are not impacted by the experiences of the young people they mentor.

### **Main implications**

- 24 Young People will develop their networks and be supported to use resources within their local community to improve their emotional wellbeing.

- 25 Mentors who are care experienced will be able to increase their own confidence and build their CV's by supporting other young people using their own experience.

## **Conclusion**

- 26 The Peer Mentoring Coordinator is able to ensure that Durham can offer opportunities to care experienced adults and young people to support them to meet their own goals. The Peer Mentoring Coordinator is supporting the recruitment process and guiding the build of the scheme.
- 27 Joint working is taking place between the Care Leavers Service, the Staying Close Coordinator and the Life-Long Links Project to ensure young people are supported with positive networks to enable them to achieve and maintain stability in their lives.
- 28 A sustainable programme is being developed with funding being used to create resources that will be used in County Durham to ensure the scheme will continue when the funding ends in March 2025.
- 29 Goals are being agreed with young people being mentored from the beginning of our involvement with them and progress will be measured to understand whether these goals are being met linked to the wider Care Leaver Service Development Plan.

## **Author**

Lesley Baldry

Tel: 0771 754 1944

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications, this project has been funded by the DFE and is supported by DCC, including appropriate employment checks and training and development for mentors.

### **Finance**

There are no financial implications as the scheme is DFE funded, however, we are already building a sustainable low-cost business case to continue the scheme beyond March 2025.

### **Consultation**

Young people are being consulted throughout the development of the scheme, they are asked for their goals, views on the mentor match and how their goals should be reviewed.

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

There is equal access to the scheme for all care leavers and children in care over the age of 16 years.

### **Climate Change**

There is no impact on climate change other than the printing of leaflets and travel for mentors and young people being mentored, however, the intention is to keep activities very close to where the young person lives.

### **Human Rights**

This fits well with the Human Rights, the Right to Life and the Right to Work and Education as a stable life with future aspirations is exactly what we want to achieve.

### **Crime and Disorder**

The Peer Mentoring Project should ensure young people have a positive support network which should reduce offending and the risk of exploitation.

### **Staffing**

Staffing of the scheme is limited to the coordinator and part time admin worker. The mentors are volunteers.

### **Accommodation**

The staff are based within the Stanley Care Leavers Hub and Green Lane within the Care Leavers Team. Activities will take place in the community.

**Risk**

All mentor's will be DBS checked and carefully matched with young people. There will be safety plans in place, should they be required, dependant on the young people's needs.

**Procurement**

No implications.