

Corporate Parenting Panel

26 January 2018



Care Leavers Update

Report of Karen Robb, Strategic Manager, Looked After Children and Permanence, Durham County Council

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide the Corporate Parenting Panel with an update on care leavers.

Background

- 2 This is the first quarterly report undertaken by the Young People's Service (YPS) and will focus on the activities undertaken by the service to support young people, who have left care and are open to the service.

- 3 The Service is split between a North and South Team, each with a Team Manager, Senior Practitioner, Social Workers, Young Person's Advisers, Social Work Assistants and a Team Co-ordinator working between both teams.

- 4 In addition to the above the service also has 3 Project Co-ordinators who have specialist roles in relation to:

Education, Employment & Training
Supported Lodgings
Accommodation & Support Provision

- 5 The report will reflect on the support provided to young people around:

Education, Employment and Training
Accommodation Provision and Placement Stability
Youth custody
Teenage Pregnancy

Key Performance Indicators

- 6 Within the service there are a number of key performance indicators (KPI's) that are monitored both internally and nationally by the Department of Education. The KPI's in relation to young people leaving care are NI147 & NI148 which relate to care leavers in suitable accommodation and care leavers accessing education, employment and training.

Care Leaver strategy

- 7 Within Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) there is a Care Leavers Strategy in place which is overarching and reflects the desire of Durham County Council to ensure that all care leavers have every opportunity to be happy, healthy and safe and to achieve their full potential in life and as they become adults.

Keep On Caring

- 8 Within CYPS the Keep on Caring Strategy is being incorporated into the Care Leavers Strategy and Action Plan with a view as to how best to implement the key elements into the services we deliver to young people.
- 9 The Government is committed to widening access to Higher Education for care leavers and have funded the National Care Leavers Benchmarking Forum (NCLBF) to offer advice and support when the young people are applying for higher education.
- 10 Care Leavers aged 19-23 years are to be given free education and training up until the age of 23 to gain level 2 or 3 qualifications. This has not yet filtered through to the colleges and has led to some confusion.
- 11 Recent reforms to Special Education Needs has promoted the use of supported internships, however this has been slow to materialise in County Durham but has been taken up nationally by the NHS.
- 12 The new care leaver's covenant will provide a way of expanding opportunities for care leavers. As a local authority we are already providing work experience opportunities, apprenticeships and traineeships for young people open to the service. This needs to continue and develop within the service and the wider council.

An Opportunity for Every Care Leaver

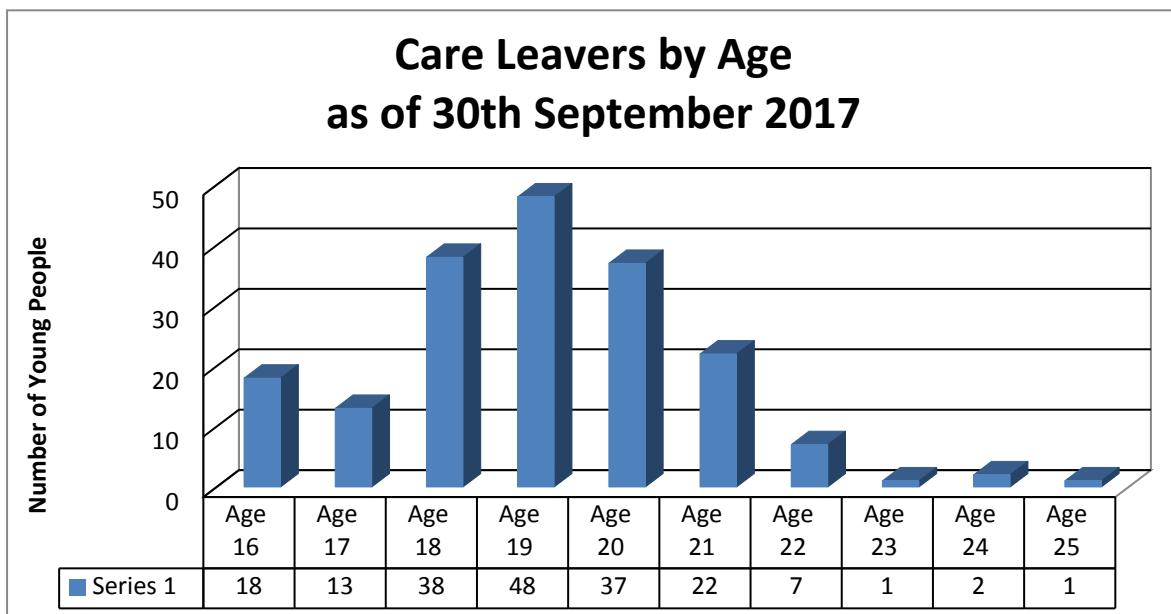
- 13 The Local Authority has developed an initiative for care leavers - 'An Opportunity for Every Care Leaver'. This is another example of partnership working and in quarter 2 has resulted in activity within the Council to identify and promote opportunities for young people who are Looked After or Care Leavers, in order for the Council to fulfil its responsibilities as Corporate Parent.

