

Item No. 9.	Classification: Open	Date: 24 February 2015	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Transition from Care to Independent Living	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director Children's Social Care	

RECOMMENDATION

1. Members consider the information presented in this report on transitions from care to independent living and note the actions we are taking to ensure positive outcomes are achieved for looked after children in Southwark.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. For most young people, moving to their own independent accommodation, entering further or higher education, engaging with apprenticeships and employment, enjoying good health and wellbeing, represent significant events in their journey to adulthood.
3. There is evidence that, as a group, care leavers are more disadvantaged and experience more challenges than the general population of young people.
4. Ensuring successful transitional planning for young people leaving care is crucial to them living happy and fulfilling lives.
5. Mike Stein is an experienced researcher in the area of leaving care. He comments on how many care leavers have to cope with major changes in their lives, at a far younger age than other young people. 'Many care leavers have compressed and accelerated transitions to adulthood.'¹ There is evidence that both physical and mental health problems increase at the time of transition and may combine with earlier pre-care and in-care difficulties. Combined with the new challenges of transitioning into new accommodation and relationships. The impact upon young people's health and wellbeing can affect their overall health and well-being.
6. Working with the Princes Trust the National Children's Bureau has conducted research² into the successful transitions from care to independent living. They have found that the key factors that contribute to successful outcomes are:
 - Stable placements whilst children and young people are in care, particularly placements that enable them to develop strong relationships

¹Promoting the resilience and wellbeing of care leavers-Mike Stein. 2009

²[Supporting care leavers' successful transition to independent living, NCB. August, 2012](#)

- Access to and continuity of both professional and informal support for young people as they prepare for and during the transition out of care
 - Effective forward planning and preparation for the transitions to independence, including solid contingency planning
 - Access to a range of support services as success in one arena of their lives seems to pave the way for success in others
 - Ensuring young people are involved as key partners and decision makers throughout the planning and transition period, including garnering their views on their readiness to leave care
 - Equipping young people with key practical and life skills, providing them with the underlying capacity to live independently.
7. In Southwark we are delivering and developing new services to respond to the needs of this group of particularly vulnerable young adults. We provide a range of suitable accommodation and access to continuing education, good quality training and employment opportunities to ensure young people succeed into adulthood. Critical to successful transition is effective pathway planning, the full involvement of health and education colleagues in receiving good services for mental, emotional and physical health needs and access to a range of support services.

Care Leavers Strategy

8. In October 2013, a cross-departmental strategy for young people leaving care was published. The strategy sets out a vision to remove some of the practical barriers that care leavers face as they progress to adulthood. The key to achieving sustained and good outcomes into adulthood are the availability of good education, employment and health provision, access to housing, help to remain outside the justice system and access to good quality, consistent long term support.
9. The Department of Education has published a data pack on outcomes for care leavers. Its aim is to consider the findings and to learn from the best practice.
10. The new inspection arrangements will have a specific focus and 'sub judgment' on care leavers. In particular it will look at: 'Young people leaving care and preparing to leave care receive support and help to assist them in making a successful transition to adulthood. Plans for them to leave care are effective and address their individual needs. They are safe and feel safe, particularly where they live. Young people acquire the necessary level of skill and emotional resilience to successfully move towards independence. They are able to successfully access education, employment, training and safe housing. They enjoy stable and enduring relationships with staff and carers who meet their needs.'³

³ HM Government. Care Leaver Strategy. A cross-departmental strategy for young people leaving care. 2013

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Care leavers information 2013-2014

11. The following information considers all young people who had left Southwark's care, aged 19 and 20 years, during 2013 and 2014. The details refer to their known accommodation, education and employment status.
12. The total of young people entitled to a leaving care service, aged between 19 and 20 years, was 102. There was no notable gender difference in each age group.

Age	Female	Male
19 years	10	10
20 years	38	44

13. Understanding the ethnic profile of the young people within this cohort is important in addressing the issues they may encounter in accessing accommodation and education/employment.

Aged 19

Ethnicity	Female	Male
Mixed Other	1	1
Black Other	1	
White Other	1	
White Irish		1
Black Caribbean		3
White British	2	2
Black African	5	3
Asian		

Aged 20

Ethnicity	Female	Male
Mixed Other		2
Black Other	9	2
White Other	2	3
Asian Other		6
White Irish		1
Black Caribbean	5	4
White British	11	12
Black African	10	9
Asian	1	
White and Black Caribbean		5

14. Information on residence and accommodation type highlights that both age groups predominantly live in council/private housing or supported housing in London. The majority of young people live in Southwark or South East London. That's important in ensuring they can continue to have contact with birth families and access to services in Southwark.

