

Item No. 6.	Classification: Open	Date: 21 April 2010	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Economic Wellbeing of Looked After Children	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Children's Services	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note the number and variety of interventions available to support looked after children and care leavers to achieve economic well being. These interventions include:
 - The council's apprenticeship scheme
 - Support from a dedicated Connexions and Southwark Works officers
 - Coaching scheme
 - Drop in service for looked after children.
2. To note that there are strong partnerships in place, with a soon to be refreshed multiagency Looked After Children (Not in Education, Employment or Training) NEET Strategy Group that is exploring ways of providing joined up provision to this cohort of young people.
3. To note that there is a comprehensive (Not in Education, Employment or Training) NEET strategy in place which is overseen by the multiagency group referred to above.
4. To note that the Council's apprenticeship scheme is successful with looked after children well represented and supported to access this programme.

KEY POINTS

5. The following notes the key points from this report:
 - Between 2009 and 2010 the number of care leavers not in education, employment or training (NEET) has more than halved from 13 to 6
 - Over the past three years 13 Looked After Children (LAC) have successfully applied for the council's apprenticeship scheme
 - The Adolescent and Aftercare (A&AC) Service has a comprehensive policy for care leavers in higher education. This policy guarantees a range of support and financial assistance to Southwark care leavers attending university
 - Connexions and Southwark Works staff are embedded in the LAC team and provide additional support for young people.
 - There have been significant changes at Southwark College and there now is a new senior management team in place. The college is keen to work in partnership and has developed new bespoke Education Other than at School (EOTAS) provision.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

6. Leaving care legislation places a duty upon local authorities to support and promote care leavers in education, employment and training. This is achieved through the allocation of a personal adviser, advice and practical support that can be provided until the age of 21 or 24 if in a continuing course of study.
7. The Southwark 2016 plan identifies reducing the proportion of 16 – 19 year olds not in education, employment or training as a priority. LAC and care leavers have been identified by Southwark Council as a particularly vulnerable groups requiring specific targeted activity within overall council strategies.
8. Responsibility for coordinating the provision of support to care leavers aged 16-19 rests with the A&AC Service. Established in 2007 this service provides the care planning function for looked after children aged 13-18 years and aftercare support until the young person reaches the age of 21 (24 of attending university/ higher education).
9. The A&AC service offers support across a range of partners and services including named nurses, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Connexions, Employment Advisers, Substance Misuse Specialists, housing and police. There are dedicated teams for unaccompanied minors and education support.
10. The 14-19 and Organisational Development teams support the work of the A&AC service. The 14-19 team is responsible for overseeing the Connexions service and raising the standards of achievement for all 14-19 year olds in the context of the borough's Children and Young People's plan. The Organisational Development Team manages the council's Apprenticeship scheme and is in the process of drafting a new Apprenticeships Strategy.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

11. The following sets out the data, strategies and range of interventions that are available to ensure that LAC and care leavers achieve economic well being.

Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET)

12. Table 1 below shows the EET and NEET figures for 16-18 Southwark resident care leavers. The data indicates that between 2009 and 2010 the number of NEET care leavers more than halved from 13 to 6.

Table 1: Resident 16-18 year old care leavers December 2010 (2009 in brackets)

Grand Total	42 (43)
EET	32 (27)
EET %	76.1% (62.8%)
NEET	6 (13)
NEET %	14.2% (30.2%)
Other	1 (2)
Other %	2.38% (4.7%)
Not Known	3 (1)
Not Known %	7.1% (2.3%)

Source: Central London Connexions data December 2010

13. This reduction was likely to have been in part as a result the NEET strategy that was developed in 2010. The strategy has five objectives:
 - a. Raising Achievement – promoting and accessing a diverse range of services
 - b. Preventative Action
 - c. Targeted intervention
 - d. Sustainability
 - e. Effective Information, Advice and Guidance
14. The strategy is delivered in partnership with Council teams and external partners, including the 14-19 team, Southwark Works, Southwark College and Jobcentre Plus. The NEET strategy delivery plan 2010 - 2012 that provides a breakdown of key activity and is also used as a mechanism for monitoring progress. See Appendix 1.
15. The NEET strategy includes a range of interventions. Three that are noteworthy are the coaching scheme, the drop in service and support for care leavers in higher education.