In practical terms it has provided some works experience opportunities within service direct, the IT installations team, the library service and within the REAL team through teenagers to work. An extended teenager to work programme has taken place within the motor vehicle maintenance team at Peterlee. Longer term work opportunities still require further development.

- 14 Financial barriers to education, employment and training have been removed through the provision of a budget of £120 K, to be spent bridging the financial gap for care leavers undertaking apprenticeship and living in supported housing or living independently.
- 15 The reduction in council tax for care leavers is also a positive move in young people having some financial stability by being in work and this includes apprenticeships.

Current Case Load

- 16 At the end of quarter 2, the service was actively supporting 187 care leavers between the ages of 16- 25 years. As can be seen from the graph below, the majority of care leavers open to the service were aged between 18 – 20 years.



Partnership Working

- 17 In order to achieve the best possible outcomes for care leavers, the service works in partnership with a number of other agencies to support young people in all areas of their lives. These include:
 - Children in Care Council (CICC)
 - Housing Solutions Service
 - DurhamWorks, and One Point
 - Adult Learning
 - Health Services
 - Department of Works and Pensions (DWP)
- 18 On-going joint working has also taken place with Jobcentre Plus, who have introduced a ‘marker’ that allows care leavers to be identified on their system and receive additional help when claiming benefits. The service has worked hard to ensure that there is minimal delay in care leavers receiving benefits

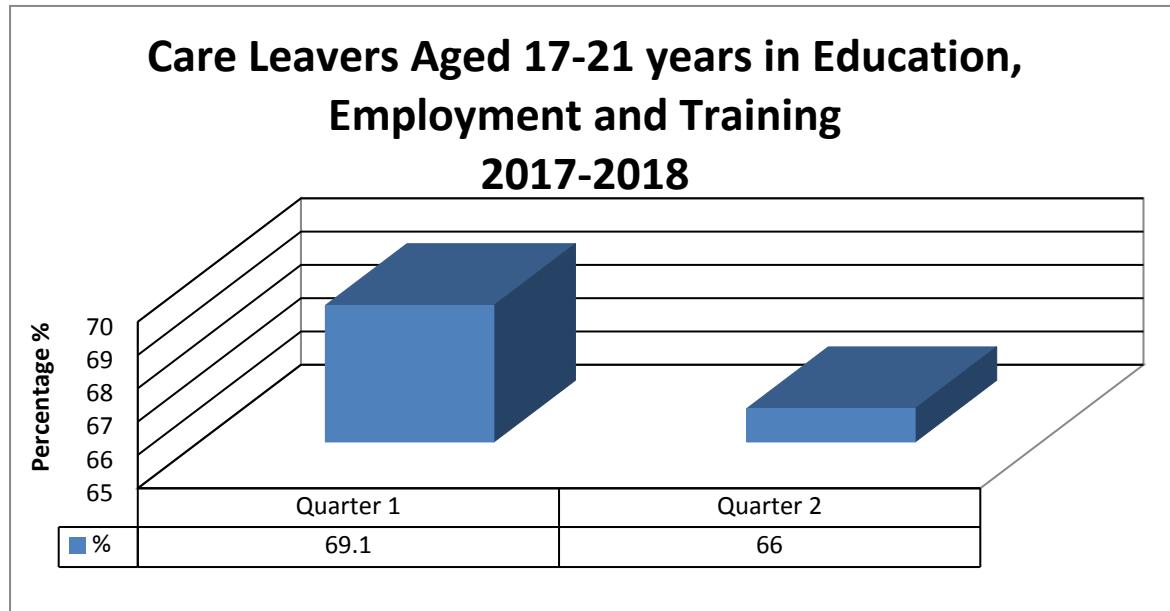
and Young Person's Advisers now have direct contact with the social justice champions in the job centres.

Education, Employment and Training (EET)

- 19 Within Durham County Council and YPS there is an ethos of supporting young people to aim high; developing aspirations for their future and helping each young person to reach their full potential through education, employment and training (EET).