15. Ten young people live outside of London. These are generally related to good attachments with previous care placements and/or opportunities in the locality enabling good education and employment outcomes. Seven young people were not registered as having current accommodation. These young people either preferred not to work with the leaving care service and therefore information regarding their housing and education was not clear or were struggling to maintain living in supported housing. The service continues to offer support to these young people should they chose to make use of it.
16. Six young men were serving a prison sentence during this period. All came into care age fifteen and over. Most entries from care for this group were as a result of parents being unable to manage their behavior. For at least three young men, there were immigration issues regarding parent's status, which may impact on the young men's current and future status. All of them spent some time in custody, prior to their eighteenth birthday. All of them were involved in some offending behaviour prior to coming into care and this continued whilst in care. Two of them were involved with gangs. They all experienced more than four placement changes, including one custodial sentence for one young man. They all experienced four or more social worker changes.
17. The current accommodation range of provision for young people aged eighteen years and over includes the following:

Type	Provider	Location	Criteria
Prevention and inclusion	Look Ahead	Gateway Borough Southwark	Foyer for young people aged 16-25, including care leavers. 24/7 supervision and support available.
Prevention and inclusion	Salvation Army	Springfield Lodge Camberwell Southwark	Range of Supported housing for young people aged 16-25, including care leavers. 24/7 supervision and support available.
Prevention and inclusion	Oasis	Peckham Southwark	Supported housing for young women aged 16-25, including care leavers. 24/7 supervision and support available.
Young people floating support	Look Ahead	Gateway Borough Southwark	Floating support for young people aged 16-25, including care leavers.
Young people floating support	Look Ahead	SABs	Scheme for young people aged 16-

Type	Provider	Location	Criteria
			21, at risk.
Staying Put	Southwark Fostering. Independent foster carers.	Varied	Manages the option for young care leavers to remain with foster carers they have lived with previously.
Council tenancy	Southwark council	Southwark.	For those young people who are identified as able and wishing to move to their own tenancy.
Private Housing	Private landlords	UK wide. Predominantly South East London.	For young people with a variety of needs which can be related to preference for location or temporary arrangements.

18. Staying Put with fostercarers would not have been an option for the group of care leavers considered in this paper. We will monitor the impact that this has upon the next cohort of rising 19-20 year olds who choose to remain with fostercarers. A comparison of the information will assist us to learn from the outcomes.
19. The same cohort had differing profiles for education employment, training and those who were NEET. There was a greater disparity between age and gender in terms of outcomes.

19 year olds analysis 2013-2014

Type	Female	Male
University	3	
College	4	
Apprenticeship	1	
Work and college	1	
EET		2
Prison		1
Not in touch		4
NEET	1	3

20 year olds analysis 2013-2014

Type	Female	Male
University	5	4
College	4	4
Apprenticeship	2	
Work and college		
EET	9	11

Type	Female	Male
Prison		4
Not in touch	4	10
NEET	14	11

20. Recent internal reviews undertaken by Catch 22, December 14⁴ and the Speakerbox Young Inspectors Project, November 14⁵, have highlighted the challenges for managing the way forward for care leavers.
21. The Catch 22 review has recommended further development of accommodation provision which helps create greater choice, flexibility and safety for care leavers. More robust pathway planning at an earlier stage to ensure there are clear plans with contingency measures identified to ensure greater likelihood of positive outcomes, particularly in education and health. A clear Southwark offer which is accessible and understandable.
22. The Speakerbox Young Inspectors project reported on their inspection of semi-independent providers and young people's experiences from sixteen years of age. In addition, complaints by care leavers regarding accommodation were collated and reflected similar themes. 76% of young people reported feeling safe in the accommodation inspected. The remaining young people reported feeling unsafe and commented on the following area's as causing them concern:
- **Anti-social behaviour** in the area of the property was the most common reason for a young person feeling unsafe
 - **Unsecure access doors** also was a common reason why young people felt unsafe (due to faulty doors)
 - **Other tenants** in the property made some young people feel unsafe
 - **Lack of security** allowing access to other people not living in the property was also a common reason
 - **Health concerns**
 - **Lighting** (en-route to the property)
 - **Fear of break in**
 - **Burglary of property**
 - **Property unclean.**
23. 88% of young people reported feeling confident in managing independent living with the help of keyworkers. They reported feeling able to complete general tasks, such as cleaning washing and payment of bills. The area where they felt most input was required was in obtaining employment. For some their legal status inhibited them being able to take up legal employment.
24. For those young people who were eighteen plus. The complaints submitted and managed by the advocacy service commented on similar issues regarding safety and the condition of properties.