Coaching Scheme

16. Introduced in 2010 the coaching scheme was set up to provide young people leaving care at post-18 with an understanding of the world of work linked to their future career aspirations. Senior managers across the council were approached by Organisational Development and asked if they would act as a coach. Training and support was provided for the coaches. Around 22 young people who were leaving care were matched with relevant senior managers. The coaching lasted for a period of 6 months – 1 year.
17. An evaluation of the programme found that whilst coaches rated the quality of the training highly and felt that the matching had been completed well there had been mixed success with securing the commitment of young people. As a result of their chaotic lives a significant number of coachees had failed to keep in touch with and meet regularly with their coaches. Although in cases where the coach and coachee had managed to maintain contact the sessions had proved invaluable.

Drop in Service

18. The drop in service was established to tackle social isolation amongst care leavers, assist in reducing the number of critical incidents in the A&AC service reception and provide young people with access to information on careers and education options. Staffed by volunteers, A&AC staff and ex-care leavers the service has been used by approximately 103 individuals. Of this group 50% are repeat users – attending three or more sessions since the service began. Interestingly Black females are the largest user group closely followed by Black males. This doesn't reflect the NEET population and the A&AC team is considering why the service isn't appealing to White service users.
19. The service has had a considerable impact. There has been a:
 - Reduction in the number of critical incidents at reception. There is now a more welcoming atmosphere in this area that both staff and young people have commented on

- Provision of a safe space where young people are able to network, socialise, play games, eat lunch and develop friendships which has helped to alleviate care leavers' isolation.

The service has also enabled regular access to education and careers advisers for those who are NEET as a result staff were able to motivate 10 NEET young people to join the Apprenticeship programme.

Care leavers in higher education

20. The A&AC Service has put in place a policy for care leavers in higher education. This policy guarantees the following support and financial assistance to Southwark care leavers attending university:

- Annual transport/ bike grant of £300
- Provision of a laptop package at the beginning of the course of up to £450
- Annual book and equipment allowance of £100 paid at the beginning of each academic year
- Information leaflet for care leavers outlining support services available
- Allocation of personal adviser throughout the course
- Full funding of required field trips
- Access to Southwark's coaching scheme for care leavers
- Support in applying for grants and loans
- Annual grant of £1,750 towards costs of accommodation
- Annual higher education bursary totaling £2,000 over three years.

21. The bursary and other financial support provided are not linked to attendance at the higher education institution, however unpaid payments may be withheld if it is found that the young person is not pursuing higher education in accordance with the pathway plan.

Partnerships

22. To supplement interventions outlined above there is additional support for looked after children and care leavers provided by two advisers from the Connexions service and Southwark Works.

Connexions

23. There is a partnership agreement between Connexions (Prospects) and the A&AC service to have a Connexions worker based within the service three days per week. The aim is to increase the proportion of care leavers known to the Connexions service who are in employment, education and training.

24. A Connexions worker has been with service for the last four years. He reports to the Team Manager for the A&AC service and is responsible for supporting young people in the transition from school by helping with application forms for employment and training, highlighting local opportunities and working to motivate looked after young people to achieve.

Southwark Works

25. A Southwark Works Employment Adviser joined the A&AC team in 2004. The adviser provides support for young people leaving care aged 18-21 into work, education or training. This includes the full range of services - from job searching, CV writing, interview practice etc through to training, support for basic skills and access to apprenticeships or work experience.

26. The Southwark Works adviser was part of the team that won the 'Co-operative

Council' Star award which recognised the cross-Council working with the Organisational Development Team in supporting looked after young people secure Council apprenticeships, gain skills and progress on up the career ladder.

