

Cheshire East Council

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting: 7th March 2017

Report of: Anji Reynolds, Service Manager, Permanence and Through Care Team

Subject/Title: Provision and Outcomes for Care Leavers

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Liz Durham

1. Introduction- Care Leavers in Cheshire East

Cheshire East currently has 195 care leavers (end January 2017) which we are currently working with aged 16-25 years. Of those 67 are eligible (16/17) who remain cared for and 3 are relevant (16/17) who have left care but living independently. There are 125 former relevant (18+). We also offer a 21+ service giving support, advice and guidance to any who may wish this support up to the age of 25 who are not in FE education, training or doing an apprenticeship. In some instances we would also consider short term allocation to give continuity to the person if required.

In July 2016 the Government published their strategy 'Keep on Caring' Supporting People from Care to Independence and sets out the Government's vision in 5 key outcomes for care leavers (below) which will underpin how we work with care leavers;



2. The Care Leaver's Service 2016

In November 2014 the 16+ team merged with the care planning and CWD team to form the Permanence and Through Care Team. Existing Personal Advisers were being supervised by 5 generic Team Managers; one having specialist knowledge of leaving care services.

In time, the Care Leaver service has evolved into a bigger team and the management structure didn't lend itself to being a cohesive group with a clear distinct identity. In January 2016 it proposed an arrangement to move the Care Leavers Service under the management of one interim Care Leavers Team Manager.

In March 2016 we ended our role on New Belongings project working in cluster groups with Trafford, Stockport, Lancashire, Blackpool and Bury. This gave us an existing platform with these outcomes above as we had already put together a CE plan reflecting the above, so thoughts had already been well developed at this point around these themes.

In July 2016 a new permanent Care Leaver manager was recruited. With one Team Manager covering 16 staff members a deputy role was put in place but she left the employment of CE at the end of 2016. With this number of staff and the determination to 'get to good' across all of these areas, this has required a reshaping of our structure and in the way we work. The following aims to set out how we propose to do this;

I. Work streams and Champion roles

Creating work streams around the strategy allows us to focus on improving outcomes in these key areas – EET, Health, 'Readiness for Independence', Financial Stability and Housing (safe, secure and stable).

We are creating Champion roles as progression routes for Personal Adviser's (PA's) from 1st April 2017.

We have 3 existing staff members who will take the lead for EET, Health and Readiness for Independence. It is envisaged that from 1st October we will consider recruiting another 'Champion' role for Housing and Finance. We envisage this will give us a clear focus on the job role that PA's do – outcomes measured. It will also give clarity in how we do this – working as a team, together, with care leavers. It is intended to improve communication with partners across these strands with one key named worker responsible for developing and working closely with the Team Manager. As a service the PDP targets will be around the 5 outcomes strategy by developing outcome focused work streams with care leavers so we can respond to – How do we know if it's any good?

The Champions will work closely with the Team Manager on the 5 key outcomes to co-ordinate the work streams, develop resources, produce a quarterly report and work closely with care leavers so focus of the work is shaped by their needs and their feedback. Our Champions are:

PA CHAMPION ROLE

Cheshire East Council

GREG STUART (Icon: House) 

NADINE WARDE (Icon: Heart) 

MIKE WOODS (Icon: Job) 

The graphic features three horizontal bars with icons and names. The top bar has a house icon and the name 'GREG STUART' next to a 'living independently' graphic. The middle bar has a heart icon and the name 'NADINE WARDE' next to a gymnastics graphic. The bottom bar has a person with a briefcase icon and the name 'MIKE WOODS' next to a 'JOB SEARCH' graphic. The Cheshire East Council logo is in the top right.

The 'Readiness for Independence' champion, the EET champion and the Health champion will work closely with the service, care leavers and social workers in these key areas;

Better PREPARED and SUPPORTED to live independently

Cheshire East Council

- INDEPENDENCE PACKS
- TENANCY READINESS COURSE
- REDUCE RISK TO YOUNG PEOPLE MOVING INTO UNREGULATED PLACEMENTS
- IMPROVE TRANSITION PLANNING TO ADULTHOOD
- RELATIONSHIP FORMING, GREATER PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT



The graphic features a vertical list of five items, each preceded by a white circle. The items are: INDEPENDENCE PACKS, TENANCY READINESS COURSE, REDUCE RISK TO YOUNG PEOPLE MOVING INTO UNREGULATED PLACEMENTS, IMPROVE TRANSITION PLANNING TO ADULTHOOD, and RELATIONSHIP FORMING, GREATER PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT. The Cheshire East Council logo is in the top right, and a 'living independently' graphic is on the right side.

