

Item No. 9.	Classification: Open	Date: 2 November 2015	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Care Leavers Transitioning to Adulthood	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director, Children's Social Care	

RECOMMENDATION

1. Members consider the information presented in this report on transitional planning and support for care leavers and note the actions the council are taking to ensure positive outcomes are achieved for care leavers in Southwark.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The previous corporate parenting committee requested further information to be provided regarding:
 - The health needs and development of services and provision for Care Leavers
 - Information regarding young people requesting to remain with their foster carers under Staying Put arrangements.
 - Details of the Southwark Offer for Care Leavers and staying in contact arrangements when they leave care.
3. Every year Southwark will have a cohort of young people being supported to leave care. The projected number from September 15-16 is 93. This is vary, depending upon the rate of admission of 16/17 year olds who are vulnerable and may require accommodation. Unaccompanied minors and asylum seekers under eighteen years, self-refer to children's social care, will also become part of this next group of care leavers.
4. Children in Care leave usually leave the care of the local Authority on their 18th birthday. Local Authorities must support care leavers until they are 21 years old or up to 25 if they are in education or training. Some young people will stay put with their foster carers under new arrangements, other young people may return home to their families and many will start to live in different types of supported or independent accommodation.
5. The government promoted the requirement for care leavers to receive comprehensive support to help them to achieve their potential as they make their transition to adulthood. The details of how Southwark will achieve this is outlined in our Achieving Excellence plan.

Achieving Excellence and Care Leavers Strategy

6. In October 2013, the government published a cross-departmental strategy for young people leaving care. This aimed to remove the many practical barriers that care leavers face.
7. The National Audit Office report released in July 2015 reflected that there was not strong evidence that the strategy was working effectively across government departments. The report suggested that there has been lack of evidence of a sustained effort to continuously improve and no regular reporting of progress or outcomes. This has an impact on how local government translates the intentions into improving local services. An example of this will be how the new universal credit roll out will affect care leavers and their benefits.
8. The new inspection arrangements will have a specific focus and 'sub judgement' 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.'
9. Our care leaver strategy and achieving excellence plan focusses on the detailed work required to achieve the above outcomes. The activity and documents are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure continuous improvement.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Care Leaver Health Needs and Service Developments

10. The range of current and specific health provision for care leavers within borough and out of borough is under review. Consultations with young people and health professionals have been undertaken by the Care Service, Children's Rights and the Children and Young Peoples Health Partnership during 2015.
11. The current health provision for care leavers encompasses a specialist service from our health partners based at Sunshine house. The lead LAC specialist doctor and nurses will ensure that medicals are reviewed, children and foster carers are met with and health advice and interventions offered and followed up. For children placed out of borough there is a consultation with the lead LAC doctors and nurses in the respective local authority and information is shared to promote the best outcomes for children and young people. Our local child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) provision are joined up with Sunshine house and discussions and meetings will be arranged to discuss the mental health and well being of specific children, in conjunction with the social worker and foster carer, residential worker. Plans will be developed to ensure the most appropriate services and interventions.
12. The care service have clinical practitioners as part of the overall integrated model of providing services to children and young people. This has become more embedded since the transformation. The clinical practitioners are able to advise the group responsible for the young person regarding approaches to promote good mental

health. They also provide joint working and individual work for young people. They are flexible and able to meet with young people in their home, a park or college. They are trained to be able to work effectively in these environments using a range of techniques and approaches. We also work with universal services and voluntary groups within Southwark and local authorities where young people may choose to remain.

13. Key messages from care leavers from focus groups held over the last two months.
 - Care leavers valued a personal approach that was not judgmental. These characteristics were the biggest influence on young people actively engaging in addressing their health concerns.
 - The environment and context came second to the approach. Young people named flexible outreach services in particular the Family Nurse partnership and health services attached to the Crisis homeless services. ' They do their job well'. Help a wide spectrum of young people'. Helpful and provide emotional support'. Good support and advice to care for my baby'.
 - Guys and St Thomas and the Maudsley were referenced as a positive provider of health provision for care leavers. 'Care about service users'. 'Took time with me and showed they cared'. Also local general practices were positive when they had the right engagement and respect for care leavers.
 - The factors that influenced young people not engaging were: lack of interpersonal skills by staff, lack of confidentiality, sense of judgment if the young person disclosed that they were a care leaver.

14. Key messages from a professionals health consultation related to the delivery of services to care leavers:
 - The LAC health team doctors and nurses reported that they experienced delivering health summaries to young care leavers of key importance. They are a requirement and often need sensitive management of how the information is shared. This will frequently lead to discussions about life stories. It was also noted that for those young people who remain placed out of borough it can be more challenging to co-ordinate health services and information through partner health agencies.
 - The sexual health worker noted that sexual health clinics are better attended and less stigmatizing than they used to be. Health huts in the Youth offending service and Youth service are accessible and flexible to young peoples needs.
 - Social care staff considered health services were used more regularly by young people who were well prepared for independence. Predominantly those young people who had been in longer term foster placements had a more positive experience of health services and understood how to access what they needed. Young people who entered care later were often less prepared and knew less about the variety of health provision available.
 - Other key information shared, focused on issues of drug and alcohol misuse, particularly noted in the asylum seeker population. Helping connect young people to domestic violence services when it was not always possible to monitor closely the impact that negative and abusive relationships were having on the young person.

- The feedback from young people and professionals has been shared and further work will be undertaken to respond to those areas where we can make a difference quickly. Such as the health passport information and life story work. Ensuring workers have the necessary flexibility and engagement skills. The general feedback is considered within the Children and Young Person's health development group work stream and recommendations made to the steering group to inform the new implementation of services for children and young people within Southwark. Care leavers are highlighted as a priority within this work.

