

Report of the Strategic Director Children's Services to the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel to be held on 8th March 2021

Subject:

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Post 16 Service

Summary statement:

This report will provide an overview of the Care Leavers Service 16+. The service has responsibility for all Care Leavers, Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (UASC) and young people presenting at 16 who are roofless or homeless.

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Portfolio:

Children and Families

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children's Services

1. SUMMARY

This report is to provide an overview of the Care leavers 16+ Service, looking at outcomes and challenges for our service and young people that it serves.

Children whom are cared for by the local authority who are reaching or aged 16 years or above and entitled to a leaving care service, under the Children Act 1989 and as amended by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

Under Section 23 of the Leaving Care Act local authorities have a duty to allocate a personal advisor for young people aged from 15 and $\frac{3}{4}$, who must be provided with a pathway plan.

Following the Southwark Ruling 2007 the local authority has a duty to assess young people aged 16+ who find themselves homeless. Young people have the right to request to be accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, thus resulting in care leaver entitlements.

The Hillingdon Judgement 2003 required all UASC to be accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, thus resulting in the majority of UASC becoming entitled to a leaving care service.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Bradford Care Leaver service (16+) was formed in January 2020; this was following a restructure within Childrens Services.

2.2 There is significant research into the outcomes of Child in Care and Care Leavers that clearly states that the one most significant factor to have influence over the trajectory and outcomes of children and young people is to ensure that the child or young person has opportunity to form a significant meaningful relationship. That is the ambition of the Care Leavers Service that all young people from 16 will have an allocated Social Worker and Personal Adviser (PA) who will take the young person through their leaving care journey into adulthood and become successful citizens within their local communities.

*“In order to develop normally, a child requires progressively more complex joint activity with one or more adults who have an irrational emotional relationship with the child. **Somebody's got to be crazy about that kid. That's number one. First, last and always**”* Bronfenbrenner quoted by Dez Holmes of Research in Practice.

2.3 The Care Leavers Service currently provides a service to all Bradford care leavers regardless of where they live up until the age of 21. At 21 young people can decide if they want to continue to have support from the Care Leavers Service or close, they can return at any time until they are 25 years old.

The service also provides information advice and guidance to a young person who has been 'in care' during their childhood (qualifying care leavers) should they need it. Examples would be young people who have previously been subject of a Special Guardianship Order or Private Fostering arrangement.

The service supports any young person in the district who finds themselves roofless, homeless or at risk of homelessness. Young people are supported until they are 21 should they need/want to be.

2.4 The Care Leavers Service is made up of a full time service manager, 4 team managers, 5 newly appointed practice supervisors (1 UASC overview), 13 experienced social workers 1 ASYE social worker, 34 personal advisors (PA)'s and 2 care leaver apprentice. As a service we are proud of the stability retained within our teams with only 2 agency worker currently in post. This stability is the number one factor in us aspiring to achieve our ambition of young people being able to form a meaningful relationship.

Supporting the Care Leavers Service are a number of specialist teams' focusing on the following areas;

- LEAP – continues to work with young people 16 plus supporting accessing education, training and employment, including higher education.
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) – we have a Practice Supervisor role who retains an overview of UASC alongside workers with a passion and interest in working with UASC, ensuring children and young people newly arriving in Bradford have their basic needs met and go onto be integrated into the Bradford district.
- 2 Leaving Care nurses are co-located in the service, undertaking sexual health work, health needs assessment, health passports and supporting young people with emotional health and well-being.
- Care Leavers Service manage and run a supported lodgings service scheme for young people ages 16 to 21.
- We have a specialist worker supporting young people Staying Put and or who have been privately fostered.
- We have a solid group of Care Leaver Ambassadors who are supporting us in our aspiration to be a co-produced Care Leavers Service.
- Care Leavers Service manage and run a bespoke volunteers service for our young people where we have 25 volunteers working alongside our PA's. Most recently this has included setting up a Care Leavers Support line which runs 6 till 10pm 7 days a week.
- We have run a support line for young people 7 days a week from CSC staff volunteers since October 2020.
- We know group work for some young people really works. Pre March 2020 the service was running a football group, cook and eat & SMIOG (Smooth It Out Group). We have successfully moved Cook and Eat into virtual platforms and are looking to do the same for the SMIOG.