Participation in Education, Employment and Training

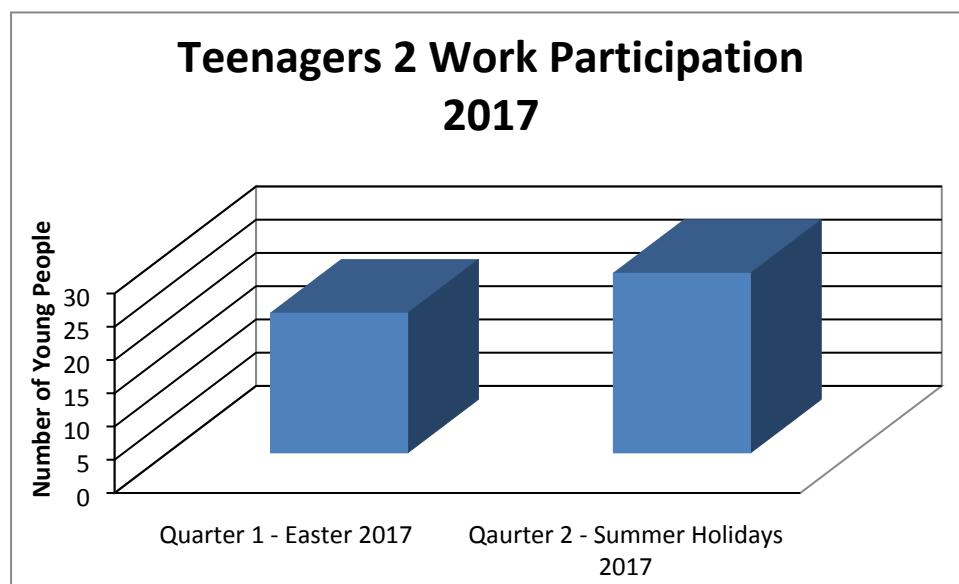
- 20 Since the implementation of the Project Co-ordinator role in August 2016, there have been improvements in outcomes for young people in EET. Based on the NI147 and NI148 returns; the service has seen the number of young people engaged in EET increase from 59.3% at the end of quarter 1 in 2016-2017 to 66% at the end of Quarter 2 in 2017-2018.
- 21 Whilst there has been a slight decline between Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 in 2017-2018; overall, the service continues to outperform other local authorities and is above the national average (52%) and local average (50%).
- 22 The decrease of 2% in those engaged in education, employment and training, coincides with a 2% increase in the number of care leavers who are pregnant or parents; who may not be engaged in any form of education or training.



Teenagers 2 Work

- 23 Since 2006, YPS has routinely provided young people who are looked after or care leavers the opportunity to participate in work experience placements during the school holidays; that offer young people an insight into the world of work.

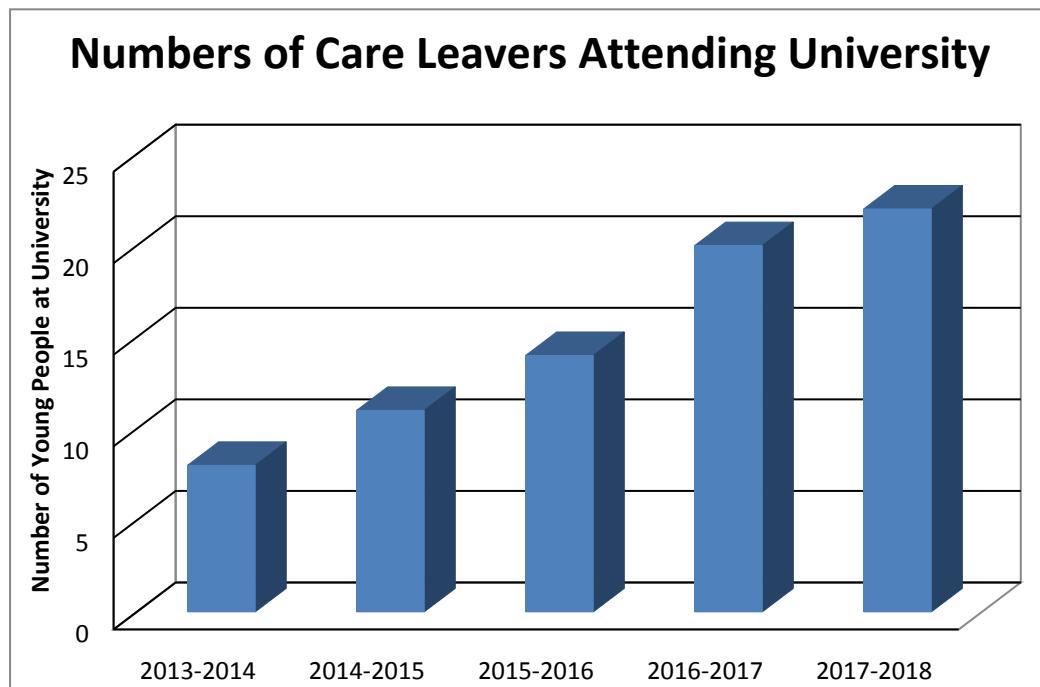
- 24 During Quarter 2, there has been 1 period of Teenagers 2 Work, which covered the summer holiday period, July – September 2017. During this period there were a total of 27 young people engaged in Teenagers 2 Work activities. 33 placements were arranged for young people; however 6 young people failed to engage with their placement.
- 25 Placements were varied and matched the young person's interests and availability, requiring a commitment to work up to 8 days in the 6 week period; which allows for holidays and other organised activities, the young person may be involved in.
- 26 Placements over the summer have been varied and have taken place within various employment sectors. Evaluations have been positive and young people have gained some valuable work experience.
- 27 Some placements were arranged and not taken up and whilst Teenagers 2 Work is seen as a positive experience, some young people often feel under pressure to participate; when they are not ready and can find the experience daunting.



