

Item No. 12.	Classification: Open	Date: 21 April 2011	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Adolescent and Aftercare Service	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Children's Services	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To receive the annual report relating to the delivery of the Adolescent and Aftercare Service for looked after children and care leavers (13-21).
2. In the event of planning permission being granted the Corporate Parenting Committee endorse the current plan to locate the CLA service in a single central location in Peckham from November 2011 (from its current three separate locations).
3. Corporate Parenting Committee to continue to scrutinise and support the delivery of key partnerships/protocols with other council services to target looked after children and care leavers to deliver tangible outcomes.

KEY POINTS

4. The Adolescent and Aftercare service (A & AC), continues to perform well, delivering good outcomes for older children in care and care leavers.
5. The A & AC service has developed a broad range of service partnerships to enhance services and target support where most needed.
6. The key challenges for the service centre around delivering successful independence transition at 18 for the most vulnerable care leavers and successfully helping them to engage in Education, Employment and Training as young adults.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Adolescent and Aftercare Service

7. The Adolescent and Aftercare Service was established in 2007 as part of a single service (business unit) for Southwark's looked after children and care leavers.

The Adolescent and Aftercare service (A & AC) is one of three services which make up the overall service for children in care and care leavers, these being the:

- Adolescent and Aftercare service (13-21)
- Services for children in care 0-12
- Adoption & Fostering Services

Each service area is led by a Service Manager consisting of a number of social

work teams with support from administration, finance and specialist co-located staff.

8. The Adolescent and Aftercare Service provides the care planning function for looked after children from the age of 13-18 and aftercare support until the young person achieves the age of 21 (24 if attending university/higher education).
9. The Adolescent and Aftercare Service has five teams which provide the full range of services for looked after children and care leavers (13-21). These being:-
 - Two teams for children in care aged 13-18
 - Two aftercare teams for care leavers aged 18-21 (24 if in university or higher education).
 - One team for unaccompanied minors and unaccompanied minor care leavers.
10. The core responsibilities of the Adolescent and Aftercare service are:-
 - Effective care planning to include health, education, pathway and transition plans
 - Maintain meaningful contact and support for young people who have left care up to age of 21.
 - Deliver support to young people who wish to attend university/higher education up to the age of 24.
 - In partnership with primary health, Specialist Health Trusts and Drug Treatment Agencies deliver effective health interventions to include reducing teenage pregnancy and substance misuse.
 - Deliver specialist partnerships with Police, Community Safety and Youth Offending Services to address issues relating to youth offending including children in care who are on the cusp of crime or associating with gangs.
 - To work alongside colleagues in Southwark Virtual School to narrow the gap relating to attainment especially at Key Stage 4 (GCSE)
 - Deliver a range of interventions post 16 to promote semi independence skills including group work, mentoring, life skills training and placement stability.
 - Deliver effective participation arrangements with young people and Speakerbox to improve and shape services.
 - Working in partnership with Southwark housing, supporting people (including Adult Services) and the private sector (commissioned services) deliver appropriate living accommodation and support for care leavers post 18
 - Contribute towards an effective strategy to support young people in employment, education or training from the age of 16 -21, involving partnerships with Connexions, Southwark works, Southwark College,

Southwark's Apprenticeship Scheme and targeted youth support (TYS).

- Provide specialist advice, intervention and support, specific to unaccompanied minors and unaccompanied minors leaving care.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Case Management

11. The core function of the Adolescent and Aftercare Service is to provide qualified experienced and motivated social workers and personal advisors to be allocated to each looked after child and care leaver. Currently the Adolescent and Aftercare team have no social worker or personal advisor vacancies and has one management vacancy which will be filled from May 2011. Social workers currently have a maximum case load level of 16 looked after children and personal advisors between 22 & 25 care leavers
12. Social work activities are monitored with regards to the impact of their direct work with children and care leavers as well as delivering key planning activities around health, education, transition (at 18) and preparation for independence.