2.5 Demographic make-up of our young people as of 9/2/2021

Care Leavers Service are supporting 680 young people; this is an increase of 201 young people since March 2020.

In Bradford we have 693 young people with care leaver status.

107 are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People (UASC) 29 under 18, 78 over 18.

43 young people have been young people previously homeless.

294 Female	320 Male	2 Other
186 16/17	353 18-20	77 21+
338 White British	90 Asian British	20 Black British
43 Mixed White/Asian	19 Mixed Black/White	6 EU
79 Other	15 Gypsy/Roma	

2.6 Where do our young people live?

51 Foster Care	31 Foster Care Friends & Family
36	Placed with parents (16/17) this has seen an increase
191	Independent tenancies (144 18+)
3	Emergency accommodation (not B&B)
20	Children's Homes
5	Long-term Hospital
18	Custody (4 age 21+, 14 18+)
22	Relatives or Friends
91	Semi-independent accommodation
5	Shared lives placements
8	Staying Close
44	Staying Put
18	Supported Lodgings
72	Other (Foyers/Student accommodation)

2.7 Base line key indicators snap shot as of 9/2/21

- 28 day visits (16/17 year olds) 86.8%
- PEP's (16/17 year olds) 80.9%
- Dental checks (16/17 year olds) 49.5% (Covid has significantly impacted this)
- Health assessments (16/17 year olds) 80% (Covid has significantly impacted this)
- 345 CLA review completed between 4/2020 to 9/2/21 97.1% on time, 239 young people attended their reviews and 98 young people contributed their wishes and feelings without attending.
- 94% Care leaver in Touch with the service.
- Care leavers 16 to 21+ NEET 30.9% (182 young people)
- Care leavers 16 to 21+ EET 69.1% (386 young people)
- Suitable accommodation 89.1%
- Completion of Pathway plans 82.1 %

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 General Themes and Trends

Covid-19 has had an impact on how we are delivering a service to our young people. There has been a previous report to The Chief Executive detailing how the service has supported our young people throughout the pandemic, without question young people continue on the whole to make our city proud in how they have responded to the pandemic and managed themselves. However, the pandemic has not been without its challenges, young people have needed additional support and an increase in contact with workers to function on a day to day basis.

As the pandemic has progressed the staff team within the service has increasingly been depleted as an increased number of individuals have been unable to work due to being diagnosed with Covid 19. 4 staff members have been seriously ill. Staff have also been away from work due to family bereavements as a result of Covid. We have also managed staff at reduced capacity due to shielding or isolating all causing additional pressure on the service and ultimately having an impact on the quality of service.

Since March 2020 there has been a sharp increase in the number of young people either in custody or detained in hospital settings using mental health legislation. This is a concern and requires intense scrutiny by partners coming together to review each young person try and stop this trend.

From the beginning of 2020 we had seen a steady decline in the number of young people in EET, young people were opting out of education. Those who did opt out suffered from low motivation, self-esteem and apathy to engage as additional barriers from the pandemic were in place. Targeted work was completed in July/August by the LEAP service in the run up to September which resulted in a sharp increase in the number of young people now in EET, this was repeated again in January 2021 and has shown positive results with numbers of young people engaging in EET being something to celebrate.

Generally, since March 2020 we have seen a continued increase in young people returning back to family members in an unplanned way. Young people have been supported accordingly by the service and each situation assessed.

There are different factors that have led to the quality of service delivery being a challenge at this moment in time. Consistency around the service that young people are currently receiving needs to be the focus over the next 3 months. The service is hopeful as additional resources have been identified to support increased capacity in social work and PA's time with young people and will enable a reduction in caseloads. The service has also had the support of the Improvement Board to map out a six-month plan of improvement which is aspirational for our young people.

