

## Peer Review of Services for Care Leavers

### Report of the Chief Officer Children's Services

*Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.*

#### 1. **Background/Introduction**

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of a peer review that took place during June 2018.

The peer review was commissioned via the South West regional group of the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS).

Cornwall County Council was approached due to having been judged 'Good' by Ofsted for their care leaving service. Cornwall also had experience of conducting peer reviews in other local authorities. Cornwall agreed to undertake the peer review with us, using a framework employed with three other local authorities recently.

- 1.2 The drivers for the peer review were: -

- Devon's' service to care leavers was deemed inadequate by Ofsted when last inspected in 2015. This peer review provided a timely opportunity to review our progress in advance of being subject to the new Inspection of Local Authority Services (ILACS) framework (launched in January 2018).
- The Corporate Parenting Board 'Summer Walkabout' in July 2017 recommended that in relation to care leavers, it would not be wise to wait until the next Ofsted inspection before satisfying ourselves of our progress since 2015. Board members suggested that the service consider a peer review of our services and progress.

#### 2. **The Review Team and Key Lines of Inquiry**

- 2.1 The review team from Cornwall included, the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting and Care Leavers, a team manager for 16+ team, the participation team manager and 8 care experienced young people.
- 2.2 The review sought to evaluate our progress since the last Ofsted inspection against key lines of enquiry (for detail see appendix one).

2.3 The Peer Review team used a variety of methods to evaluate the service including:

- An audit of 30 cases
- Group and individual interviews with Personal Advisors and Social Workers.
- Group and individual interviews with young people who are 'relevant' or 'former relevant' care leavers.
- Group and individual interviews with Corporate Parenting stakeholders
- Group interview with Independent Reviewing Officers
- Interviews with Senior Leaders, Chief Executive and Lead Member for Children.
- Review of key documentation (strategies and developments)

### **3. Peer Review Findings**

3.1 The Peer Review team concluded that considerable progress had been made since the last inspection of Devon Children's Services by Ofsted in 2015. This finding was supported by the data evidence, feedback from care leavers themselves, and from other activities undertaken by the Peer Review team.

3.2 What's Working Well. The team identified a number of things that were working well or were much improved, including:

- Personal advisors' commitment to improving outcomes for children and demonstrating a young person-centred approach. The PA's morale is high. Care Leavers interviewed spoke positively about them.
- Personal advisor' and social work staff' morale was found to be much improved since 2015.
- Being In touch with Care Leavers has increased from 45% (in 2015) to at least 84% June 2018.
- More Pathway Plans are being completed and reviewed.
- Coordination of key multi-agency partner services is developing. For example, the joint protocols with district councils regarding accommodation and with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) regarding NEET. In addition, a delivery group is in development and this will bring services together in a formal way to drive further improvement.

3.3 Areas for Development. The team identified areas where more development would be of benefit, including:

- Continuing the work to develop and publish the Devon 'Offer' for Care Leavers, and to ensure that all care leavers are provided with an understanding of their entitlements.

- Further developing the overarching methodology [practice model] and ensure that it is consistently applied by all workers. A 'strength based' approach has been partially implemented and the development of a practice model across Devon is in development to support all work with children, young people and their families.
- Maximising the opportunity to further improve the quality of case recording with the introduction of Eclipse, planned for later this year. This will support practitioners to manage and review work such as Pathway Plans.
- Considering how to further develop the participation activity so that the views and wishes of Care Leavers are better represented. Based on this review, Devon have a group of young people who could participate more and effectively.
- The current Pledge was developed by young people and has been part of an internal review. It now needs to be refreshed. The Pledge includes a high number of commitments. The review recommended reducing these in order that they are memorable and easier to implement and monitor.
- The number of Care Leavers in education, training and employment whilst in line with the England average at 48% could be further improved.