Young People Attending University

- 28 At the time of writing this report, there are currently 22 young people attending University undertaking a variety of degree courses countrywide; including criminology, cyber security, geography animation and design psychology, archaeology and ancient history.
- 29 Unlike previous year's, most are concentrated in the north east and this helps to maintain regular visits and support; particularly when there are issues which demand an early response.
- 30 In addition to those undertaking degree courses, there are also 2 young people embarking on their Masters Degrees. This is a first for YPS and the

young people involved are to be commended for their commitment and determination to progress their educational attainments; often under difficult circumstances and often without family support.

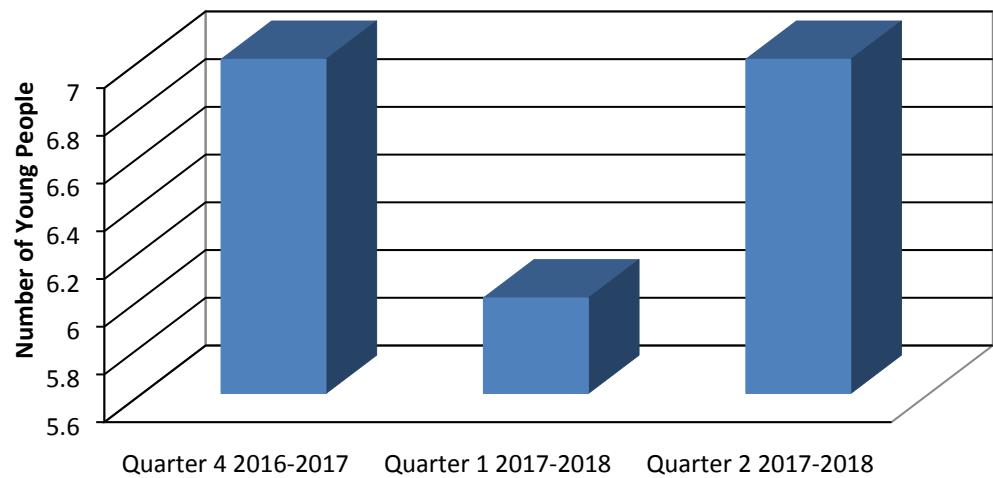


- 31 As can be seen from the graph above, university attendance has continually increased year on year. In 2010, 1 young person was attending university; this has now increased to 22 young people.
- 32 To support the needs of young people at university, the service has a dedicated worker who has developed knowledge and skills in all areas of student finance, applications and accommodation. Through this approach, young people are supported to access all relevant financial entitlements; as well as receiving support that is tailored to their individual needs.
- 33 It has also enabled the service to develop good relationships with universities, ensuring appropriate support is in place from the universities and has contributed to the sustainment of young people completing their degrees and who can find the experience overwhelming, initially.

Apprenticeships

- 34 At the end of Quarter 2, there were 7 young people aged 18+ undertaking an apprenticeship. This figure has remained relatively static since end of Quarter 4 in 2016-2017. It is disappointing that the vast amount of apprenticeships are undertaken within the provide sector; with only 1 being accessed within the County Council.

Care Leavers Aged 18+ in Apprenticeships



- 35 It has been hard for the service to encourage young people to apply for Council apprenticeships for varying reasons, which include the lack of confidence, motivation and family culture.
- 36 In order to counteract some of the barriers faced by young people, the service is considering the use of traineeship within the service; as a step-by –step approach; facilitating further work experience, skills and confidence building; with a view to enabling young people to apply for apprenticeship vacancies with increased ability and confidence.

National Open College Network (NOCN)

- 37 To improve opportunities for young people and address some of the barriers to education, employment and training, the service are in the process of rolling out NOCN qualifications for our “hard to reach” young people who are unable to sustain mainstream education and training.
- 38 The service currently have 10 young people engaged with the programme and whilst they are not our most hard to reach young people; they will act as a base line for the future development of the project.
- 39 By carefully matching the NOCN units to the young person’s skills and abilities, it has enabled the service to identify where the gaps are in relation to their independent living skills, including:
 - Independent travel
 - Food drink and cooking
 - Sex and relationships
 - Managing a budget
 - Setting personal goals
 - Skills for independent living
 - Working as volunteer