3.2 A Local Offer for Care Leavers.

Through the Children and Social Work Act 2017 the Government introduced the requirement for all Local Authorities to publish a 'Care leaver offer' and sign up to corporate parenting principals.

Bradford's Local offer is currently being updated following the original being completed in Oct 2018.

The current offer includes:

- All our Care Leavers can access any Bradford Council gyms free of charge.
- Young people in education or training are able to get a financial contribution towards a laptop we will also ensure that you have access to Wi-Fi.
- All young people will ensure all young people have a Smart Phone.
- All Care Leavers living in Bradford are exempt from Council Tax up until the age of 21.

We are working hard as a partnership to increase our offer to young people with regard to traineeships, apprenticeships and work experience. Places have been ring fenced as part of Kick Start as well as the service hosting a number of placements. We want to get to a position where all our young people are offered work experience within their parent company.

3.3 Accommodation Provision

Leaving Care accommodation brief overview.

- Commissioning of 'group living' continues to be in place offering quality semi-independent living accommodation. Young People tell us they are happy in our block commissioned 'group living.'
- A crash pad emergency accommodation offer is in place; it is hoped that this will be expanded for a bespoke 18+ care leavers crash pad facility.
- Jumpstart is established and liked by young people, the aim of 'Jumpstart' is to assist young people in the transition from the children's home/foster care into semi-independent/ independent living via the delivery of pre tenancy work. The pre tenancy work known as 'Life-wise' is delivered to those aged 15 ½ onwards which helps young people prepare for independent living. Young people also have the opportunity to experience 2-weeks at the 'My First Home' flat. Young people can experience the My First Home flat/house for 2 weeks. The 2 weeks are used as an assessment tool to assess young people's Independent Living Skills. This scheme is a commissioned service and will be subject to review to ensure all young people have opportunity to access bespoke pre tenancy work.
- Planning is in place to expand the Jumpstart programme, with the aspiration that all young people in the service have the opportunity to completed the 'Life-wise' pre-tenancy work and all have an opportunity for the taster flat.
- Supported Lodgings scheme is a stable service offering 25 beds for young people up to the age of 21 or 25 following a needs assessment.

- Permanence planning is in place for all young people 16 to 19 to ensure a young person's transition into an adult world is tracked and supported. This is an area of development, ensuring the cliff edge at 18 is diminished and young people exit care at a pace suited to them.
- Bespoke accommodation for UASC is in place, however needs reviewing due to the increase in numbers of young people.
- On-going strong partnership and operational working between Childrens Services and Housing remains good underpinned by our Housing Protocol.
- The 'New Burdens' grant has supported 1 social work post to work with young people at risk of youth homelessness, who generally have complex needs and behaviours.

The Care Leavers accommodation pathway will be subject of review and scrutiny via the Children in Care and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy, the responsible officer being Richard Fawcett.

Quality Assurance of accommodation

The regulation of accommodation as provided under the accommodation pathways for 16+ children and young people requires robust quality assurance. Whilst work has been on-going in this area since 2018, there is now greater provision in available accommodation. The quality assurance of the accommodation types requires robust processes for contract monitoring, value for money and quality provision.

There are 91 young people placed in semi-independent provision. This provision is being commonly referred to as unregulated provision as Ofsted do not regulate the provision. However, this accommodation meets statutory guidelines and must not be confused with children who are under the age of 16 years and placed in semi-independent, unregulated provisions'.

3.4 Financial Management & support

The reality of the current economic position and welfare reform is that the service has seen an increase in young people presenting in financial crisis and poverty especially post 18. Everyone in service is clear that all young people open to us or returning post 21 will have access to free food, and emergency payments. No young person in the service will be destitute.

Care Leavers Service have established strong working relationships with DWP, with a robust DWP protocol in place. It is an aspiration that we will be co-located in the future.