Additional Vulnerability

13. Some looked after children may be additionally vulnerable to teenage pregnancy, substance misuse and engagement in youth crime. Others might have additional pressures upon their emotional well being (mental health) as a result of previous trauma or neglect. The Adolescent and Aftercare Service therefore have a screening process which can identify young people from the age of 13 (or later if arriving in care over the age of 13) which can highlight specific vulnerability and trigger referrals to key partners.
14. As a result of the vulnerability screening the following specialist referrals can be made: -
 - (a) Teenage pregnancy services. The CLA Service joint funds a specialist nurse with the teenage pregnancy strategy to target young women in care. The Family Nurse Partnership Service is also available to provide support to young mothers.
 - (b) Insight (commissioned substance misuse services for young people) through a specific protocol which offers targeted services to looked after children.

NB: Members of Insight attend Southwark's drop in and group work programmes to directly engage with Southwark's most vulnerable children and will receive referrals directly from social workers who have undertaken screening activities relating to substance misuse.
 - (c) Vulnerability to youth crime. The screening process enables young people to be identified as vulnerable to youth crime which triggers a strategy meeting involving Southwark's youth offending service to identify early intervention and diversionary activities as well as support to placement carers.
 - (d) Emotional Well Being. All looked after children coming into the care system

are subject to mental health screening (Strength and difficulty questionnaires – SDQ) which can identify early issues relating to mental health. This screening process enables prompt referrals to be made to Southwark's co located mental health team (Carelink) to deliver specific interventions.

15. The Adolescent and Aftercare Service has developed a number of key initiatives to enhance services provided and improve outcomes for children leaving care at 18 and achieving full independence at 21.

These are as follows: -

- **Apprenticeship Scheme**

16. In partnership with Southwark's organisational development team, the looked after service has developed a protocol to enable care leavers to fully access the Council's apprenticeship scheme.
17. The protocol has clear targets with regards to Southwark's care leavers accessing apprenticeship placements as a percentage of all apprenticeships on offer.
18. To support this process, each year the Adolescent and Aftercare Service deliver a short preparation course for those care leavers who wish to apply for a Southwark apprenticeship.
19. The CLA Service provides a leadership role (modeling) through the establishment of three apprenticeship posts within the business unit, (IT, finance and group work)
20. To support care leaver apprenticeships successfully completing their training and placements, there are designated lead officers within the Aftercare Service and organisation development who track progress and intervene early should any problems develop.

- **Coaching Scheme**

21. In partnership with Southwark's organisational development team, a pilot project was successfully delivered in 2009 which allocated care leavers with Senior Southwark Managers who wished to coach care leavers. Specific training was provided for Southwark Managers as to coaching/mentoring skills for vulnerable young adults and whilst raising awareness as to the needs of care leavers. The pilot scheme has now been reviewed with a second recruitment and matching process scheduled for May 2011.

- **Drop In Service**

22. In January 2010 the Adolescent and Aftercare service introduced a "drop in" service at Bradenham Close. The drop in service is a key initiative delivered in partnership with Southwark's youth work service (TYS) to maintain contact with the most difficult to engage children in care and care leavers aged 16-21. The Bradenham resource centre is available three days per week for young people who are not engaged in employment, education and training or have been assessed as having raised vulnerability. The service has input and advice from partner workers including specialist nurses, employment advisors, connexions and substance misuse team.

23. The drop in is provided to maintain contact with vulnerable care leavers to enable the service to continue supporting them and maintaining some momentum towards them regaining access to employment, education and training opportunities.

- **Housing Protocol**

24. Southwark Specialist services has a long standing protocol with Southwark housing (over 20 years). The protocol enables care leavers to access level 2 priority for Southwark housing at 18. Under leaving care legislation, local authorities are required to provide suitable accommodation for all care leavers. For most care leavers in London this results in care leavers being allocated a house of multiple occupation or a temporary tenancy in the private market. Through Southwark's protocol with housing (including supporting people) Southwark is able to offer a tenancy (twelve month probationary tenancy in keeping with all Southwark policy) at 18 which provides suitable accommodation at affordable rental costs. For all young people who are deemed to be vulnerable at 18 and require additional support, Southwark housing allow the children looked after service to have a designated number "supporting people" placements which provide up to 2 years supportive housing till the young person is ready and able to cope with their own tenancy.

- **Southwark Works and Connexions**

25. The Adolescent and Aftercare Service have an active partnership with Southwark Connexions and Southwark Works to provide allocated staff who are able to target the most vulnerable care leavers who may struggle to access the employment, education and training markets.