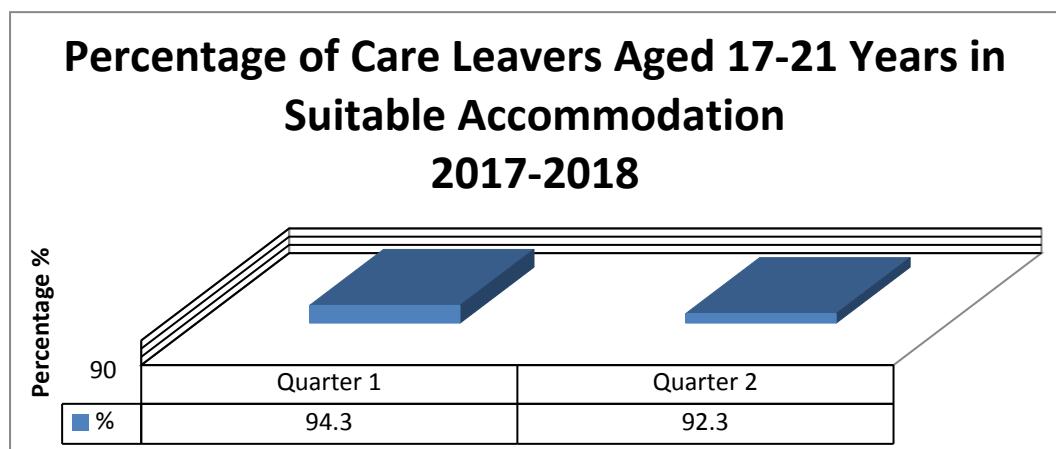
- 40 It is the intention of the service to schedule the training in such a way, to ensure there is a regular turnover of young people gaining the qualification and more young people being identified and asked as to whether they wish to take part in the scheme.

EET Group

- 41 The service also holds an EET group on a bi monthly basis; that is attended by our partners which include representatives from Sunderland and Teesside Universities, DurhamWorks, local colleges and One Point.
- 42 The group acts as a mechanism for the sharing of good practice and ensures all services are aware of developments on a local and national level and links directly to Durham's Care Leavers Action Plan.
- 43 Early identification of young people not engaged in education, employment or training is achieved by bi monthly surgeries with staff from DurhamWorks and YPS staff.

Accommodation

- 44 As part of the multi-agency partnerships undertaken with colleagues in housing, supported accommodation and Durham Key Options, young people leaving care are supported to make a planned transition to independence through the use of the Care Leavers Accommodation & Support Protocol (CLASP)
- 45 The service continues to work hard to ensure young people are accessing appropriate accommodation that is safe and suitable to their needs. The accommodation needs of care leavers are routinely monitored and recorded through NI147 and NI148 key performance indicators.
- 46 At the end of quarter 2, 92.3% of care leavers were living in suitable accommodation and appropriate. This is slightly lower than quarter 1 figures which were 94.3%. Whilst the figures have declined slightly, they remain above the national average (84%) and the local averages (86%).



Accommodation Options

- 47 Young people have accessed a variety of accommodation options throughout Quarter 2, some of which have been emergency accommodation options.

Planned Accommodation:

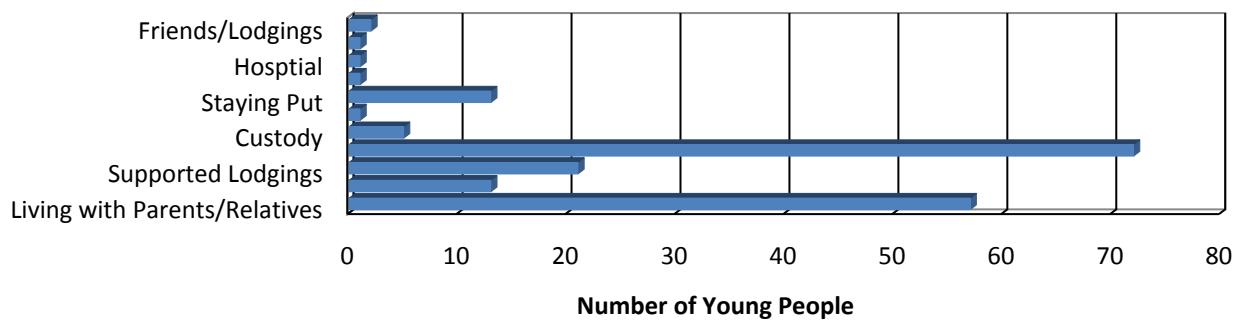
- Commissioned Supported Accommodation
- Durham Key Options – Social Tenancies
- Privately Rented Accommodation
- Supported Lodgings Placement
- Staying Put Placements

Emergency Accommodation:

- Unplanned Emergency Supported Lodgings
- Bed & Breakfast Placements
- YMCA Emergency Bed