Improved access to Education, Employment and Training



TRAINEESHIPS

APPRENTICESHIPS

HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION

WORK BASED OPPORTUNITIES

CVs, WORK READINESS, COACHING



Improved access to health support



EMOTIONAL WELL BEING

MENTAL HEALTH

REDUCE RISK AROUND TEENAGE PREGNANCY AND PARENTING

SEXUAL IDENTITY AND SEXUAL HEALTH

HEALTH PASSPORTS FOR CARE LEAVERS



II. Monthly Challenge Meetings, Quality Assurance and Auditing

In addition to the focus on developing work around the strategy and work streams there's been a drive to improve the quality of pathway plans and the tool used with care leavers. A task group worked on a new look pathway plan and this 'went live' on the children's system on the 10th January 2017. Service Manager's thematic audits and challenge meetings have explored a range of topics including; adoption

breakdowns in adolescence (13 to date over 16+), University attendees (10), apprenticeships (7-9) (, Pregnant and Parents (24), Foyer accommodation, Staying Put arrangements (16), EEA nationals, UASC support as part of a deeper dive into our work.

III. Raising the profile of work with Care Leavers

The staff have delivered a number of presentations about the service to care leavers at the Practice and Development Workshops held in Crewe and Macclesfield in March 2016 and in December 2016. We have also delivered a presentation to the Fostering Forum in January 2017 and to the 'Skills to Fostering' training programme to assist foster carers thinking towards independent living and how they prepare cared for children and aid their skills for moving on. These events were well received.

With greater resources to meet the growing demand of the service, earlier allocation of a Personal Adviser to an 'eligible child' is now matched on turning 16 and most certainly by their first pathway plan review. (Due to resources a year ago in February 2016 there were 27 16/17 year olds not allocated to a PA. In February 2017 a review showed that currently 3 not yet allocated.) The PA's role is to support independent living skills.

3. What are we doing?

Better prepared and supported to live independently / Engagement and Participation

Independence Packs (Bronze, Silver and Gold) designed by the PA's to use as a tools to work with young people in thinking about the work needing done to support their independent skills. A number of social workers are using this tool to assess their young people's independence skills. Tenancy Readiness Programme offers CLs opportunity to think about the merits of having their own property and the responsibilities that may come with this. Four programmes were set up over 2016 and 13 young people engaged in this work over a 4-6 week period, with 4-6 care leavers participating at any one time. 7 have successfully moved to independent living, 2 have moved into Supported Lodgings, 3 have taken part in a trail at the taster flat and one has a moving on plan for semi independence from residential care in the coming months. One care leaver fed back "The course reiterated to him that he is not yet ready for independent living and requires further support from his host."



We now have improved knowledge of our data, better oversight and understanding of our service and a 16/17 year old tracker to think about next steps accommodation options. Better data tracking on numbers in staying put arrangements, semi-independent provisions, Forum Housing and reviewed by the Team Manager in monthly challenge sessions.

Last year 25 young people were referred to the **IGNITION PANEL** which is an innovative project that has been established to support young people to have the best, most appropriate transition for when they leave care. Ignition is for young people aged 15½ plus who are thinking about where and how they would like to live when they leave care (we think the earlier we can plan the better the experience!). Making sure our young people start independence at the right time and in the right place provides the best chance for a positive journey to adulthood and will support the best possible life chances. The panel shares ideas, suggestions, good practice etc. to develop an action plan that will support each young person to achieve their future living goals. This may be accessing a taster house, supported lodging or being supported through a semi-independent setting with a phased transition to young people being in their own property. 3 young people who attended panel availed themselves of the taster flat over a 6 month period. Others obtained advice, more options to consider while others moved on to semi-independent provisions.

There are better 16+ options with ring fenced properties and even closer working with Commissioning services and input into the Sufficiency Statement. Having the training flat aids the work in supporting care leavers make up their minds on their next steps.

We are exploring the House Project as an alternative option to traditional offers. Funding Bid and scoping in progress.

We are working hard to try and reduce the experiences of care leavers facing homelessness and debt issues; with work being developed by the Team Manager and housing providers to prevent debts accruing and threat of eviction so there's a warning bell ringing out to our service long before this is considered an option.

Challenges:

Need earlier intervention so work begins from 14+ and closer working with Care Leavers Forum and the Fostering Forum and with social workers.