26. In partnership with the virtual school social workers identify the young people who do not have firm plans and directly intervene to help young people (16+) clarify their pathways and access special projects to help them engage and prepare. The impact of these partnerships and protocols are measurable through attainment levels at 18 and those that are accessing employment, education and training at 17 and 19 (key performance indicators). The CLA Services ability to maintain it's current employment, education and training levels in the current economic circumstances reflects the impact of these partnerships.

- **Group Work and Fusion Partnership**

27. The CLA service has a group worker who is able to deliver a range of activities and learning opportunities for young people in care and care leavers. This acts as a focal point for partners who wish to deliver key health and developmental inputs for looked after children and care leavers. Examples of the impact of group work can be seen through the delivery of sexual health promotional activity and more social events such as black history month (Windrush) and the young people/staff choir (CLA celebration ceremony).

28. Southwark's leisure centre contractor, Fusion is committed to a further protocol from April 2011 to deliver free gold memberships to looked after children and care leavers from 14 – 20.

- **Communication and Participation**

29. The Adolescent and Aftercare Service are fully committed to consulting with young

people relating to their individual care plans and evaluation and shaping of services. The service actively uses the Speakerbox magazine to promote services and delivers a range of information materials for young people. In addition all young people when they reach the age of 13 are invited to visit the Adolescent and Aftercare Service for an induction event where they meet staff and key partners.

30. A similar induction event is managed by the Aftercare Team when young people reach the age of 18 to explain the service and introduce them to key partnership staff.

31. In 2011/12 the Adolescent and Aftercare Service are piloting how communications can be improved through an automated text communication system.

32. Single Location for CLA Service

It is currently proposed that the whole CLA Service will be integrated into a single location in the Autumn of 2011. The current design proposals incorporate all of the current facilities available to the Adolescent and Aftercare Service which will be updated and modernised. This resource will enhance the work of the service as a whole particularly the drop in, employment, training, skills development and group work processes. It is expected that through the co location of the Carelink team (now increasing its remit from 16 years to 18 years of age) there will be more effective early intervention planning for young people who have emotional well being issues.

33. Service Overview

The performance and impact of the Adolescent and Aftercare Service is subject to regular scrutiny by the Corporate Parenting Committee through the series of partnership reports and performance analysis submitted.

34. Examples of the relevant reports during 2010/11 have been: -

- Apprenticeship Protocol
- Fusion Protocol
- Delivery of Virtual School
- Employment, Education and Training Strategy
- Youth Offending Services
- Teenage Pregnancy and Substance Misuse Initiatives
- Youth Offending Services for Children in Care

Policy implications

35. There are none.

Resource implications

36. The Adolescent and Aftercare Service delivers statutory provision for looked after children and care leavers and is delivered within current resources allocated to the Children's Looked After Services. There are no additional resource implications in this report.

Consultation

37. As part of the overall looked after service, the Adolescent and Aftercare service has a

key part in delivering direct involvement of young people in their individual service plans and evaluating and shaping service delivery.

Community impact statement

38. Southwark CLA Services works to promote the five outcomes for children in care as outlined in every child matters. It is recognised that placement stability, engagement in education, access to leisure and healthy lifestyles all help to build resilience for young people to successfully achieve economical wellbeing and making a positive contribution from 18.
39. The children looked after service recognises that the Adolescent and Aftercare Service provides support for some of the most vulnerable young people and young adults in the community. It is recognised that this group may be particularly subject to issues relating to youth crime, substance misuse and anti social behaviour and would therefore want Southwark's services to be effective in delivering economic well being and ensuring care leavers are able to make a positive contribution. The Adolescent and Aftercare Service therefore has a key role to lead a range of strategic partnerships to provide targeted interventions as appropriate.
40. Many of Southwark's looked after children do not begin to settle and make sense of their lives until they have left care. It is therefore crucial that the Adolescent and Aftercare Service maintain effective contact with care leavers up to the age of 21 to provide all the necessary support and encouragement. Over 95% of Southwark's care leavers at the age of 19 are still in touch with their personal advisor and living in suitable accommodation.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Head of Service will provide a range of leaflets available to young people in care and care leavers about the services available.	Bradenham Close	Chris Saunders

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Assistant Director Children's Specialist Services & Safeguarding	
Report Author	Chris Saunders, Head of Services for Children in Care	
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CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
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Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	No	No
Finance Director	No	No
Cabinet Member		
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