

## Care Leaver Self-assessment

### 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.*

**Recommendation:** members of the committee are requested to consider:

- Key messages from recent self-assessment activity
- Note proposed key lines of enquiry for a future peer review.

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

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of a self-assessment activity that took place during November and December 2017. Each of the four locality Permanence and Transition teams responsible for supporting all care leavers undertook an internal review to evaluate the quality of provision and to identify areas for continued improvement.
- 1.2 This self-assessment represents preparation for a Peer Review, which is in the process of being agreed and commissioned to take place between May and June 2018.
- 1.3 There are several drivers for this self-assessment:
  - Devon's' service to care leavers was deemed inadequate by Ofsted when they last inspected us in 2015. This self-assessment provides a timely opportunity to review our progress in advance of the new Inspection of Local Authority Services (ILACS) framework launched in January 2018.
  - The Service Review commissioned by Children's Social Care in May 2017 noted that there was evidence of good quality support offered to care leavers by their Personal Advisors.
  - The Corporate Parenting Board 'Summer Walkabout' in July 2017 identified /recommended three issues for follow up, namely;

- To review the county wide approach being taken to the timing of the allocation of Personal Advisors to ensure consistency and best practice.
  - To evaluate our capacity to meet key practice requirements such as reviews, visits, transition to adult services support, health needs and education/training/employment support.
  - To commission a peer review to analyse what progress we have made following the previous inadequate judgement in 2015.
- 1.4 Following the implementation of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, it is important that we can assure young people we work with and the Corporate Parenting Board that we are fully compliant in the three key aspects as follows:
- 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.

## **2. Self-assessment methodology**

- 2.1 To evaluate and provide an evidenced-based summary of progress since 2015 inspection against the concerns highlighted in the original Ofsted report.
- 2.2 To evaluate the quality and impact of Devon's' practice in respect of care leavers against the practice of LA's with good and outstanding services for care.
- 2.3 An indicator grid was developed which reflected the benchmarks outlined above.
- 2.4 Each locality was required to undertake some core activities during the self-assessment period:
- Review existing performance data related to care leavers.
  - Pathway Plan audits and a summary report to outline key strengths and concerns (67 were completed).
  - The completion the indicator grid (24 indicators) summarising each team's analysis of compliance with statutory requirements as well as the quality of practice.
  - Each locality completed a summary report to outline key strengths and areas for development along with an overall self-assessment judgement.
  - Additional evidence was accepted and included:
    - Focused discussions with key team members.
    - Feedback from internal service providers (DYPAS, Fostering and the Participation Team)

- Feedback received from the following external providers (colleges, housing, YES centre, Bethany House, YMCA, Esther House)
- Young people's views
- Analysis of a locally developed NEET tracker.

### **3. Performance Data**

- 3.1 Data was provided for the four key categories of reporting to DfE in line with requirements under Children looked after by local authorities in England guide to the SSDA903 collection (annual return), namely, those care leavers we keep in touch with, young people's activity, accommodation and suitable accommodation.
- 3.2 We have increased the percentage of care leavers with whom we remain in contact (to 82%)
- 3.3 Young people's activity (education, work etc) - The proportion of care leavers in Education, Employment, or Training has increased (to 46%).
- 3.4 87% of care leavers are now reported to be in suitable accommodation (compared to just 57% at the end of March 2017).
- 3.5 Further to this we are working with the management information team to improve the quality of additional data we require to support improved practice in other key areas of our work with care leavers. This includes;
  - Completion rates of needs assessments for all 15-year olds to inform initial pathway plans.
  - Number of young person with a pathway plan at 16 years of age.
  - Personal Advisor caseloads and allocation of young people eligible for care leaving services from 16 years of age.
  - Risk assessment completion where suitability of accommodation is a concern
  - PoPP (personal occupational progress plan) completion rates.
  - Health passport completion rates.

### **4. Key Themes**

#### ***Strengths identified:***

- 4.1 All four localities graded themselves as having improved since the Ofsted judgement of 2015. They each separately judged themselves as 'requires improvement' on the basis that while practice and compliance has improved some inconsistency remains evident as can be seen from the evidence above.

- 4.2 In 79% (N=53) of cases audited, young people are reported to have participated in their pathway plan and that their voice is evident throughout planning process.
- 4.3 Over 68% (N= 46) of plans audited were deemed both SMART and having each key aspect of need.
- 4.4 Pathway plans are reviewed and/or updated in a timely way in 77% (N= 52) of cases. One locality did identify this as more problematic however and this is an area for focused improvement.
- 4.5 One locality reported that it already uses an audit template to regularly evaluate their care leaver practice. It is recommended that all localities use this approach to evaluate outcomes on an ongoing basis.
- 4.6 In 79% (N=53) of cases audited young people are reported to have participated in their pathway plan and that their voice is evident throughout planning process.
- 4.7 Over 68% (N= 46) of plans audited were deemed both SMART and having captured each key aspect of need.
- 4.8 Pathway plans are reviewed and/or updated in a timely way in 77% (N= 52) of cases. One locality did identify this as more problematic however and this is an area for focused improvement.
- 4.9 One locality has developed an approach to auditing their own work and had already undertaken work to evaluate the quality of their practice with care leavers. This is an activity that needs to be replicated across the county to ensure regular review of compliance, practice and outcomes.
- 4.10 While one of the localities sought to get direct feedback from care leavers as part of this assessment they were not as successful as they would have hoped. Regular feedback from the young people we work with is crucial and needs to be sought routinely as part of our regular contact with them and through the monthly case audits undertaken.
- 4.11 Again, this is an issue all localities need to resolve to ensure that through their regular contact they are seeking views and experiential feedback. It is also important to be able to reach those young people we are not keeping in touch with on a regular basis.
- 4.12 Positive feedback was received about the quality of PA and SW support and how hard they work for young people (audit and professional feedback). They advocate strongly to support access to services and to prevent homelessness.