Improved access to Education, Employment and Training



We have been successful with an Innovation Bid and recruited full time worker Mike Woods in October 2016 on a 2 year contract. Mike was a Job Coach prior to this employment with Cheshire East. Mike's role means he has been able to establish very quickly some of the barriers that prevent young people from getting into employment

Targeted approach to improving 16+ destinations for care leavers through funding from the Innovation Fund Bid and employment of a full time staff member who will focus on NEET status of care leavers and another staff member pending to support the work with 16-18 year olds. There is a sub-group called SPEED, which focuses on 16+ Education, Employment Destinations, which is a work group from across the services and focus on tracking 16-18 year olds and also 18-21 year olds.

Improved data reporting and reliance on Liquid Logic (LL) as central point for data collection has been a central feature over the work this past year. There is a Tracker

and measuring of EET in monthly Challenge Meetings held and a staff expectation all NEET are to have a CV updated – we will drive this forward to all young people, no exceptions.

EET PA Champion is liaising closely with all potential providers, agencies and resources within CE and providing more offers and choice of job, training or apprenticeship to care leavers.

3 have progressed and completed Apprenticeships in August 2016. We recently fine-tuned our EET reports to reflect the 16-18 EET figures and the 18-21 year olds data figures and we will test this out in our next SPEED meeting in March 2017. There were 7 *end of December. Currently 5 listed and 2 x 21 year old FR care leavers doing apprenticeships. Improved tracking of this held within the PTC team.

NEET figure for 18-21 year olds lowered with targeted approach, care leavers being supported by their PA's to have CV's and work ready programmes such as 'Just drop in', Youth Support Team drop in, EET champion and improved funding to support this.

Challenges:

Public Transport links for some care leavers getting to and from their training or work destinations.

A low wage can deter some take up of an apprenticeship.

Experiencing stability and feeling safe and secure

As already stated above, young people aged 16/17 are being referred to Ignition Panel to consider their next steps to give them choice about the accommodation options they may wish to consider.



Ofsted said we needed more robust risk assessments for our young people in the Foyer at YMCA. As a service we have taken the view that there needs to be a risk assessment on all young people in semi-independent provisions and this is now expected practice.

A working group is set up with commissioning to work closely with care leaver service around the Sufficiency Statement 2017-2018. The housing options have increased and offer;

- 2 YMCA ring fenced flats through IGNITION panel
- 5 ring fenced beds at Watermill House. Occupancy rates equate to 8 care leavers to date in Watermill House
- West Street - 4 beds secured at West Street in Crewe area
- Broad Street – semi-detached house in Crewe area.

Data suggests less than 3% in 'homeless' category.

There is a small % of care leavers that are choosing not to have contact with service –

2 x ARE (appeals rights exhausted) and 3 other (pregnant or new parent) who are only engaging with a SW in CIN/CP teams. Wirral and Tameside Ofsted inspections highlight the need to have closer scrutiny in this area. Clear efforts conveyed in case recording of our attempts to engage them and generally very good compliance with visits and young people seen in line with statutory requirements.

Challenges:

Transitions and allocation to adult services worker can sometimes take too long. Macclesfield area suggests potential drop in accommodation options.

Improved access to health support



A 16+ health nurse now working with CLS since her employment in July 2016.

A PA worker dedicated to 15 hours of targeted work towards 'Emotional Well-being' and leading a task group looking at research, resources and tools to support assessment and support.

New tool called 'How am I doing?' being piloted to gauge and better support poor emotional well-being and an evaluation in progress February 2017.

'Pregnancy and Parenting' audit highlighted that we have 24 young women who are either parents or pregnant 16-21 years. A number working closely with CIN/CP teams requiring additional input and support with the care of their baby. We have good relationships with the Family Nurse Partnership but we will build on the offer to support these young mothers by setting up a programme run by the Health Champion. Our deep dive highlighted a high % have interventions and approximately over 25% have had their children removed from their care. We need to do more preventative work around healthy relationships due to high incidence of DV as a factor in these interventions.

Mentoring support offer is now available via Voice for Children (VfC) 6 mentors working with care leavers, mentoring offer from Children's Society, and Pure Insight (in the north of the borough).

KOOTH – workshop in February to discuss the online service to support care leavers with emotional well-being by telephone when they need the service.

Challenges:

The 16+ time commitment that will be involved in completing Health Passports on all our care leavers. Health Passports need developing for care leavers as tend to feature in Ofsted inspections.

