

Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee



4 July 2017

Supporting Care Leavers into Education, Employment and Training

Report of Margaret Whellans, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an introduction to a presentation on the progress being made to support Care Leavers to participate in Education, Employment and Training.

Background

- 2 Care Leavers are young people who have been in the care of the Local Authority for 13 weeks or more at any time. The Local Authority is responsible for Care Leavers as their Corporate Parent, recognising that they are a particularly vulnerable cohort of young people.
- 3 A significant amount of activity is being undertaken to support Care Leavers into Education, Employment and Training. This includes the implementation of a Participation Plan; the deployment of additional resources provided through the DurhamWorks Programme – Youth Employment Initiative; as well as the identification of more Apprenticeship and Traineeship opportunities within the Local Authority through its 'An Opportunity for Every Care Leaver' initiative.
- 4 This activity is contributing towards an increase in the proportion of Care Leavers participating in Education, Employment and Training and a reduction in the proportion who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).
- 5 Other actions to support Care Leavers include extending access to Personal Advisers to the age of 25, as well as implementation of 'Staying Close' and 'Staying Put' requirements.

Participation Plan

- 6 The Local Authority has a Participation Plan in place – 'Believe, Achieve and Succeed: Increasing the Participation of Young People in Learning 2015-2018' which co-ordinates a range of activities to increase the participation of young people in Education, Employment and Training, whilst at the same time reducing the number of young people who are NEET.

- 7 One of the Participation Plan's strategic objectives is to target support to young people in vulnerable groups, who have a greater risk of being in the NEET cohort. In support of this objective, there are a number of actions directly related to Care Leavers.
- 8 The implementation of the Participation Plan, including progress against targets, is rigorously monitored through appropriate operational and strategic groups.

DurhamWorks Programme – Youth Employment Initiative

- 9 DurhamWorks is a European funded, Local Authority led partnership programme that supports young people aged 16-24 who are NEET / unemployed and resident in County Durham. Funding for the programme has enabled increased resources to support Care Leavers, including sustained wrap-a-round support through three specialist DurhamWorks Transition Advisors. There are also bespoke activities to motivate and prepare young people for participation in learning, as well as a 'Learning, Working and Earning' Grant to the value of £5,000 for employers to support the employment of young people, including young people who are Care Leavers.
- 10 The specialist DurhamWorks Transition Advisors are working very closely with a broad range of partners to support Care Leavers. This is resulting in a greater understanding of the barriers that prevents some of them from progressing into sustained Education, Employment and Training. These barriers include accommodation, finance, childcare, low confidence and self-esteem, previous negative experiences of learning, mental health, youth offending, and transport.
- 11 As a result of DurhamWorks, there have been a number of positive progressions for Care Leavers into opportunities, including Apprenticeships, Traineeships, Study Programmes and employment.

An Opportunity for Every Care Leaver

- 12 'An Opportunity for Every Care Leaver' is a Local Authority initiative to identify and promote opportunities for Care Leavers, to support its responsibilities as Corporate Parent. Key developments include:
 - The creation of Service Group Champions to promote the benefits of providing opportunities to young people who are Care Leavers.
 - The identification of opportunities within Service Group areas, including Apprenticeships and Traineeships.
 - The development of a central brokerage function to match young people who are Care Leavers with identified opportunities.
 - The adoption of rigorous targets to increase the number of Apprenticeships and Traineeships provided to young people who are Care Leavers by 2020.

- 13 A significant barrier preventing some Care Leavers from progressing into an Apprenticeship or employment opportunity is the significant financial disadvantage that ensues once they cease to be eligible for certain Government benefits. Therefore, a priority is to utilise funding identified by the Local Authority in May 2017 to provide financial support to Care Leavers to ensure they are not at a financial disadvantage.

