

**Briefing for:** CPAC  
**Title:** Issues of isolation faced by young people leaving care  
**Lead Officer:** Chris Chalmers  
**Date:** 6 September 2011

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 On 19 April 2011 the Committee considered a report setting out issues facing young people leaving care, particularly in relation to the potential for isolation if established support networks were not in place. Work was then underway to improve support offered from other sources for example, the current tendering process for semi-independent accommodation providers who provide formalised support for young people, aimed to improve the quality of accommodation and service.
- 1.2 A number of participation pathways were also available for care leavers to help mitigate feelings of isolation, including the CiC Council, Total Respect training, Regulation 33 inspections, etc.
- 1.3 Further work was planned to develop a peer mentoring scheme for care leavers with younger CiC and the Committee recognised the value of potentially extending any mentoring scheme to include adult volunteers, which could potentially be achieved through reactivation of the Independent Visitors scheme. It was agreed that a report would be provided to the next meeting or the following one exploring the potential around Independent Visitors and peer mentoring schemes with associated costings.

## **2. Establishment of the Mentoring Project**

- 2.1 Sandjea Green, Participation Strategy Officer met with a number of Third Sector organisations earlier in 2011 in order to identify one of these to run a pilot partnership with Haringey for an initial group of 12 adult mentors for young people leaving care and also to develop 12 peer mentors for young people under the age of 17. The intention was to then complete a funding application to widen mentoring opportunities early next year, 2012.
- 2.2 It is generally agreed by all in the 18+ Service that the greatest need for young people leaving care is independent living skills. It is imperative that all of those leaving care are thoroughly prepared for adulthood. In an attempt to manage a mentoring process for this we would start with mentoring for young people age 17.5 and look for the mentoring relationship to last a minimum of 1 year. This is in recognition that the following services stop at age 18 for young people in care:

- Young people lose their social worker, LAC nurse, mental health specialist worker (if they had one), LAC education provision, their key worker and statutory services change to those provided for young adults. As we know those services do not replicate the services available to children.
- They start to be solely responsible for managing their money
- Apply for benefits
- To manage different access to education
- Start attending the job centre in many but not all cases
- If they are NEET before 18, most remain NEET

2.3 In meetings since the presentation of the initial report to CPAC on isolation issues the following needs have been highlighted regarding the support and development opportunities for care leavers:

- Social skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Boundaries, including managing relationships with their birth families
- Lack of stability, whether young people have been in care longer term or have come into care at a slightly older age.

2.4 Young people need mentors who will understand their individual cultural, racial, religious and linguistic heritage. In addition to this their mentors will need to be able to readily relate to the issues that particularly affect young people in today's society generally. Any proposed scheme needs to be sustainable, deliverable and affordable. Certainly a partnership with a local third sector organisation will enable funding possibilities, increased capacity and knowledge of the locality.

### **3. Intended Outcomes**

3.1 At this stage the following outcomes have been identified:

- Young people need support to be steered onto the right paths
- Raising opportunities; Young people seeing themselves as having realisable goals with opportunities and space to consider fully what opportunities they wish to grasp.
- Adult support providing young people with a taste of what they would get in healthy family life i.e. go in to work with dad, football game with an uncle etc
- Create opportunities with the young person