Some Parent Care Leavers child/ren on child protection plans, pre-proceedings or care proceedings due unhealthy relationships with their partners.

Role of CAMHS ending at 19 years and care leavers being placed on waiting lists for a service.

Achieving Financial Stability

There is now an established link with the DWP lead Debra Washington who has attended our service meetings and recently at the one on the 20th October 2016. As a result 2 PA's will take an active role in closely working with the north and south job centres and attending their 'Comms' meetings and feeding back to the PA forum.



Mike Woods (EET champion) will establish contacts in the local Job Centres throughout CE as part of his role.

Credit Union offer to work with care leavers around budgeting, savings or bank accounts.

Pathway plan tool newly devised budget planner tool and 'live' since 10th January 2017 to support Budgeting Skills work with young people.

One minute guide issued to staff as an aid to assist with care leaver entitlements New financial Entitlements policy in draft. Clear detail. Local Offer being discussed at Benchmarking Forum in March 2017.

Pathway plans now evidencing all the financial entitlements and not authorised when these don't.

Council Tax Exemption and Cheshire East Council identified as one of 5 councils exempting care leavers.

Pathway plans now evidencing all the financial entitlements and sets out Triple Planning in the event young people UASC may not have right to remain in UK.

Challenges;

Working with UASC/EEA nationals and the support offer diminishing to this group with the Immigration Act 1st April 2017.

Delay in publishing our Entitlements Offer owing to the guidance and case law on UASC 1st April 2017.

Is it any good? Key headlines

Better prepared and supported to live independently / Engagement and Participation

4 Tenancy Readiness Groups took place over 2016 reaching 13 care leavers who participated in the programme. We are currently tracking their pathways to see how this programme assisted their decision making.

A weekly Care Leavers Football Group is held on a Monday at Middlewich Leisure Centre with a good number of care leavers (up to 19 in total) have been attending this weekly event regularly with staff. This group has played against Cheshire Police and have a

	<p>proposed game planned with Cheshire Fire Service.</p> <p>A number of care leavers are known to Youth Justice Services – some on orders now having ended successfully through use of Divert.</p>
Improved Access to Health Support	<p>Immediate support offer to care leavers by telephone contact through commissioning of KOOTH - avoiding need to wait for adult's services referral or waiting lists.</p> <p>PA (15 hours per week) now supporting young people with emotional or MH issues around NEET status to improve confidence, self-esteem getting them re-engaged in a provision.</p>
EET	<p>Audit of Pathway Plans (Q1, Q2) showed there needed to be more evidence of improved outcomes in this area of their work around EET. Part 2 – needed more clarity in the plan as to how this was to be done with the young person i.e. stepping stones. Audits and Coaching sessions to improve written evidence of work done on EET.</p> <p>Over 2016 the CLS has worked hard to get young people work ready, off ESA, JSA and into work readiness programmes.</p> <p>When Ofsted visited in July 2015 our 18-21 NEET figure was 52%, higher than the national average. At the end January 2017 our NEET figure for 18-21 year olds is now below the national average (40%) having attained 36% this past month.</p>
Experiencing stability and feeling safe and secure	<p>We know the whereabouts of all of our young people except for 2 who are ARE (appeals rights exhausted).</p> <p>Keeping in touch - high compliance. 80% of care leavers seen every 2 months.</p> <p>Others are 'exception visits' outside these timescales, Adults with Disabilities, University students and those out of the country for example.</p> <p>The offer of a training flat and trial is working well with our Ignition Panel.</p>
Achieving Financial Stability	<p>More young people having their own bank accounts and ID documents, a good number are holding down tenancies, jobs, training opportunities and making a success of this.</p> <p>Small % that are chaotic and struggle to achieve financial stability with addictions.</p>

How do we know?

Pathway plans appear to evidence the views and voice of the care leaver who is generally consulted about their plans and participate. All the care leavers have an

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) who independently reviews their pathway plan with the care leaver.

Audits capture the views of young people about their pathway plan. In very exceptional cases young people who are not engaging, are unlikely to have their current views in the plan. This related to a small % overall.

New in 2017, there is pre-arranged Children's Society 'drop in' at Cledford House, to speak to staff and cared for children's interest in the Children in Care Council. The Team Manager has now attended the Care Leavers Forum twice in the past 6 months to obtain their views. There's greater scope for our PA champion to develop these links between the service and the care leavers forum as we consider a review of our service plan and refocus on 2017/18.

Over 2017 we will also undertake a survey to obtain feedback from all care leavers we are working with.