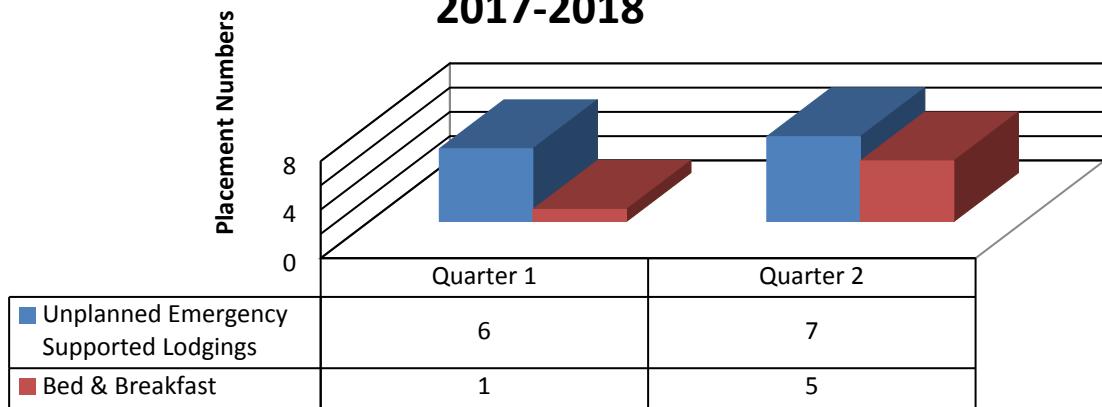
- 48 As can be seen from the graph below, the majority of young people were living in their own tenancy at the end of quarter 2. The second largest grouping referred to young people returning home to live with their parents or extended family.

Accommodation Options Accessed by Care Leavers as of 30th September 2017



- 49 As a service, we continue to adopt a zero tolerance approach to the use of bed & breakfast placements for young people. However, during quarter 2, it was necessary for 2 young people to be placed into bed and breakfast, utilising 13 bed nights in total.
- 50 The placements were due to the complexity of the young people involved and lack of alternative accommodation placements, as the young people involved had exhausted previous accommodation options.
- 51 As can be seen from the following, 12 placements were made into emergency accommodation during quarter 2 for 8 young people; utilising a total of 288 bed nights:

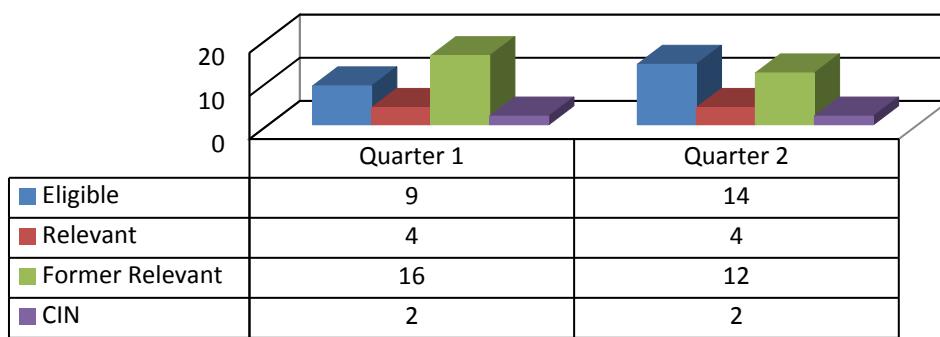
Emergency Accommodation Placements Accessed for Care Leavers 2017-2018



Support Lodgings

- 52 The service has a dedicated Project Co-ordinator who manages the service. Supported Lodgings aims to improve outcomes for young people by ensuring that they experience a gradual transition from care acting as a 'stepping stone' to independence.
- 53 There are 3 strands to the service; planned placements, Staying Put placements (we support those who are no longer continuing with fostering) and also emergency unplanned placements.
- 54 During quarter 2, a total of 32 young people accessed planned placements within Support Lodgings. As can be seen from the graph below, there has been a shift in the type of placements being accessed between quarter 1 and quarter 2. The largest proportion of placements, were for those young people classified as Eligible young people (Looked After).