- 4.13 There was evidence of good quality visits and regularly advice about entitlements and complaints processes. Tenacious efforts to keep in touch with young people, even when they disengage were identified.
- 4.14 Young people are deemed to be safe based on regular contact and review.
- 4.15 Some excellent aspirational pathway plans completed in partnership with young people and key multi agency partners were evident.

***Identified areas for development:***

- 4.16 The audit revealed that too many pathway plans lack a contingency plan (55% N=37).
- 4.17 Too few cases (30%) had a separate needs (or single) assessment to support the development of the initial pathway plan. Current practice includes the assessment of need in the pathway plan. Recent changes to practice requires a separate assessment and compliance will be monitored in the coming months
- 4.18 Recordings don't always confirm that care leavers have been given copies of their pathway plans. 44% (N=30) were recorded as having this confirmed on file in some way or confirmed by the social worker as part of the audit process.
- 4.19 44% (N=67) of young people audited are recorded to have had pathway plans in place at the point of their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. However, all had them in place before their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- 4.20 All teams understand the requirement for allocation of PA's at 16 years of age. Each team identified the availability of PA's as the reason for this. All four teams are concerned about how they will meet the challenge facing them with the increased responsibility in respect of the requirements of the C&SW Act 2017.
- 4.21 Strengths were identified in the PA role in getting alongside YP from an early stage to form a working relationship and support the implantation of the pathway plan support, independence preparation and transition needs.

**Improvement action required:**

- 4.22 This self-assessment has raised useful practice issues for further development. The teams are keen to ensure we provide the best service to care leavers and are keen to engage in this ongoing improvement process as

well as celebrate good practice. These issues have been added to the improvement plan, which is overseen by Karen Morris, Locality Director lead for children in care and care leavers.

- 4.23 Improved performance data is required from MIT so that all teams can access regularly to support county wide and locality performance. This is dependent upon successful implementation of Eclipse.
- 4.24 Planning and support for the implementation of new legislation and guidance such as Children and SW Act 2017, including 7 corporate parenting principles is also required.
- 4.25 Pathway Plan compliance needs to be improved.
- 4.26 we need to put in place risk assessment guidance/template to evaluate key issues affecting care leavers (e.g. suitable accommodation, emotional and mental health risks, independent living risks, vulnerability to CSE, County Lines (dangerous drugs/modern slavery) risks etc)
- 4.27 Needs assessment practice needs to be further strengthened:
  - Guidance based on legal requirements about what this looks like for all practitioners and managers.
  - Quality assurance to be improved regarding the relevance and quality of assessments via responsible managers and IRO's as part of the review process.
- 4.28 A repository of good practice to share ideally via SharePoint can be developed so that this can be shared across the county.
- 4.29 Regular peer auditing within and across teams to support sharing good practice and to support improvement where this is needed will need to be embedded.
- 4.30 Caseloads must be manageable for PAs and complexity considered as part of caseload management.
- 4.31 Clear guidance is needed regarding local offer to all care leavers up to 25 years of age. Senior Management Team (SMT) is asked to produce clear direction.
- 4.32 A focus on building multi agency working relationships that support collaborative practice and challenge to support best outcomes is required so that we escalate concerns and invite escalation to support timely challenge.
- 4.33 Training programme for Pas are needed;
  - Implications of legislative changes

- Pathway planning
  - Local offer
  - Entitlements for care leavers
- 4.34 Training/guidance to support the implantation of the Children Social Work Act 2017 is also needed;
- To ensure the 7 Corporate Parenting Principles (Appendix 1) are integrated throughout our practice.
  - To ensure a clear and well understood local offer
  - To support all care leavers until they are 25 years of age.

## **5. Peer Review**

- 5.1 A peer review is being commissioned via the regional group of the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS). There are two local authorities in the South West region who have achieved a 'Good' Ofsted rating in respect of care leavers. One has been approached to consider undertaking this.
- 5.2 This review needs to evaluate the issues raised in the Ofsted inspection (2015) and outlined at the beginning of this report and to evaluate the county's own assessment of its progress against these key areas of practice.

## **6. Next Steps**

- 6.1 Key actions arising from the self-assessment have been built into existing locality/team improvement plans. The lead for children in care and care leavers will report on the progress of this plan at the Corporate Parenting Board.
- 6.2 A Peer Review is in the process of being commissioned to take place in the first half of 2018.
- 6.3 Peer Review findings will be reported to the Corporate Parenting Board once completed and a learning event will be arranged to share key messages and learning.

**Jean Kelly**  
**Senior Manager – Children's Safeguarding**

**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

*Contact for Enquiries:*

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

Email: [darryl.freeman@devon.gov.uk](mailto:darryl.freeman@devon.gov.uk)

Tel No: 01392 383212

Room: 130, County Hall



## **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.