Other Actions

- 14 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires the Local Authority to extend support to Care Leavers to the age of 25, including provision of Personal Advisers. In preparation, the Local Authority has reviewed the Personal Adviser role and additional workforce development has been put in place.
- 15 As a result of the Children and Families Act 2014, young people in foster care in England have the right to stay with their foster families until they reach the age of 21, if both parties agree. The Local Authority has recently implemented a new process whereby 'Staying Put' is introduced into care planning when the young person reaches 15.5 years of age or sooner.
- 16 Following Sir Martin Narey's review of children's residential care in 2016¹, the Government has committed to implementing several of his recommendations, including introducing 'Staying Close' whereby young people leaving residential care will receive a guarantee of support for three years up to the age of 21. The Local authority has incorporated this measure into its Care Leaver Accommodation and Support Protocol.

Participation in Education, Employment and Training – Performance Data

- 17 The Local Authority collects performance data in relation to the participation of young people who are Care Leavers in Education, Employment and Training, as required by the Government.
- 18 The Progression and Learning Service (part of Durham County Council's Children and Young People's Services) supports the delivery of a number of statutory responsibilities on behalf of the Local Authority to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in Education, Employment and Training. In order to meet these responsibilities, the Local Authority is required to track and report the destinations of young people to the Department of Education on a monthly basis.
- 19 The following table shows the latest performance data for 16-18 year olds who are resident in County Durham, including the proportion of young people participating in RPA (Raising of the Participation Age) compliant Learning; the proportion of young people who are NEET; and the proportion of young people whose destination is Not Known to the Local Authority.

¹ Department for Education (2016) 'Residential Care in England – report of Sir Martin Narey's independent review of children's residential care.'

	April 2017			April 2016		
	All 16-18	Looked After	Care Leavers	All 16-18	Looked After	Care Leavers
Total Cohort ¹	16,595	91	151	16,957	89	114
Participating in Learning ¹	84.2%	79.1%	56.0%	85.1%	74.2%	52.6%
NEET ¹	6.2%	11.0%	30.7%	6.2%	18.5%	33.9%
Not Known ¹	2.6%	3.3%	6.0%	2.7%	3.4%	7.9%

¹Local Authority CCIS, Department for Education.

20 Compared to the same period last year, the proportion of Looked After young people and Care Leavers aged 16-18 participating in Learning has increased, and the proportion who are NEET or Not Known has decreased.

21 To be identified as participating in RPA compliant Learning, a young person must be engaged on one of the following routes:

- Full-time study in a School, College or with a Training Provider (minimum 540 directed learning hours);
- Full-time work or volunteering (20 hours or more) combined with part-time education or training leading to relevant regulated qualifications;
- An Apprenticeship, Traineeship or Supported Internship.

22 The Looked After and Permanence Service (part of Durham County Council's Children and Young People's Services) tracks and reports on the destinations of Care Leavers aged 17-21 to the Department of Education on a quarterly basis. This captures the destination of Care Leavers at the time of their birthdays. The definition used by the Looked After and Permanence Service to identify a Care Leaver aged 17-21 as participating in Education, Employment or Training is more flexible than that used by the Progression and Learning Service to identify a young person aged 16-18 as participating in RPA compliant Learning.

23 The following table shows the latest performance data for 17-21 year old Care Leavers compared with the same period in 2015/2016:

	2016/2017	2015/2016	North East	England
Total Cohort	239	232	NA	NA
Participating in Education, Employment or Training	69.5%	57.3%	50.0%	52.0%
NEET	25.1%	40.1%	40.0%	38.0%

17-21 year old Care Leavers – County Durham 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 Quarter 4; North East and England 2015/2016.

- 24 Compared to the same period last year, the proportion of Care Leavers aged 17-21 participating in education, employment or training has increased and the proportion who are NEET has decreased.

Conclusion

- 25 This report has outlined the actions being taken to increase the participation of young people who are Looked After or Care Leavers into Education, Employment and Training. The impact of these measures is evident in improved participation performance data for both 16-18 year old and 17-21 year old cohorts.

Recommendations

- 26 It is recommended that members of Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
- (a) Note the information contained within this report.
 - (b) Continue to monitor performance in relation to the participation of young people who are Looked After or Care Leavers in Education, Employment and Training.

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – None.

Staffing – None.

Risk – None

Equality and Diversity – None

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder – None

Human Rights – None

Consultation – None

Procurement – None

Disability Discrimination Act –None

Legal Implications – None