Planned Supported Lodgings Placements 2017-2018

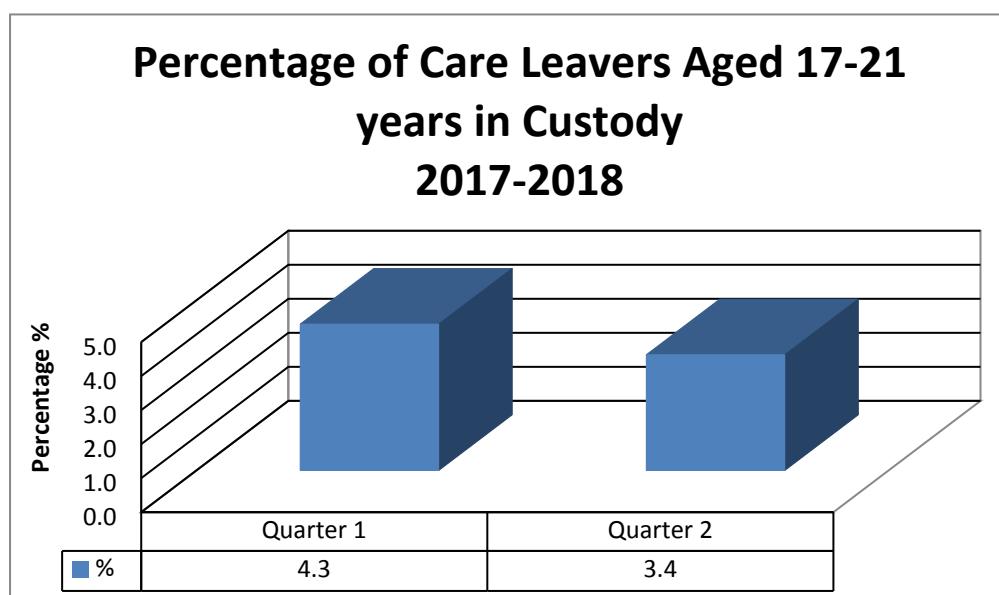


Staying Put

- 55 Since the implementation of Staying Put guidance, young people in both internal and external foster care provision have been given the opportunity to remain in placement, where both the foster carer and the young person have agreed to this.
- 56 At the end of quarter 2, there were 13 young people in a staying put provision.

Youth Custody

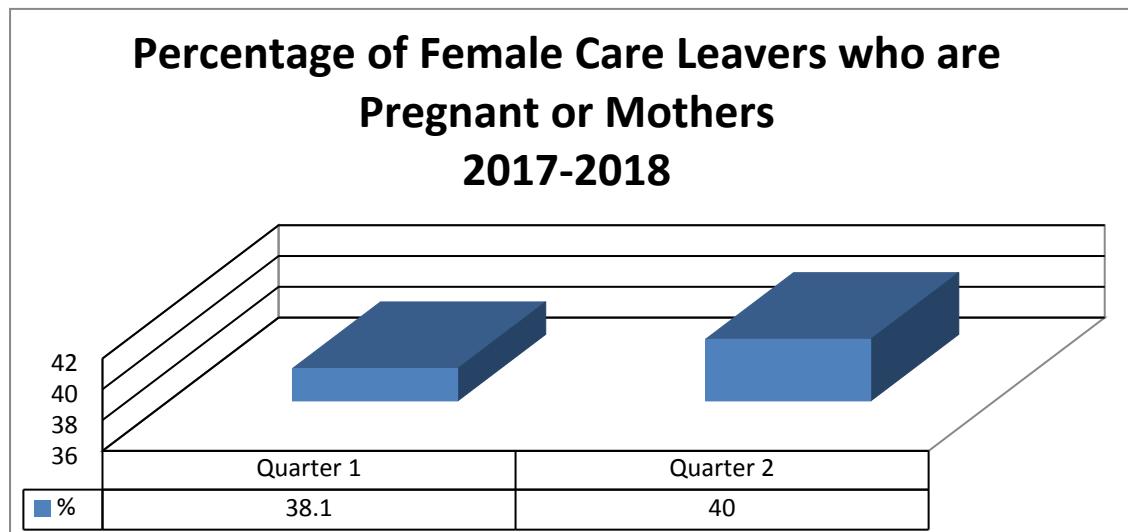
- 57 Care leavers in custody continue to be an issue for the service; however there has been a slight decrease in the number of young people in custody from quarter 1 to quarter 2. At the end of quarter 2, 3.4% of care leavers between the ages of 17-21 were in custody.



- 58 For those young people in custody, support continues to be provided by their Social Workers and Young Person's Advisers with regular visits undertaken whilst the young person is in custody.
- 59 As part of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) there is a protocol in place which requires all young people who are care leavers to be red flagged within the prison system, to ensure that their needs and vulnerabilities are taken into account.
- 60 Whilst a young person is in custody, work will continue around their plans for discharge and regular multi-agency resettlement meetings are held with Youth Offending Service, Probation and Housing Solutions Service to ensure that there is an appropriate accommodation provision in place ready for their discharge.
- 61 In order to achieve the necessary outcomes for those young people in custody; a CLASP meeting may be held prior to discharge and support provided from the Housing Solutions Service to identify appropriate accommodation.

Teenage pregnancy

- 62 Care leavers on a national and local level are identified as a group of young people more likely to be at risk of teenage pregnancy, than their peers of a similar age. At the end of quarter 2, 40% of female care leavers aged 17-21 years were either a mother or pregnant.
- 63 It is worth noting that the combine figure for 2016-2017 was 31.1%; therefore based on current figures, it is anticipated that the figures for 2017-2018 are likely to be higher, given the increasing trend.
- 64 Targeted work needs to be undertaken in this area; with a view to reducing the number of care leavers becoming pregnant in the future.



- 65 The Teenage Pregnancy Partnership (TPP) plan to work closely with CYPS to develop targeted sex and relationship education (SRE) for young people who are looked after children or care leavers; as national and international research shows that good quality SRE has a protective function for young people.
- 66 In order to deliver good quality SRE to young people, the TPP will need to work alongside CYPS to upskill the workforce to be confident in addressing SRE issues confidently with young people and signposting them to relevant services.