Care Leavers staying put with their foster carers

15. The Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers Regulations and Guidance 2010 and the Fostering Regulations and Guidance 2011 both require local authorities to have a Staying Put policy. The aim of Staying Put is to provide continuity of care for care leavers who wish to continue their education within a supportive family environment. Being offered similar opportunities to their peers. Also for young people with special needs or who are particularly vulnerable, staying put can provide the additional security and continuity of care to assist them transition into adulthood with family support and assistance.
16. The age of leaving home among the population as a whole is rising and the transition to adulthood is becoming increasingly complex. Children looked after often leave care to become independent before the age of 18. Research and evidence highlights that where children in care experience an extended transition more akin to their peers, they achieve better outcomes.
17. The current profile of young people 'Staying Put' is as follows-
 - 46 young people are in Staying Put arrangements with their foster carers as of October 2015.
 - Of these 33 are EET and 13 are NEET
 - 19 are female and of these 6 are NEET and 13 are EET
 - 27 are male and of these 7 are NEET and 20 are EET.
18. All young people who choose to stay put will have a pathway plan which will detail support to assist with achieving their goals. The Care Service work actively to support young people with work and employment opportunities within the community. Placements are supported by a supervising social worker and personal advisor. Some placements will also have additional services from the transitions service or disabilities services.

Southwark Offer for Care Leavers

19. Young people preparing to leave care and care leavers aged 18+ will have a Pathway Plan and reviews of their pathway plan to detail what are the key needs which require support. The pathway plan can detail how a young person will access support regarding preparation for leaving care, life skills, independence skills and who will help them with this.
20. Southwark offer a range of support for care Leavers in the process of preparing to leave care and once they have left care. This includes:-

- Accommodation. Young people are assisted to stay put with foster carers, to live in a range of supported housing. To live in their own tenancy with floating support of varying types and degree's of input.
- Education. Young people are supported financially to access educational opportunities. Financial support packages will include covering the cost of laptops, books, travel, accommodation. Dependent upon the type of course.
- Southwark have an Independent Visitor Scheme which is currently extended to 19 years. This captures the first year of transition from 18-19 which can often be particularly challenging for young people. The Scheme matches volunteers to befriend and mentor young people for at least a year. The individual arrangement is flexible and depends upon the young person's needs and circumstances and helps them to have a more independent input into developing their skills and helping them to have another voice to assist with their views. This service is particularly helpful for young people who do not have any positive relationships with their birth family.
- Our LAC doctors and nurses alongside our Camhs colleagues in Carelink will help young people to manage the initial transition to adulthood. Our Clinical Practitioners based in the Care Service can work with young people up until 25 if they are in education.
- The children's rights service are delivering an emotional resilience programme jointly with Young Minds to support young people with the skills to manage difficulties and challenges as they become more independent.
- The care service is developing more life story skills for workers to be able to help young people to make sense of their history, culture and identity. Often as young people move into independence they question some of the reasons for coming into care in order to make sense of their family connections going into adulthood. We have a specialist worker who is leading on this project.
- The transitions team in Southwark work closely with the care Service to advise and in some instances to take over case management of young people where the transition to adulthood will be more challenging. Particularly in relation to disability or a range of difficulties which impede their general life skill development.
- The personal advisor will keep in touch with a young person at least every two months. A young person can make arrangements for how this is experienced but in most instances this will be a personal visit to the young person's home. The local authority are required to ensure that all efforts are made to locate young people who are not responding to contact being made or whose current address is unknown.

What Care Leavers told us about what they needed help with when planning to leave Care- February 2015

21. In February 2015, the Children's Rights Team led a consultation with care Leavers about what they would like help with as they worked with their social workers and personal advisors to assess their needs and develop and review their pathway plans. The following are some of the key area's highlighted.

- Learning about finances, for example how to pay rent, access or receive information on benefits, water and electricity bills, managing money, saving, credit cards and what to do if you are evicted.
 - How to do electrics, such as change light bulbs and use a boiler safely.
 - The process of how to apply for a council house
 - How to apply for work
 - Learning what it means to be healthy
 - Learning how to deal with stress
 - How to cope on your own
 - Self esteem
 - Learning how to be part of the community you live in so you are not isolated
 - Help applying for college
 - Hygiene
 - Cooking
 - Communication skills
 - Where to go for help
 - How to manage health
 - Where to go if you are pregnant
 - Healthy relationships, such as what you are entitled too and how to keep safe)
 - 'Realities of life class'
- Most young people prefer to receive help and assistance on an individual basis around the above areas as it allows for greater flexibility and confidentiality about their personal information. Group work is offered where young people find this helpful and support in accessing community services.

Actions being taken:

- Improved planning, development and co-ordination of health services for care leavers.
- Ensuring that Staying Put arrangements are regularly reviewed and young people and Staying Put carers are consulted about their experiences.
- Promoting what Southwark Offers with Care Leavers and to continue to listen and incorporate their views into service developments.

Community impact statement

22. 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 protectiveness 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
National Audit Office. Care Leaver's transition to adulthood. July 2015.		
Link: https://www.nao.org.uk/report/care-leavers-transitions-to-adulthood/		
HM Government. Care Leaver Strategy. A cross-departmental strategy for young people leaving care. 2013		
Link: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-leaver-strategy		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Rory Patterson, Director Children's Social Care	
Report Author	Jane Scott, Head of Care	
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Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
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