⁴ Catch 22. London Borough of Southwark Diagnostic report. December 2014

⁵ Speakerbox. Young Inspectors Project Report. November 2014

Actions being taken

25. As noted above achieving good outcomes for care leavers involves careful planning, co-ordination of services and a good choice of quality provision.
26. A LAC Strategic Group has been established to improve co-ordination between the different parts of the looked after system. This incorporates leaving care. The group will co-ordinate the development and delivery of a LAC Strategy which will incorporate the review recommendations from Catch 22 and the feedback from Speakerbox young inspectors and representations managed through the advocacy service.
27. Key area's for focus will be:
 - **Developing the range and safety of accommodation provided to care leavers:** Social Care are working in partnership with commissioning colleagues to review current provision with providers and young inspectors, which is part of a wider 16+ accommodation review which commissioning are leading on. We are working on the feedback and observations to improve the commissioning arrangements with those providers who are delivering well and could provide more. For those providers who are not delivering well we are reviewing the commissioning agreements and considering other types of provision which will broaden the choice of safe accommodation and support.
 - **We are developing a strategy to review all rising eighteen year olds and improve pathway planning:** Learning workshops are being delivered throughout February and March for social workers to assist them in developing their pathway planning skills. These workshops will also introduce the new pathway plan. Carelink, our mental health provision for the care service, are working closely with us to assist with transitional planning for those young people who have particular mental health and learning difficulties. IRO's are involved in this process to strengthen their understanding of need and services post eighteen.
 - **We are reviewing 'The Southwark Offer':** Ensuring that our offer to care leavers is clear and accessible. We are exploring different media to assist young people to access and understand what is available.
28. In addition the LAC Strategic Group is prioritising work on initiatives which will increase services and support to enable more children and young people to remain at home. This includes developing more "edge of care" services with a particular focus on work with adolescents and helping those young people who want to return to family members as part of their pathway plan to be able to do this safely and with support.

Community impact statement

29. Southwark Looked After Children services works to promote the best possible outcomes for children in care. The care population is diverse in terms of age, gender and ethnicity and we closely monitor these protective characteristics to ensure we understand specific needs and are able to deliver services that address these needs. 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 make a positive contribution. Effective performance monitoring supports these objectives and enables us to identify areas where improvements may need to be made.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Case Study A
Appendix 2	Case Study B

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Rory Patterson, Director, Children's Social Care	
Report Author	Jane Scott, Head of Care	
Version	Final	
Dated	11 February 2015	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Legal Services	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	11 February 2015	

Case Study A

APPENDIX 1

ChildA has been in the care of the local authority since 2002 having been neglected and suffering physical and emotional abuse and was subject of a Care Order, Section 31 Children Act 1989. ChildA experienced 20 changes in placement during time in care, mostly because of challenging behaviour, and was eventually placed with an in-house foster carer in 2007 until their 18th birthday.

ChildA attended college and completed a level 3 course, along with GCSE English and Maths. They went on to complete a six week work experience placement and aspires to work in the health field.

ChildA is now living in a council tenancy, living independently and doing very well. They are very focused and determined to make a success of life. ChildA was being supported by Carelink for several years, until their 18th birthday, and reports that they have helped to come to terms with some painful earlier life experiences when they lived with their birth family.

ChildA recently started university and is thoroughly enjoying the course and managing well. They have a good supportive relationship with Personal Advisor says that it is reassuring to know that the PA can be contacted for practical and emotional support.

Case study B

APPENDIX 2

ChildB was born outside the UK and came to the UK to live with father, who was a British Citizen as their mother was unable to provide care. Father passed away in 2008.

ChildB initially lived with relatives but was told to leave due to answering back on occasion. They went to live with other relatives who found it difficult to manage their behaviour.

ChildB consistently said that they were unhappy living with the family and felt un-cared for and un-loved. They were assessed at hospital after a suicide attempt but was not diagnosed with a mental health difficulty. ChildB moved from relatives and went to live with a family friend. In 2009, ChildB was accommodated by Southwark as all family and friends' placement options had been exhausted.

ChildB was placed with a Southwark foster carer and remained with the same carer until leaving care at 18. The carer developed strategies to support ChildB through challenging behaviour towards independence at 18 years. ChildB moved into supported accommodation at eighteen but struggled to manage behaviour, this culminated in B in an episode which resulted in eviction.

ChildB worked with their personal advisor and arranged to stay with friends for a short period and was then helped to move into a supportive hostel. ChildB demonstrated their ability to manage within the hostel and therefore was supported to obtain their own council tenancy. ChildB has since had some rent arrears which are being managed. The Care Service has supported ChildB by providing some funding toward the arrears.

Recently ChildB secured a job with the support of the Personal Adviser, specialist careers advisor, for the Care Service. They remain in contact with their foster carer.