

Report for: Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee: 4 April 2016

Item number:

Title: Care leavers – what we do to support them

Report authorised by : 
Jon Abbey, Director, CYPS

Lead Officer: Emma Cummergen, Deputy Head of Service, Young Adults

Ward(s) affected:

**Report for Key/
Non Key Decision:** Non Key

1. Describe the issue under consideration

Haringey Council has a duty to ensure that the children and young people in its care are successful in education and that they are supported to make progress and equipped with the life tools to make good choices to continue through education and into employment. We also have a duty to ensure care leavers are settled into suitable and sustainable accommodation, and have the life skills to manage independence into adulthood. This report updates Members on the work undertaken to carry out our duties.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

NA

3. Recommendations

Members to note this report.

4. Reasons for decision

To provide an to update Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee on the Council's roles and responsibilities in relation to care leavers.

5. Alternative options considered

No other options were considered as this report is for information purposes.

6. Background information

- 6.1 The Young Adults and 16+ Service are currently working with 446 care leavers 16-25 years old.

How we support young people to stay in education and training

- 6.2 We aim to support young people to remain in their current education and college courses. Each young person in care has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that accompanies them during their journey through care. As an additional monitoring system there are plans to review the PEPs ongoing at the transition panel where a representative of the Virtual School is present and can provide additional advice and guidance to the current and future plans in place and ensure all efforts are being made to sustain current educational/training provision.
- 6.3 We expect that young people will have had careers guidance at school and completed PEPs outlining aspirations and education progress throughout their time in care. We want young people to know that we have high aspirations for their future.

University

- 6.4 We continue to have marked success with higher than average numbers of care leavers attending university. This year 61 of our current care leavers are at university.
- 6.5 To support our care leavers we also introduced in 2011 a dedicated email address to keep in touch with our care leavers at university so that we can send them regular updates on funding opportunities and other important opportunities.
- 6.6 In 2015 in partnership with the Chartered Accountants for England and Wales we targeted our university students and provided them with a day focusing on them gaining quality advice, and information regarding accessing the workplace, career options and future career planning. We also offered each third year student a one to one appointment with Drive Forward to develop their CV and prepare them to access the job market. This offer was made in July last year and will be repeated this year.
- 6.7 Currently we are also promoting the work of the Who Cares Trust and the Propel website that identifies all the additional funding for care leavers at specific universities so those care leavers who are preparing to apply to university are well aware in the different funding opportunities available to them.
- 6.8 Raising the knowledge base of both social workers, foster carers and personal advisors is key in ensuring best decisions can be made and opportunities maximised. For care leavers aspiring to go to university we encourage peer support, and keep carers and looked after children aware of the various open days that universities offer specifically for care leavers.
- 6.9 Many of our care leavers enter university later, usually between the ages of 19 and 21, and some require the continuity of their foster placements to repeat

A-levels. Staying Put placements have been effective in ensuring those that require it can stay on at their foster placements until their exams are completed, or as bridging placements prior to embarking university.

- 6.10 We have also looked creatively at bespoke packages for some of our very bright but complex care leavers, In such circumstances we look at funding streams, opportunities and organisations such as the Care Leavers Foundation to access individual opportunities, SEN entitlements, and scholarships.

Annual care leavers achievement event

- 6.11 This is an annual event to celebrate the achievements of children and young people in care and leaving care. We now combine the event with highlighting career and training opportunities for the young people. This has proved to be a successful networking event for all, with a cross section of providers being represented, for example Princes Trust, Working Chance, Drive Forward, Grind Central, CHENEL, HALs and CSV.

How we are working to reduce the Numbers of Not In Education (NEET) and Employment and support young people to engage in education and find employment.

- 6.12 We recognise that young people who are about to leave care or have left care have many challenges to face including accessing housing, finances, family contact , education and the prospect of living independently for the first time. The role of the social worker (SW) and personal advisors (PA) is essential in providing support, advice and encouragement to keep the young people in mind and support them in their decision making. Young people need positive and supportive relationships which encourage aspirations, offer consistency and appropriate pathways. The challenges of limited employment opportunities and financial concerns directly impacts on some young people in maintaining a focus on education and employment.
- 6.13 As part of our strategic plan to reduce the numbers of NEET the service has developed a working protocol with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Drive Forward to ensure the welfare benefits process is simplified and care leavers supported more robustly into sustainable employment. Both seconded officers work on site alongside the social workers and personal advisors and can offer both drop in and appointment based advice to staff and young people . Having both drop- in and appointment-based opportunities has increased the chances to engage young people. The drop-in offer has supported SWs and PAs in engaging the more difficult to reach young people into opportunities available to them alongside receiving a service with regard to other matters in relation to their care plan. Having the same seconded staff ensures relationships and trust are developed more readily and care leavers can access the services when they are ready.
- 6.14 With regard to our current performance data which monitors care leavers at the 19th , 20th and 21st birthday in ETE, we are below target. However we believe there have been some accuracy issues on reporting of which we are now aware and working to resolve.

