

## Corporate Parenting Panel

6 December 2024

### Care Leavers Service - Custody Audit Summary Update



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## Report of Rachel Farnham, Head of Children's Social Care, CYPS DCC

### Electoral division(s) affected:

None

### Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report details the outcome of the Custody Audit undertaken by the Care Leavers Management Team which was completed on 8 July 2024.

### Executive summary

- 2 The purpose of this audit was to understand the needs of Care Leavers in custody including what led to their offending behaviours and how we can improve our support to this group of young people.
- 3 The audit found that, predominantly, the offending behaviours leading to young people being in custody were linked to violent behaviours, however, some of the offending was related to sexual offences.
- 4 The young people were found to have very limited positive support networks.
- 5 There is a concern that many young people had not been in education from a young age.
- 6 There had been little stability in the young people's lives including changes of home and social workers.
- 7 Planning for release is not always robust.
- 8 Young people do not have a consistent offer of financial support for essentials such as clothing.
- 9 The impact of the Custody Project, compiled in partnership with HMP Durham, was clear with regard to young people building support networks and being better understood.

- 10 The findings have supported the Care Leavers Service to develop a plan to enable better support to be put in place for Care Leavers in custody.

### **Recommendation**

- 11 The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to:
  - (a) consider the findings of the audit and agree to support the action plan.

## Background

- 12 The Team Manager attended the National Benchmarking Forum in 2023 and heard a care leaver, who had been in custody, speaking about his experience which included his lack of access to support and having only prison plimsols to wear. This had an emotional impact on the Team Manager and suggested the desirability of improving the offer for care leavers in custody in Durham and nationally.
- 13 The Custody Project was subsequently developed and presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel. The project has so far reached 83 care leavers, within HMP Durham, who have been able to access improved support from prison staff and Young Person's Advisor's in Durham. Care Leavers in HMP from outside the county have been linked with the local authority which is able to support them.
- 14 Fortnightly sessions continue within HMP Durham for care leavers. Prison staff are now more aware of their needs and attended an event with the Care Leavers Team based on understanding the need for one important person in a young person's life that can make a change.
- 15 Links are now being made with prisons throughout the region to try to roll out the scheme more widely.
- 16 The Team Manager attended the 2024 National Bench Marking Forum and spoke to the conference about County Durham's Custody Scheme. The young person who had presented in 2023 was also in attendance told the Team Manager how happy he was that she had listened and that they had both made a difference for care leavers in custody.
- 17 The Care Leavers Service wanted to gain a better understanding of the needs of care leavers in custody and to consider what could be done to prevent offending and further increase the offer to those young people.
- 18 During June and July 2024, the Care Leavers Service management team undertook an audit of all care leavers in custody, this included 15 young people in custody at this point in time.
- 19 The rationale for the audit was to understand the experiences of young people in custody including:
  - (a) The offending factors, when they started and what interventions have taken place.
  - (b) Are there additional factors, such as learning needs, to be taken into consideration.
  - (c) How the young person has been assessed and supported.

(d) How we are working with the young person to plan for their future.

20 Areas of good practice were found to include:

- Pathway Planning - in all but one case was found to be robust, forward thinking, aspirational and completed with the young person.
- Visits are regular and purposeful.
- There is recent evidence of the building support networks.
- There is evidence of agencies working together to plan for release.
- The positive impact of building links within prison can be seen as part of the Custody Project.

21 The audit also identified the following areas which could be improved; these are being developed in an action plan as detailed in Appendix 2.

- Understanding the impact of not being in education from a young age, in particular for children with additional needs, and developing interventions to try to prevent future offending.
- Identifying indicators for future violent behaviours which can result in offending when considering the impact of domestic violence, neglect, alcohol or substance misuse and mental health issues.
- Ensure staff in the Care Leavers and CLA services are equipped to understand familial sexual abuse, the stages and ages of this and the impact this has on young adults who have been the abuser.
- A lack of stability for the young people, including changes in social worker, YPA's and where they live.
- Networks are limited and some family networks tend to continue to be troubled relationships.
- Multi agency planning for release should be evident in all cases.
- Facilitate links being made within prisons to make visits easier to arrange and to ensure more support is in place for the young person.

- Ensure the new finance process is used to evidence consistent support for items such as clothing and pocket money.