A strong financial policy and processes are in place for all our young people, the principals of our payments to young people are rewards and incentive based.

Children's Services have secured £300 000 additional income from the Winter Grant for young people in the service. Young people living independently or who are parents are benefitting from this additional funding.

3.5 Safeguarding

We have seen a steady reduction in the numbers of young people going missing throughout the year, it is concluded that one reason for this is the consistent message that has been given to all young people across the district – ‘stay indoors’, Covid and national lockdowns having had an impact on adhoc missing episodes. What we are seeing now is young people that do go missing generally have complex needs and require risk assessments being in place. Currently we have 10 young people who have regular missing episodes.

Within the service we have 45 young people where there are complex safeguarding concerns that have met thresholds for a multi-agency risk assessment and protocols to be in place. This is a significant increase and has doubled from November 2020. Concerns are detailed below, mindful that some young people may have more than one concern area.

- 23 young people this is due to sexual exploitation
- 22 young people due to criminal exploitation
- 10 due to missing
- 8 due to trafficking
- 11 young people have emerging concerns regarding exploitation.

A plan of work is in place to strengthen the risk assessment process for young people aged 16+ and will include the tracking of vulnerable young people aged 18+. All young people where there are complex safeguarding concerns including post 18 are subject of regular multi agency care planning meetings to enable risk to be managed and support to be in place.

3.6 Employment, Training and Education Outcomes (EET)

As previously stated this year has seen a steady decline in the numbers of young people in EET provision. Targeted work was completed over the summer in the run up to September which has seen an increase in the number of young people back in EET opportunities. We are proud of this work.

We currently have 33 young people at University, with 4 young people who started in September 2020. This is a lot lower than previous years but reflects national trends, of young people deferring a year or continuing further studies. This year we have successfully supported our first young person going to Cambridge and celebrated 5 young people graduating subjects in dentistry, nursing, acting and stage combat, clinical psychology and animal behaviour. It is a key area of development to increase number of young people accessing higher education.

Nationally all young people leaving year 11 have had a tough time, our young people were no different, however what we have seen is a general improvement with our young people's GCSE attainment.

What we know - Key Stage 4 outcomes 2020

These results are provisional awaiting DfE validated data due to be released in March 2021. In comparing results with previous years it should be noted that no exams took place in summer 2020 due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. To enable students to receive qualifications, schools and colleges have provided a centre assessment grade for each subject; this is the grade their school or college believes they would be most likely to have achieved had exams gone ahead, taking into account a range of evidence including, for example, non-exam assessment and mock results.

The calculations are based on a total of 60 Year 11 CLA who had been in care for a year or more as of 31st March 2020.

To highlight some individuals; 7 children achieved a grade 7 or better in either English or Maths (4 in both), one child who achieved a grade 9 in both English and Maths and 48% of children gained at least 5 GCSEs at grades 1 to 9.

In relation to DfE benchmarks the percentages at this stage are below (national 2020 data for CLA is not yet available)

	GCSE Grade 5-9 English and Maths	GCSE Grade 4 -9 English and Maths	5 + GCSE Grade 4-9 inclu English & Maths
National CLA 2019	7%	18%	13%
Bradford CLA 2019	8%	15%	11%
Bradford CLA 2020	15%	22%	22%

Attainment & Progress

	Total (60)	Total %
9 to 5 in Maths and English	9	15.00%
9 to 4 in Maths and English (Basics)	13	21.67%
5 GCSE's 9 to 5 including En & Ma	7	11.67%
5 GCSE's 9 to 4 including En & Ma	13	21.67%

5 GCSEs 9 to 4	14	23.33%
1 GCSE 9 to 4	29	48.33%
1 GCSE 9 to 1	46	76.67%

3.7 Health

There has been a decrease in the number of young people accessing health assessments over the last 6 months, this has been due to the restrictions placed on nursing staff over the lockdown period. We have now established face to face 'drop ins' in order to facilitate catch up.