### 3.4 Recommendations

- Ensure, via management oversight/supervision records, that personal advisors are asked about the timing of the last pathway plan and young person's visit.
- The pathway plan format has been reviewed and will be implemented with the new records system (Eclipse), however looking at best practice in other local authorities would also be helpful.
- Provide a benefits/entitlements leaflet for care leavers at different stages and integrate that into the local offer.
- Review those care leavers not in touch, not in education, training and employment and not in suitable accommodation.
- Consider specialist leaving care management capacity to continue and develop the improvement since 2015.
- Development of a protocol with colleges to improve and maintain education opportunities for Care Leavers.
- Continue to develop the Children in Care and Care Leavers participation strategy.
- Progress the development of the corporate parenting board structure so that partners are fully included and wider consideration is given to partners understanding their role with Care Leavers.

#### **4. Next Steps**

- 4.1 Key actions arising from the peer review are being implemented and worked on. Findings have been disseminated, learning events have been started and a draft action plan for improvement has been developed that will be monitored through the childrens social work management team (Appendix three)
- 4.2 The development of the 'Local Offer' is almost complete and will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in September 2018.
- 4.3 Progress will be reported to the Corporate Parenting Board.

#### **Darryl Freeman**

Head of Children's Social Care (Deputy Chief Officer)

#### **Electoral Divisions: All**

Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Skills: Councillor James McInnes

Chief Officer for Childrens Services: Jo Olsson

#### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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Appendix 1: Peer Review Key Lines of Enquiry

Appendix 2: Corporate Parenting Principles

Appendix 3: Draft Action Plan

## Appendix 1 Peer Review Key Lines of Enquiry

- Ensure that support being provided to all care leavers to ensure that their welfare is being promoted through receipt of the care leaving services to which these young people are entitled. How do we know and what difference is this making to support positive outcomes via transition to adulthood?
- Review the quality of senior leadership and monitoring by elected members to ensure best quality service provision and outcomes.
- Review the quality and provision of suitable accommodation for all care leavers.
- Review the quality of partnership work in respect of care leavers.
- Monitoring and quality assurance arrangements in respect of any unsuitable accommodation placements.
- In 2015, the number of care leavers in education, employment or training was below the national level; how has this improved and what has contributed to this improvement?
- Do all care leavers have a needs assessment and a SMART, outcome focussed Pathway Plan that is regularly reviewed and updated to support effective transition to adulthood.
- Are all reviews of pathway plans for young people aged 18 and over include purposeful management oversight that adds value?
- Is information readily available for care leavers in an accessible format explaining their rights and entitlements.

*In addition, the team considered:*

Compliance re Children and Social Work Act 2017 requirements, including:

- A clearly defined, advertised and implemented local offer.
- Personal Advisors available for all care leavers up to the age of 25 years of age from April 2018.
- Adherence to the seven corporate parenting principles ([Appendix 1](#)).

## **Appendix 2**

### **CORPORATE PARENTING PRINCIPLES (CHILDREN AND SOCIAL WORK ACT 2017)**

The corporate parenting principles set out seven fundamental needs for looked after children and care leavers, as follows:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- to consider of the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

## Care Leavers Improvement plan 2018/19

*A good corporate parent should have the same aspirations for a child in care or care leaver as a good parent would have for their own child. It means providing them with the stability and support they need to make progress; and helping them to access new opportunities and experiences that inspire them to set ambitious goals for themselves. It means celebrating their successes, but also recognising that they will sometimes make mistakes and need help to get back on track. It also means supporting them to gain the skills and confidence to live independent lives, while letting them know that they have someone to call on for help if the going gets tough.*

**Edward Timpson MP, Minister of State for Children and Families (2016)     Corporate Parenting Principles (Children and Social Work Act 2017)** to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;

- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

**‘Working to improve the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in Devon’  
Mission Statement for Children’s Services written by Devon’s Children in Care Council**