### **4. Progress to date**

- 4.1 The mentoring project is now moving forward. Representatives from local identified third sector provider, Embrace, Emma Cummergen, Deputy Head of Service for 18+ Service and Sandjea Green have met and discussed the outline of a mentoring pilot. This pilot will comprise of provision for 12 young people approaching age 18 or 18 years old, to support them with their transition to adulthood. The relationship will last for 1 year with the option for the mentor and mentee to continue if they wish after the 1 year period. The focus will be for those young people to complete the essentials necessary for them to enter into healthy and sustainable living with group equipping sessions i.e. budgeting, benefits, health, cooking, cv writing, etc.
- 4.2 The selection process is still to be agreed; it will need to be aimed at young people who positively want this opportunity so as to get the best out of the project. Mentees will then come together to form a group to encourage socialisation and befriending which will also help to mitigate isolation for them.
- 4.3 Mentors will be recruited from within the Haringey locality to aid cultural understanding. There will be preference for those from a professional background/well connected so that they will be able to support with work experience/ employment opportunities and encourage aspirations in young people.
- 4.4 '*Embrace*' organisation has already had several applications by people interested in volunteering from across Haringey and will work with Haringey Council in the training of these mentors (proposed training is mentoring training, Total Respect training and child protection training). Supervision of mentors will be undertaken by Embrace through weekly contact calls and monthly group supervision. Issues of confidentiality will be covered within the training. The personal advisor/social worker and mentor for the young person will be introduced to ensure that there is appropriate communication where necessary.
- 4.5 Embrace will fund the pilot as it meets their organisational objectives. They will use the results of the pilot to apply for future funding and to further developed and widen the scope of the project if appropriate. As the project rolls out we will have a vested interest in substantially increasing the availability of mentors to far more than 12 young people. There will be no costs to Haringey other than the links with participation workers as part of their existing work duties and the delivery of training modules, e.g. Total Respect training.

## **5. Independent Visitor Scheme**

- 5.1 An independent visitor (IV) scheme has been previously run, on a small scale, by Action for Children but this contract has now ceased. The IV scheme has now been successfully incorporated as a variation to the existing Advocacy Contract with Barnardo's. Barnardo's are able to continue work with existing IVs from the previous scheme. In terms of the IV scheme, the agency developing this is responsible for the recruitment, checking and monitoring of all IVs.
- 5.2 Given the large needs of the children in care population there is recognition that the proposed 10 IVs will be a starting point and that a further funding bid would be needed to expand this. New IVs will be selected for children in care who are felt to be highly vulnerable in terms of their lack of positive relationships with adults. For example, those who are in foster care where they have successfully made supportive relationships with their carers will not be of the same priority as those who have had several residential placements and are struggling to make any meaningful adult attachments.
- 5.3 Barnardo's have been awarded a contract, through Third Sector Review, for a period of 12 months commencing from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012 (with an option to extend for further period of up to 12 months) for the provision of advocacy service for children and young people. The initial funding agreement was purely for an advocacy service for the 12 month period. Barnardo's agreed to reduce the cost of this by 10% and offered some seed funding in addition to this reduction. This essentially means that the planned 20k per annum cost of the additional independent visitor scheme has been absorbed for no extra cost than the original estimate for the advocacy scheme.

## **6. Participation projects and development of independent living skills**

- 6.1 Work regarding preparation for independent living skills is being consolidated. So far two workshops have been run by housing services in Haringey for young people regarding housing issues. "Let's Get Cooking" sessions are now booked with Tottenham Hotspur Foundation. The Children in Care team invited both children in care and care leavers to contribute to a recent team away day in order to promote better understanding and communication across their service of issues currently being faced by young people. This was deemed to be a huge success, both from the point of view of the young people and the staff group. Mentoring has also been discussed in the context of Children in Care Service staff attending recent Total Respect training session.

## **7. Conclusion**

- 7.1 The benefits of additional, more personally focused support to young people in care and care leavers are well researched. The plans for the mentoring project are now underway and the independent visitor scheme is being transferred to Barnardo's. The full implementation of both of these projects will underpin a new way of working with the young people in our care. There is joint acknowledgement from those young people who we have consulted and staff members that this will enhance service delivery. It is accepted that both of these projects will need to gradually increase in capacity in order to fully meet the demands of the children in care population. We are greatly assisted in this work by the cooperative approach taken by the two third sector organizations and support of those with whom we already work such as the Tottenham Hotspur Foundation. Whilst future funding will be a challenge there is confidence that we will be able to take a creative approach with current providers in order to achieve this.