Unsurprisingly we have seen young people needing additional support regarding their emotional wellbeing increase over the last 6 months. We have seen a greater use and take up of young people accessing support from Youth in Mind and the Buddies scheme. Self-help booklets have been sent out and more young people accessing self-help via app based links, for example Kooth and wellbeing podcasts.

We are no different to national trends in seeing a drop in young people accessing dentists as a result of dentist only having emergency procedures, we are working hard with health colleagues to try and facilitate a dental drop in for our young people.

3.8 Celebrations

As a service we ensure our young people's achievements are celebrated, this has been challenging this year as there have obviously been no traditional award ceremony opportunities. However, during the National Care Leavers week, we successfully virtually recognised 84 young people's achievements, young people receiving awards and vouchers to treat themselves.

We have continued to celebrate festivals, all young people received Easter eggs and wellbeing parcels in April this year. Then in June we successfully delivered 90 Eid Hampers to young people living independently, during Christmas we worked with TCD (Lemn Sissay Foundation) and 50 Christmas hampers were delivered. The Service ensured all care leavers received gifts and treats over the Christmas period, along with The Department of Place providing young people with on line opportunities to engage with and activities packs.

4. **FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

- 4.1 Our main challenge is the increase in care leavers coming into the service. Children's Social Care has seen a year on year increase in the number of children becoming 'looked after', alongside an increase in UASC and young people presenting as homeless, this has an obvious impact on our care leaving population. Up to date (although now temporarily agreed) there had been no additional social

work capacity. This has had a significant impact on caseloads and the quality of service delivery.

- 4.2 Our young people rightly are requesting greater access to digital platforms; this has been compounded by national lockdowns being in place. The service is working hard with partners and charities to try and facilitate smart devices and Wi-Fi for all our young people, with successful outcomes. We have secured 200 laptops and Wi-Fi devices which is a positive step forward.
- 4.3 Since the 'offer' to care leavers extended to 25 we have seen a steady but slow rise in young people requesting to remain open or returning and requesting a service. As yet we do not know the full resource implication that this will have. Nationally Local Authorities expect to see a third increase in number of Care leaver continuing to access a service post 21.
- 4.4 We are seeing a changing demographic within our cared for children with actual numbers of children from European Union states increasing and a changing demographic of our UASC. Therefore, as adult's significant issues regarding immigration status, leave to remain and no recourse to public funds. With this there is a moral discussion to be had as these children are growing into adults who do not have access to DWP resources, but are owed a service under Human Rights.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

It is important for the variety of accommodation pathways used by the 16+ service to have good quality assurance and contract monitoring in place. This is not unique to the district of Bradford and is being looked at in many local authorities.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

Work on the quality assurance of accommodation pathways will be completed in consultation with Ofsted. Although it is noted such provision is not regulated by Ofsted, there is an interest in this area for the governing body.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

N/A

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

With the increase in Care Leavers and children age 16+ who remain looked after, combined with the need to improve the quality of the service we deliver, we are developing an action plan to cover all aspect of the 16+/Care leavers service. To enable the focused work an additional Service Manager has been funded for a 6-month period and will support the existing Service Manager, who will each take a lead in specific areas, for example, Independent living, Emotional Wellbeing, EET, NEET, Voice and Participation, UASC, and Youth Homelessness. Overarching this both Service Managers will be looking at practice development and resource

analysis.

We have further request via the Covid Fund for an additional Team manager, Social Worker, and Personal Assistant has been agreed.

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

N/A.

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

N/A

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

N/A

7.6 TRADE UNION

N/A

7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

N/A

**7.8 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS
(for reports to Area Committees only)**

N/A

7.9 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

The provision of a good quality 16+ service has significant impact upon corporate parenting as is noted within the report.

7.10 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

N/A

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

N/A

9. OPTIONS

This report is for information only.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

The views of the Corporate Parenting Panel on the detail outlined in this report are

welcomed.

11. APPENDICES

N/A

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

N/A