Impact of Universal Credit

- 67 The full roll out of universal credit was implemented in December 2017 within County Durham and concern has been raised about the impact this will have on care leavers within the County.
- 68 Recent research from the Children's Society has identified that care leavers are three times more likely than the general working population to find their benefits sanctioned by the DWP.

- 69 Work is on-going between the DWP and Durham County Council to ensure that young people are appropriately highlighted as care leavers for the purpose of universal credit and that claims are made in advance to minimise their waiting times for payments.
- 70 However, based on current universal credit claims for care leavers open to YPS, significant problems are being highlighted resulting in young people being left with no income for weeks on end. Support from the welfare rights service; has been sought for those young people struggling with accessing their benefits in a timely manner.
- 71 Whilst young people continue to struggle with meeting the requirements of benefits system, there will continued pressure on YPS to provide a basic financial safety net for those young people that experience benefit sanctions

Areas for Service Development

- 72 The Children and Social Work Bill received Royal Assent on 10th May in Parliament and as a result will require YPS to offer all care leavers the opportunity to continue to receive services until they reach the age of 25. YPS has already begun to consult with our current care leavers and work is underway to better understand the impact this will have on the service, going forward.
- 73 The service continues to face significant accommodation pressures at present, following the decommissioning of the HTASS contract and the end of the contract at the beginning of May 2017. However, Joint partnership working with Housing Solutions is on-going, a plan to identify and develop an emergency accommodation provision for young people with low to medium support needs.
- 74 At present, wherever possible unplanned emergency supported lodgings placements are being used to meet the emergency accommodation needs of care leavers. However, we have also had to utilise bed and breakfast accommodation; whilst acknowledging that it is not appropriate or suitable for young people they continue to be supported and additional resources are in place to ensure their needs are being met. During this period there has been 12 placements made into bed and breakfast, involving 3 young people. A total of 33 bed nights were utilised during the quarter and all placements were for young men.
- 75 The lack of accommodation for young people with complex needs is an on-going issue but work is being undertaken with Commissioning Services to try and address this and increase provisions within the market place.
- 76 On a national level, youth employment levels continue to remain high and this is a situation that is echoed in County Durham. As a service, YPS are trying to break down the barriers to employment and targeting the different cohorts of young people and developing tailored packages of support around education, employment and training.

- 77 Further work needs to be undertaken with employers within County Durham, to better understand the needs of care leavers and the support they may require within the workplace.
- 78 Further work needs to be undertaken within the County Council to promote the Teenagers 2 Work programme; ensuring care leavers have access to work experience placements within the Council and therefore facilitating a step-by-step approach to longer term employment opportunities.
- 79 The introduction of Universal Credit poses a challenge to the service and work will need to be undertaken with care leavers to prepare them for move to universal credit and the ability to budget their monies on a monthly basis.
- 80 Further work needs to be undertaken with the Teenage Pregnancy Partnership; in an effort to reduce the raising number of care leavers who are pregnant or parents
- 81 In order to improve outcomes for young people 18+ in custody, it would be beneficial to further develop our relationships with HM Prison and Probation Service, ensuring young people are appropriately supported in custody, accessing education and training as appropriate and have tailored resettlement packages prior to release from custody.

Recommendations

- 82 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are recommended to:
 - note the content of the report
 - note the presentation which will be given at the meeting
 - request any additional information required in relation care leavers

Contact: **Karen Robb** **Tel: 03000 265759**

Strategic Manager Looked After Children and Permanence

Appendix 1 – Implications

Finance – The service will need to ensure it monitors an increase in demands and workloads to ensure the service is able to sufficiently meet these needs and continue to provide a good service to Care Leavers

Staffing – As above

Risk – The duty to protect children and young people is one of the Council's basic statutory functions. Risks relate to risk of harm to children as well as financial risk to the council as a result of escalating costs.

Equality and Diversity/Public Sector Equality Duty – Looked after services and services to Care Leavers are available to all children and young people in line with legal duties.

Accommodation – The report makes reference to the range of accommodation available to our Care Leavers.

Crime and Disorder – Instances of offending and disorder by looked after children and Care Leavers is low in Durham and is closely monitored by the service. Appropriate supports are in place across the multi agency partnership to avoid young people being criminalised.

Human Rights – Care Leavers and young people in care have the same entitlement to a Family Life as any other young person in County Durham and this is what we aspire to for our looked after children.

Consultation – N/A

Procurement – DCC procurement policies are followed wherever required.

Disability Issues – Looked after children and Care Leavers who have disabilities are afforded the same level of care and services as any other child. Their needs are fully assessed to ensure where they do require any special provision this is provided in line with their needs.

Legal Implications – Services to looked after children and Care Leavers are provided under a clear legal and statutory framework which Durham County Council has a duty to provide.