- 6.15 Reasons however for sustained NEETs are in relation to the number of care leavers who have no resource to public funds and our asylum seekers who are All Rights Exhausted. Their access to education in some circumstances is barred whilst they await deportation. Within this cohort we have a number of care leavers currently at HMP establishments on short custodial sentences, often with no opportunities for education for education, or training until their release. In addition some are young mothers who have recently given birth or have been involved in Child Protection Proceedings and are taking a break from ETE, and others have significant medical disorders which prevents them from accessing ETE currently.
- 6.16 Within this cohort however we also have those who are actively seeking work, unofficially working, and those with firm plans to re-engage in education or who are volunteering but as this is not formal ETE they would therefore still be considered at this stage as NEET.
- 6.17 As a service we have developed close working partnership with schools, colleges, and post 16 providers. Through developing our targeted actions to reduce NEET, the Young Adults Service (YAS) initiated a panel of 16+ providers and together we review on an individual basis with PA and SWs the young people they are most concerned about in terms of NEET or on the edge. We consider at the panel both mentoring, developing bespoke interventions including providers undertaking joint visits with allocated workers to engage care leavers in the community, and we have found through this process 16+ providers have become more attuned to the needs of our young people, and their programs revised to meet the needs more effectively. This has led to increased outcomes, with care leavers gaining the additional support they have required to have a successful and subsequently sustained engagement with the identified program or provider. Linking a care leaver to an apprenticeship program we have found does not lead to success. Enrolling them and supporting them to engage onto pre-apprenticeships or traineeships via joint working between providers and PAs does get results. It is time intensive, but now that providers are beginning to understand the needs of the young people they are more able to respond.
- 6.18 For the last two years we have also been running regular employability sessions for young people as part of plans to prepare care leavers for independent living. Each care leaver who attends leaves with completed CV, and we also try and tie the sessions to the days when we are aware of local careers fairs, therefore arranging to accompany the young people who wish to attend the fair to go along with their newly updated or devised CV. This increases motivation and encourages confidence and for many an immediate response and potential opportunity.
- 6.19 Drive Forward is our strongest partner and regularly provides our care leavers with bespoke opportunities to engage in 'getting ready for work' opportunities. We have found by arranging meetings at the YAS office and accompanying our young people to the opportunities on offer gives us the greatest results.
- 6.20 The E8ghteen project has now been running since 2011. The project currently supports care leavers aged 16-20 being mentored by coaches from the Tottenham Hotspur Foundation. The project supports young people to remain

in education and also for those out of education to engage and achieve some success. It offers opportunities to engage some of our most hard to reach older children in care and care leavers in interesting, enriching and confidence building activities to engender their interest in further education and employment.

Housing Options – how we support care leavers to access housing

- 6.21 Housing and accommodation is one aspect of the advice and support we offer. For those under the age of 18 the most likely type of accommodation they will be placed in will be with a foster carer and live as part of their family.
- 6.22 At 16, care leavers may also be living in semi-independent provision and will be building on their lifeskills so that they can move onto living independently by the age of 21.
- 6.23 From the age of 18 years old care leavers have a range of housing options they can consider as part of their independent living. Remaining with their foster carers under staying put arrangements, moving to semi –independent provision with key work support, moving to one of the transitional training houses managed by the YAS with volunteers on site or possibly to their permanent accommodation. Occasionally care leavers do enter the private sector but this is as a last resort and based on the care leaver being unwilling to return to Haringey to take up their permanent housing offer.
- 6.24 Housing currently offer YAS a housing quota of 60 one bed and 6 two bed quota (for care leavers who are parents). Each care leaver receives a setting up home establishment grant of £2000.
- 6.25 The decision to put young people forward for the quota for permanent housing is made by the Transitions Panel, which the Deputy Head of Service chairs. If agreed, the young person is then invited to attend a series of Tenancy and practical Workshops and verified by YAS and housing and then nominated for band A.
- 6.26 Currently we run four workshops per cohort. The workshops cover tenancy, budgeting (2 ½ day course), cooking on a budget, and employability workshop which includes the production of a CV. We have plans to develop a DIY workshop in partnership with housing this year.
- 6.27 The service continues to manage two transitional houses, developed in partnership with Homes for Haringey, CSV who provide the volunteer and YAS. We can offer three female and three male care leavers the opportunity to live semi independently for six months + who perhaps have never lived on their own before, prior to embarking on their permanent tenancies in the borough. The volunteer is on site to offer the young people both practical and emotional support and can continue to the care leaver when they move into their permanent accommodation.
- 6.28 We are in discussions currently about expanding these projects to include a number of studio accommodations and developing a hub and spoke model.

6.29 In acknowledgement that rent arrears are one of biggest challenges, we are developing links and partnership working with our Income recovery colleagues and developing closer working relationships with the housing officers so that we can review progress of each care leaver at regular points throughout their first 12 months of holding a tenancy.

7. Contribution to strategic outcomes

Priority 1 - Enable every child and young person to have the best start in life, with high quality education.

8. Statutory Officers comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Assistant Director of Corporate Governance, Equalities)

Finance and Procurement

There are no Finance and Procurement implications involved in this report.

Legal

There are no Legal implications involved in the report.

Equality

In accordance with the principles set out in the Children Act 1989, Haringey's services for Looked After Children are premised upon the belief that in most circumstances children and young people are best looked after within their own families.

However, there will always be some children and young people for whom being in the care of Haringey Council will be in their best interests. These children and young people deserve the highest quality services to ensure both that they are not disadvantaged from their peers, and also that any disadvantages which they may have suffered prior to coming into care are redressed. Haringey Council seeks to remove any and all barriers that may exist in order to enable care leavers to achieve their full potential.

9. Use of Appendices

None

10. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

NA