**GOVERNANCE**

Objective	Actions	Lead	Milestones			Outcomes	RAG
			August 2018	September 2018	December 2018		
1. Care Leavers understand the support that they can access and their entitlements in the Local Offer that is in a format accessible to all.	Local Offer to be written and consultation to take place.	Liza Jarvis	Draft for consultation	Consultation complete and completed document ready for launch	Local offer in place.  Launch and publicise via Permanency & Transition Teams, stand up speak up website, newsletters	Care Leavers will return to us for support when they need it and have the support and opportunities to succeed.	Green
	Plan for launch	Liza Jarvis	Launch plan written and distributed				Green
2. Care Leavers are consulted regularly and have a voice in service delivery.	Participation strategy to be produced. (see also point 10)	Sophie Ellis	Draft strategy completed	Final strategy agreed	Participation Team fully staffed Strategy Action Plan completed and implemented	Service delivery is informed by care leavers and the service delivers to meet their needs.	Green
	Bright Spots Survey to be completed	Karen Morris			Survey closes. Results expected March 2019.		Green
3. Corporate parenting governance arrangements are clear and ensure that DCC meets its responsibilities as good corporate parents.	Governance strategy to be produced (Corporate Parenting Board).	Darryl Freeman	Draft Strategy written	Consult with Corporate Parenting Board	Implement	Corporate parents consistently prioritise the needs of care leavers and have sufficiently high aspirations for them	Green
	Mark Riddell invited to visit Devon to advise on good practice.	Karen Morris	Invitation		Date agreed for February 2019.		Green

	Devon team to visit Cornwall to identify good practice	Karen Morris	Team identified and arrangements made	Visit Cornwall	Learning disseminated and implemented.		Green
4. Resilient high performing workforce that ensures all care leavers receive a high-quality service	<p>Ensure Sufficient Personal Advisor capacity to provide a good service.</p> <p>Identify capacity needed</p> <p>Recruit to posts</p>	<p>Karen Morris</p> <p>Area Managers</p> <p>TM's</p>	<p>Identify resource</p> <p>Identify capacity by number of care leavers and entitlement to service.</p>	Additional PA's in post		<p>Caseloads are manageable and audit evidences high quality service.</p> <p>Care leavers have caring and enduring relationships with effective and ambitious corporate parents.</p>	Green
5. Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy.	Revised strategy to be completed.	Darryl Freeman	Draft complete	Consultation	Strategy published	Corporate parents consistently prioritise the needs of care leavers and have sufficiently high aspirations for them	Green

## SUPPORT, ACCOMMODATION AND ENTITLEMENTS

Objective	Actions	Lead	Milestones			Outcomes	RAG
			August 2018	September 2018	December 2018		
6. Care Leavers understand DCC's commitment to them.	A pledge produced that is accessible to care leavers and staff.	Karen Morris	Pledge revised	consultation	Understood by all	Care Leavers understand Devon's commitment to them as corporate parents.	Green
7. Staff understand care leavers legislation, status and entitlements and that this is shared with all looked after children.	Staff training	All managers	Peer review feedback to managers with identified item on care leaver status at SDM.	Cascaded to teams by frontline managers	All staff have gained the knowledge and is routinely part of induction of new staff.	Care leavers receive a high-quality service and all staff understand what care leavers are entitled to.	Green
8. All 15-year olds who are looked after will have a full needs assessment that informs their Pathway Plan.  This assessment must be updated every year.	Tracker to be completed to identify if requirements met.  Line Managers to monitor compliance and quality of plans.	Area Manager's  Team Manager's Assistant Team Manager's	Tracker to be populated  Routinely monitored in supervision	All care leavers have up to date assessment.	Objective met and sustained.	Tenacious planning for care leavers futures at all levels and across all key agencies.	Amber
9. All 16-year olds who are looked after will have a Pathway Plans in place. The plan will be reviewed at each statutory review until young people reach 18 and then every 12 months post 18 years.	Tracker to be completed to identify if requirements met.  Line Managers to monitor compliance and quality of plans.	Area Manager's  Team Manager's Assistant Team Manager's	Tracker to be populated  Routinely monitored in supervision	All care leavers have up to date assessment and pathway plan.	Objective met and sustained.	Tenacious planning for care leavers futures at all levels and across all key agencies.	Amber

