



**Haringey Council**

<b>Report for:</b>	<b>CPAC</b>	<b>Item Number:</b>	
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<b>Title:</b>	<b>Transitions and Leaving Care</b>
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<b>Report Authorised by:</b>	<b>Marion Wheeler</b>
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<b>Lead Officer:</b>	<b>Emma Cummergen</b>
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>Report for Key/Non Key Decisions:</b>
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## **1. Describe the issue under consideration**

In Haringey, we are working with 327 young people who have left care, 70 of whom are former unaccompanied minors, and 50 of whom who are young parents. A small proportion are disabled, with a high proportion having suffered some degree of mental ill health during their time in care. This can often emerge again in early adulthood with symptoms of depression. Some young people also suffer significant health concerns such as diabetes, HIV, MS, and sickle cell and struggle to manage their health effectively once the health resources they received as a child are no longer available.

Research suggests transition to adulthood is becoming more and more difficult, and that for the general population there is a longer term reliance on family support. This poses problems for our young adults who are often estranged from their families, or for whom family contact remains dysfunctional and abusive.

## **2. Background**

### **2.1 Pathway Planning and the Panel**

In Haringey, approximately 70 young people turn 18 years old and leave care each year and transfer to the Young Adults Service (YAS). This year's figure is 57 young



people. I currently manage both the YAS service and one team in the Young People in Care (YPIC),

which results in additional oversight and monitoring of this process and scrutinising where changes are necessary. Chris Chalmers, CiC Head of Service and Annie Walker, Deputy Head of Service, Court Team also have management input to this.

Transitional planning is initiated as a looked after child approaches their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday when the first Pathway Plan is prepared. This plan sets out how the young person will be helped to achieve independence. This plan is reviewed at the child's six monthly LAC review, and whilst LAC reviews cease at the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, this plan continues to be reviewed and revised until the young person's case is closed. (Usually at age 21)

Each young person is also reviewed by a multi-disciplinary panel at 17 ½. The purpose of the panel is to ensure appropriate planning has been initiated, taking account of the young person's longer term needs, accommodation and support requirements. Nearly all cases are now discussed at Panel at least six months in advance of a young person becoming 18. In addition to this the panel decisions are also tracked in terms of progress, overseen by the Head of Service, at monthly review meetings.

## **2.2 Accommodation**

A significant proportion of our LAC are placed outside of Haringey. However, we can only access permanent social housing within the LB Haringey. This poses additional hurdles for young people who decide to return to Haringey to obtain permanent accommodation and therefore have to leave their "home" areas. To counter this we have established :

- Staying Put guidance (drafted and about to be signed off) which supports young people still in education, or with additional vulnerabilities to remain where possible with their former foster carers to complete their education, or provide a bridging gap until the start of university. This guidance is already being followed in principle in advance of the formal sign off.
- A leaving care 'training house' with the onsite support of a lead tenant. The purpose of which is to provide young people with an opportunity to enhance and evidence their independent living skills and gain confidence before moving to permanent accommodation. The project is a pilot for the next three years which has been initiated in partnership with Housing and Homes for Haringey.
- In 2011, in conjunction with Housing Services, we have set up a quota of 60 one bed accommodations so that care leavers are now more effectively prioritised and nominated for permanent housing. Tenancy and budgeting workshops run alongside this quota and focus on the practical skills young people need to acquire to hold their own tenancies.



- For those care leavers who are parents, we are currently negotiating with Housing to establish a small quota for their particular needs.
- A noticeable gap in provision is those who have significant support needs, but do not meet thresholds for adult services. There is limited support via our vulnerable adults team's housing provision, and young people remain in children's local authority provision until we are able to effectively negotiate and plan something different for them. It is likely for some that they will eventually need ongoing support from adult services.
- Unaccompanied Minors require specialist transitional planning. For the majority, immigration remains unresolved prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthdays with extensions having to be applied for at 17 ½. If at age 18, there is still no decision regarding their asylum application, these young people cannot apply for permanent housing and usually remain in local authority shared provision, most likely on a rent only basis. There has been an increase on the number of young people receiving All Rights Exhausted decisions who then face deportation
- For care leavers who do not wish to return to the borough, or cannot for issues of safety, we have some limited success in assisting them to apply for housing via the Local Authority where they live. For others we provide rent/deposits in order for young people to access private tenancies. There are barriers to this such as not being able to find a rent guarantor post 21 years of age, and their rent becoming unaffordable on their 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday due to changes in their welfare benefit entitlements. This is therefore not an option we encourage and it has to be a last resort. For young people who are EU, consequently barred from accessing social housing due to not having exercised their treaty rights this currently is our only option.