## **Main implications**

- 22 Undertaking this audit provided the Care Leaver Service with a greater understanding of the needs of care leavers in custody and the areas of focus needed for the future.
- 23 The difference the Custody Project is making was well evidenced and the learning from this is now part of future planning.
- 24 The offer the Care Leaver Service has developed over the last year can also be used for care leavers in custody. The Peer Mentoring Project is going to be influential in terms of developing support networks as we can see from this audit that even though young people may have been in care prior to being in custody, positive support networks other than their YPA have not been developed.
- 25 Ideas to ensure effective earlier intervention and prevention of offending have come from this audit. These include the development of a multi-agency approach to addressing children not being in school as soon as they stop attending and working with Youth Offending to develop a further joined up approach to preventing offending.

## **Conclusion**

- 26 The Care Leavers Team Manager had identified an area where the Care Leavers Service needed to improve their offer is now being developed as the Custody Scheme. However, completing this audit has provided the Care Leaver Service with a focus to try and provide consistent support for care leavers in custody and to develop different interventions to try to prevent offending.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None.

### **Finance**

Support for Care Leavers staff is provided from budgets within the Care Leaver Service.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

Whilst undertaking this audit the Care Leavers Management Team have tried to understand the world of the young person from their Pathway Needs Assessment and views that they have given to their YPA.

The Care Leaver Team Manager has listened to a young person who was in custody and is now a care leaver as well as to other young people in custody as part of the audit. Their views have informed the development of the action plan.

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

It is intended that the same local offer is available to all care leavers in custody.

### **Climate Change**

None.

### **Human Rights**

No concerns.

### **Crime and Disorder**

No concerns.

### **Staffing**

There will be no requirement for additional staffing as existing staff currently undertake the support of care leavers in custody and will continue to work with an already established multi agency team.

### **Accommodation**

No impact.

### **Risk**

Not applicable.

### **Procurement**

Not applicable.

## Appendix 2: Areas for Improvement – Action Plan

Area for Improvement	Action Required	Lead	Timescale/Progress
Early multi-agency understanding and intervention when a child stops attending school.	Multi-Agency group to be set up to review data around CLA's failing to attend school and to create a multi-agency approach to address this at an early stage.	Lesley Baldry	First meeting has taken place, second meeting planned for October 2024
Understand what current support and interventions are in place for children who start to act out trauma by displaying violence due to what they have witnessed or experienced at home.	Meet with YOT and then convene a multi-agency group to consider the current provision and work together to build on this and develop further interventions.	Lesley Baldry	Begin in October 2024
Further develop the understanding of staff within the CLA and Care Leavers services of sexual harm in particular when this happens between children within the same family.	Meet with the Learning and Development team to consider how this may be rolled out.	Lesley Baldry and Rachael Riley	September 2024

<p>Ensure the impact of change is well understood and is at the heart of decision making around changes of worker or homes for young people.</p>	<p>Share the outcome of this audit widely with CLA team managers, Family First team managers and the Home Finder team.</p>	<p>Service Managers</p>	<p>August 2024</p>
<p>Continue to develop positive networks for young people.</p>	<p>Build on the Lifelong Links and Peer Mentoring work with a focus on ensuring there is a target group of young people not in education and young people beginning to show offending behaviours. Understand these young people from YOT and virtual school.</p>	<p>Chris Maughan  Nigel Connah</p>	<p>Begin August 2024</p>
<p>Ensure there is a bottom-line expectation of meetings for care leavers in custody.</p>	<p>As part of the custody project work with the prison and probation services ensure that meetings are happening for care leavers in custody to plan their release and to review their wellbeing and support networks.</p>	<p>Tracy Shaw</p>	<p>Build into custody work from August 2024</p>
<p>Increase the reach of the Custody Project to other prisons to support their individual offer for care leavers.</p>	<p>Identify lead YPA's to link with each prison and work with a prison link worker to build the offer for care leavers.</p>	<p>Tracy Shaw</p>	<p>Currently progressing</p>



<p>Ensure the support being provided to care leavers in custody is well evidenced on their file to achieve some parity.</p>	<p>Use the new finance process to evidence requesting pocket money, clothing and other items.</p> <p>Develop an offer which is used throughout the care leavers service.</p>	<p>Tracy Shaw and Lindsey Dodds</p>	<p>From October 2024.</p>
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