## SUPPORT, ACCOMMODATION AND ENTITLEMENTS

Objective	Actions	Lead	Milestones			Outcomes	RAG
			August 2018	September 2018	December 2018		
<p>10. Personal Advisors will keep in touch with all Care Leavers and ensure that their voice is heard.</p> <p>They will make contact and visit regularly to maintain positive relationships and offer timely, skilled support to promote independence.</p>	<p>Tracker to be completed to ensure requirements are met.</p> <p>Practice standard of visits every 2 months.</p> <p>Line managers to monitor frequency of contact in every supervision</p>	<p>Area M's</p> <p>PA's</p> <p>ATM's/TM's</p>	Tracker to be populated.	Tracker to be updated and used regularly to monitor progress and ensure compliance.	Objective met and sustained.	<p>Care leavers have caring and enduring relationships with effective and ambitious corporate parents.</p> <p>Care leavers will have a strong and stable social network to support them.</p>	Amber
<p>11. All care leavers have suitable accommodation in line with their assessed needs identified in the pathway plan and that staff understand what constitutes suitable accommodation.</p>	<p>Staff to understand what constitutes suitable accommodation.</p> <p>To be discussed in supervision. All changes of accommodation must be agreed as suitable by the TM.</p> <p>Tracker to identify where care leavers are not in suitable accommodation.</p>	<p>All managers</p> <p>TM's /ATM's</p> <p>AM's</p> <p>TM's/ATM's</p>	Peer review feedback to managers with identified item on suitable accommodation at SDM.	Cascaded to teams by frontline managers	All care leavers are in suitable accommodation or if not contingency plans are in place and senior managers are made aware.	<p>Care leavers can manage finances, maintain a home and manage their lives independently.</p>	Green

## SUPPORT, ACCOMMODATION AND ENTITLEMENTS

Objective	Actions	Lead	Milestones			Outcomes	RAG
			August 2018	September 2018	December 2018		
	Contingency plans must be in place to ensure risk is managed and suitable accommodation is sourced.						

## EDUCATION EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING

Objective	Actions	Lead	Milestones			Outcomes	RAG
			August 2018	September 2018	December 2018		
12. All care leavers are supported to achieve their full potential through either being in further and higher education or in their chosen career/occupation.	<p>Widen the participation in the EET working group to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young Devon</li> <li>• Enterprise &amp; Skills (DCC)</li> <li>• CSW</li> <li>• Virtual School</li> <li>• Social Care</li> </ul>	Ian Hemlick, Virtual School Head	Produce Terms of Reference group and ensure dates are set on a monthly basis.	Virtual College development plan to be produced.		Care leavers have the support and opportunities they need to succeed.	Amber
13. Care leavers have assistance to find employment, training and financial support.	<p>A protocol between the Local Authority and post 16 providers detailing the responsibilities of each party. In addition, there will be terms of reference for the CLEET group.</p> <p>Develop the regional advice clinics which meet twice a year with agencies such as: Job Centre+, Children's Services, Careers South West, Virtual</p>	Ian Hemlick, virtual School Head	Protocol and TOR for CLEET group produced	More effective transition between KS4 and KS5.		Care leavers progress into further or higher education, apprenticeships or skilled jobs.	Green

	School and local post 16 providers.						
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## HEALTH AND WELL BEING

Objective	Actions	Lead	Milestones			Outcomes	RAG
			August 2018	September 2018	December 2018		
14. Care Leavers are supported to be emotionally resilient and physically healthy.	<p>All Devon Care Leavers will be offered an up-to-date summary of their personal health issues and suggested actions. They will be offered an ongoing point of contact for support with health issues and signposting to appropriate health services/information.</p> <p>Care Leavers will be offered support to transition into adult health services.</p> <p>All Devon Care Leavers will be sent a letter from the CIC Nurse team to offer on-going support post</p>	Cathy Jeremy, Named Nurse	Implement to all care leavers.	Electronic records will be able to evidence if this was offered and qualitative accounts will be documented in health records.		Care leavers are physically healthy, feel valued are not isolated and have learnt how to manage the challenges in life.	Green

## HEALTH AND WELL BEING

Objective	Actions	Lead	Milestones			Outcomes	RAG
			August 2018	September 2018	December 2018		
	18 years. This letter gives the team's contact details and reminds the YP of their Health Passport that they should have received at 16 years old.						