### **2.3 Education, Training and Employment Support**

In recent years the Virtual school in Haringey has extended its support and oversight to care leavers post 16 to counter some of the disadvantage. The committee has recently received presentations on Haringey's Virtual School response to national and local trends for CIC however the E18gteen project has had particular impact for young people leaving care resulting in 40 places for our care leavers.

Haringey has successfully supported approximately 45 students each year in or to begin university. Support for such young people include

- visits to Middlesex university
- Into University workshops on site
- virtual email account dedicated to young people at University
- drafted higher education guidance setting out financial support offered.



With regard to those wishing to seek employment we have in place links with Jobs for Haringey, various providers such as KIS as well as Youth Community and Participation. However the reality is that short term and low paid employment opportunities open to many care leavers with limited qualifications will not necessarily make them better off.

We are constantly exploring other initiatives. One example of this is our recent project in partnership with five other LA's and the Marriott hotels to create an opportunity for six Haringey care leavers to have work experience in the Marriott hotels, in both London and Germany. It is hoped this will lead to fulltime employment for the candidates.

## **2.4 Finances post 18 and the welfare benefits system**

The current system compels care leavers to claim benefits, including housing benefit, as soon as they reach legal adulthood in order to fund or part fund continuing placements.

Limited children's services budgets mean that, even as good corporate parents, we must ensure that our young people have maximised the income they are entitled to receive from the benefits system. Uncertainty of outcomes and delays in processing claims add more stress when young people are dealing with important transitions in their lives, such as starting a new college course, establishing their first home, coming out of custody.

In addition to these benefits, the service's fee matrix sets out under what specific circumstances our care leavers can expect additional financial support for. The service has also had to increase support, such as emergency cash payments, to young people who have been sanctioned by Dept of Work and Pensions and left unable to provide for themselves.

## **2.5 Welfare Reforms**

Care leavers are currently expected to apply for housing benefit to cover the costs of all or part of the rent. Experience tells us that the majority of our young people find it difficult to manage their rent payments, when the benefit is paid directly to them, and end up very quickly in rent arrears, threatening their tenancies. Currently it is possible within the current system to arrange payments are made direct to the landlord. It is however unknown whether this arrangements will be maintained and possible within the new welfare reforms.

It is hard to gauge the impact of the forthcoming welfare reforms as information directly relating to care leavers is not yet clear. Younger care leavers are exempt from the shared room rate that restricts people under 25 to a Local Housing Allowance payment equivalent to a room in a shared house. However, at age 22 care leavers are no longer exempt from this and so the properties they may have been able to resettle into become unaffordable and a move to a room in a shared



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house a necessity to avoid homelessness. This also adds impetus to achieving Council tenancies for all those who are entitled to them. This will at least ensure affordable social housing for our care leavers.

### **3. New Developments for Care Leavers**

- 3.1 At the close of National Care Leavers Week this year, Edward Timpson MP, Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Children and Families wrote to all directors of children's services with information about new developments for Care Leavers and asking us to review our work on supporting care leavers into independence (Appendix A)
- 3.2 Matters to consider include the Care Leavers Charter (Appendix B) , the data pack for review of policy and benchmarking our authority against best practice, the care 2 work programmes, the 'Staying Put' arrangements, Junior ISA Accounts and the Care Leavers grant.
- 3.3 I have asked the Head of Service for Children in care to lead on a short piece of work, consulting with members of ASPIRE and other representative children in care and care leavers and consult them on their views about the Charter and other matters raised in the communication from the minister.
- 3.4 Haringey currently supports care leavers with a £1500 grant to meet the costs of transition to independence. We support around 70 young people leaving care a year. To increase this grant to £2000 as suggested would place a £35,000 pressure on the budget. We are currently undertaking some work with our procurement team to explore options for maximising the "buying power" of the grant through bulk order discount, possibly as part of our NLSA partnership. We will include consultation with Aspire and care leavers as part of this work and ensure that young people's views are properly included in any proposals to Members about taking this forward.
- 3.5 The outcome of the consultation, the early findings from our review of the Care leavers data pack benchmarking and recommendations for members to consider will be presented at the February 2013 CPAC

### **4. Conclusion**

There are numerous challenges for young people leaving care to manage during transitions to adulthood. The service is undertaking to make these processes as smooth as possible in order for outcomes to be improved across our care leaver population as a whole. We are working with Aspire, and all our care leavers, to listen to the outcomes that young adults wish to us to work with them to achieve. We are proactive in signposting and supporting young people to access housing, education and employment which will be their foundation to successful and fulfilled adult lives in the community. New initiatives are regularly explored and we are



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pleased to have established positive, evolving working relationships with a range of partners, in particular with our colleagues in housing, youth services, Tottenham Hotspur and Virtual School.