

Report of the Cabinet Member Children's Services and Schools

Introduction

I have been asked by Councillor Connett to report on:

- *the number of private Children's Homes in Devon;*
- *Which authorities have oversight of the homes*
- *which authorities are responsible for ensuring residents attend school and*
- *how 'parental oversight' is provided, particularly in the use of leisure time*

I have further been asked by Councillor Hannaford to Report on the work being done with education and training providers, the public and private sectors, and voluntary and charity groups, to promote education, employment and independence for local people with special needs. Will there also be further opportunity to make sure that this area of work can be incorporated into the devolved authority's productivity plan?

Response

Children's Homes in Devon

The number of private Children's Homes in Devon

There are currently 24 providers of Children's Homes operating in Devon consisting of 103 beds.

These provisions are registered as Children's Homes by Ofsted and in some instances, are considered specialist; for example, a home that provides care to disabled children. All Children's Homes used by Devon are owned and operated by private providers who are companies and in a small number of cases; charities.

Most of these Homes are registered by Ofsted to provide care to young people who present with emotional difficulties and with behaviours that can be challenging.

There are also 19 provisions in Devon which offer accommodation for children over the age of 16 in preparation for independence. These Homes are not regulated by Ofsted and each Local Authority is responsible for quality assurance of these provisions. Some of these provisions also provide support for homelessness prevention.

Which authorities have oversight of the homes

There are a number of local authorities currently placing young people in to Children's Homes located within Devon. Most are bordering authorities. There is a legal responsibility for placing authorities and Children's Homes to inform the 'host' authority of young people being placed within their area. Currently this information is

held by the 'Independent Reviewing Unit' within Devon County Council and is updated on a weekly basis.

Devon County Council remains responsible for the 'safeguarding' of all young people placed in this area regardless of which authority has placed them. All safeguarding concerns are referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for consideration or/and the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH).

Ofsted will notify Devon as the host Local Authority and all placing authorities of any concerns they become aware of through information received or visits. Devon officers offer support and guidance to provisions where improvements are necessary whether we have children placed or not. The quality of provision within the County is important for all children currently placed and for any future Devon placements.

Which authorities are responsible for ensuring residents attend school

All professionals involved in the care of a child are responsible for ensuring they attend school. Arrangements are made when the young person is placed in the home at placement planning meeting that is arranged by the social worker. Primary responsibility sits with the placement provider who will bring concerns to the attention of the Social Worker and the Virtual School. Some Homes will have access to their own education provision however most children will access mainstream school provision local to the home. Our expectation of all providers is that they promote, support and where appropriate facilitate a child's education in line with legislation and statutory guidance. The Virtual School supports all children in care who are living in Devon or who are looked after by Devon but living in another part of the country. For young people accommodated in 16 plus provision they may be attending Foundation Education College or employment or training opportunities. Careers South West have a role to support young people to ensure they are able to participate in this.

How 'parental oversight' is provided, particularly in the use of leisure time

Parental oversight would be the responsibility of the placement (Children's Home) these are registered provisions who work in accordance with the Children's Homes Regulations 2015.

The Social Worker from the placing authority will work with the provider / placement to ensure that the day to day needs of the young person are being met and that desired outcomes are being achieved. The Social Worker and stakeholders will agree with the provider on how a young person's leisure time is overseen and monitored which will change over time and will be regularly reviewed by the Social Worker and an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

The corporate parent remains the placing authority and Parental 'oversight' is also exercised by Devon in more general terms through the activity of the Corporate Parenting Board and Corporate Parenting Forum.

Education, employment and independence for local people with special needs.

In response to Councillor Hannaford, this area of work cuts across the County Council including Economy and Skills and Adult Social Care and Public Health, under Cabinet Members Cllr Barker and Cllr Leadbetter respectively.

The Transition Support Contract, delivered by Careers South West (CSW), is one of the Council's primary mechanisms for working with young people as they move from Education into the post 16 environment. The contract currently focuses on three priority areas; supporting those with a Special Educational Need; supporting those at a higher risk of becoming NEET from other protected groups (notably those in our care); and monitoring and tracking the wider cohort. On a day to day basis, the contract provides the Council with a flexible menu of supplementary support services assisting our most vulnerable young people before and during the transition process, including the provision of tailored advice and guidance capacity around careers and learning, bespoke mentoring approaches and ongoing input into the design and delivery of wider social care and other support mechanisms to support individual progression. As of December 2017, CSW were tracking over 1,100 students with a SEN requirement in Years 12-14, with a range of support interventions in place.

Over the last 3-4 years Devon County Council has encouraged and supported each of the further education colleges in Devon to establish and grow Supported Internship Programmes for students aged 19-25 who have a statutory plan. Small grants were awarded to enable colleges to train staff, develop a network of employer placements and reshape foundation programmes to better prepare students for Supported Internship opportunities. Relationships have been forged with adult supported employment providers, and Job Centre Plus to maximise progression in to paid, and in some cases voluntary, work. Approximately 60 places are available each year, a six-fold increase in less than 4 years, and retention and positive progression rates are as high as 80% in some colleges. The Council continues to support and develop this provision by facilitating a regular practitioners meeting, to share good practice and solve delivery challenges. This group will be expanded in the future to include Special Schools and other agencies working with this group of young people so that participation and success rates are raised even further.

Officers from Social, Education and Employment and Skills, through Devon's Purposeful Systems work, Preparation for Adulthood, have researched current practice and are looking to test different systems for improved transition from child to adulthood with a strong focus on independence and employment. The intention is that through better support and relationships prior to transition, combined with strong collaborative work at transition, will help individuals be 'steady and ready' for their next steps in becoming as independent as they can be including employment. Alongside this work, the SEN Strategic Review will highlight the gap in appropriate local post 19 educational training which will be a focus of work in the next financial year, in particular working with school and Foundation Education (FE) partners in redesigning the market.

Alongside this work, Devon has a campaign to increase the number of people with disabilities (including young people) in Devon who are employed by 2020 including a range of partners such as JobCentrePlus, Further Education colleges, our employment team in the Council, Exeter University, schools, Devon Partnership Trust and Careers South West. The campaign will address known barriers to employment and increase opportunities for volunteering, apprenticeships, internships and employment (including self-employment), and make sure providers have the right skills and confidence. It is anticipated this work will be shared with Members at the Adults Standing Overview Group at the end of February.

With regards to linkages to the Productivity Strategy, the draft document has been strengthened over recent weeks to better incorporate the key theme of extending prosperity to all, following feedback from the recent consultation exercise. This

includes refinement of the Employment, Skills and Learning chapter to incorporate a new programme entitled 'Creating Pathways to Success for All', focused around overcoming learning / employment barriers for those furthest from the labour market / economy. Additional text within the Strategy now outlines the need to better align activity in this crucial area, and for partners to work together and innovate to further support those with a disability, health related barrier or other personal barrier (e.g. SEN or other learning requirement) to access emerging opportunities. This amendment is currently due to be agreed as part of the revised Productivity Strategy process later this month, with the intention to then develop a linked Implementation Plan over the summer.

Councillor James McInnes
Cabinet Member
Children's Services and Schools