Southwark College

27. There are a number of changes taking place at Southwark College that will increase the level of support available for LAC. The college has restructured its senior management team and is now seeking to reshape its curriculum to better meet the needs of Southwark young people. As part of this reshaping there is from March 2011 a new bespoke EOTAS course in place and new bespoke provision for the Pupil Referral Unit is currently being planned. The college is aware that the Looked After Children team is seeking to develop bespoke provision and it is intended that there will be closer collaborative working.

Apprenticeships

28. The Council's Apprenticeship Programme is in its sixth year and calls upon all Council Departments and partners to provide apprenticeship places. Since 2007 there have been 98 participants in the Council's scheme including 20 looked after children (20.5%) who were made an offer of an apprenticeship.
29. There is an agreed recruitment and selection process, which seeks to match applicants with appropriate apprenticeships to ensure success on behalf of the participant and also the relevant department's ongoing commitment.
30. In partnership with the Organisational Development Team, the Looked After Children Services are keen to ensure that LAC are regarded as good potential applicants for the scheme and that they perform on a similar level when compared to other applicants. To this end the LAC services manage an Employability Programme; designed to develop the skills of LAC in completing job applications, undertaking interviews and improving their numeracy and literacy. This programme runs for six weeks each year in the run up to the Apprenticeship recruitment phase. Young people from the Adolescent and Aftercare Services were identified who would best be able to use the programme. Without the intense preparation programme, this would not be possible to recruit as many looked after children to the council's apprenticeship scheme.
31. In 2008/09 15 LAC applied to the Apprenticeship programme, 6 (40%) successfully obtained placements.
32. In 2009/10 18 LAC applied to the Apprenticeship programme, 3 (17%) successfully obtained placements.
33. In 2010/11 13 LAC applied to the Apprenticeship programme, 4 (31%) successfully obtained placements.
34. A more summary of the outcomes of LAC who applied for an apprenticeship place in 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11 is detailed in the table below.

Year	LAC Apprenticeship Applicants	LAC Passed Assessment and interview	LAC Apprentices	Notes
2008/09	15	6	6	
2009/10	18	3	3	
2010/11	13	8	4	3 LAC were offered an apprenticeship place but chose not to take up the offer.

35. The apprenticeship scheme runs for 12 months and the apprentice receives a wage on the basis of an unqualified new starter of NVQ Level 2 paid at Hay 2 and NVQ Level 3 paid at Hay 3. This equates to £15,306pa to £16,503pa for a 36 hour working week.
36. Towards the end of their programme, during the last 2/3 months, all apprentices receive Information, Advice, and Guidance (IAG) to assist them with career/study option decisions.

Policy implications

37. There are no new policy implications relating to this report.

Community impact statement

38. The Looked After Children Service recognises that adolescent aftercare may be a concern for the community. The Looked After Children Service has a range of specialist services and staff who provide targeted support.

Resource implications

39. Pressures on council budgets across departments and the private sector are likely to impact on the availability of apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers accessing employment.
40. The recent announcement of increases to higher education fees will act as a potential deterrent for many young people leaving care who may then become NEET on their 19th birthday.
41. Wherever possible, the Children Leaving Care service will utilise partnerships across the council and access grants to support care leavers achieve employment, education and training.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Central London Connexions Impact Report Quarter 3	Central London Connexion 3 rd Floor 125 Freston Road London W10 6TH	Angela Rweyemamu 020 7525 3283

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	LAC NEET Action Plan

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Rory Patterson, Assistant Director Children's Specialist Services & Safeguarding	
Report Author	Angela Rweyemamu, 14-19 Manager	
Version	Final	
Dated	7 April 2011	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	No	No
Finance Director	No	No
Looked After Children's Team	Yes	Yes
Organisational Development Team	Yes	Yes
Southwark Works	Yes	Yes
Connexions (Prospects)	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Officer		7 April 2011