

**Report of the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care)
the meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel to be held on
7th March 2018**

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Subject: Through Care Service

Summary statement:

Report to focus on accommodation provision, preparation for independence, Council tax update, localised information regarding outcomes of Care Leavers.

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**Portfolio:
Children's Services**

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**Overview & Scrutiny Area:
Children's Services**

1. SUMMARY/BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Bradford Looked After Childrens Service and Leaving Care merged in July 2017 to become the Through Care Service. Research is clear that the most significant impact on Looked After Children outcomes is a relationship based service. It is Through Care's ambition and drive that all our children and young people will have a service where they have the opportunity to form meaningful relationships from initially entering the looked after process to becoming sustainable achieving citizens within their communities.
- 1.2 *"In order to develop normally, a child requires progressively more complex joint activity with one or more adults who have an irrational emotional relationship with the child. **Somebody's got to be crazy about that kid. That's number one. First, last and always**"* Bronfenbrenner quoted by Dez Holmes of Research in Practice.
- 1.3 Within Through Care we have 8 Social Work teams, made up of a mixture of Social Workers and Community Resource Workers. Community Resource Workers are starting preparation for leaving care work at an earlier point in a Looked After Child's care journey and will have the capacity to support the young person up to the age of 25. Through Care is currently working with 395 Looked After Children aged up to 16, 512 Care Leavers and 51 Homeless Children In Need. Through Care is based across 3 sites, SHMH (Sir Henry Mitchell House), Shipley and Odsal. Shipley and Odsal continue to offer food bank resources, washing facilities, IT facilities, showers, clothes swop and themed drop ins.
- 1.4 Through Care has retained its specialist teams and roles.
- LEAP (Learning, Employment, Advice & Preparation) – continues to work with young people 16+ plus supporting accessing education, training and employment, including higher education.
 - Youth Homeless Team – continue to work with Bradford's 16 to 18 Youth homeless/roofless young people, supporting sustainable accommodation. Work with these young people is needs led and does include post 18 work. Within this team partnerships are key in accessing the best opportunities for some of the most vulnerable young people in Bradford.
 - UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children) – we have workers with a passion and interest in working with UASC, ensuring children and young people newly arriving in Bradford have their basic needs met and go onto be integrated into the Bradford district. We currently support 51 UASC (including post 18)
 - 2 Leaving Care Nurses are co-located in the service, undertaking sexual health work, health needs assessment, health passports and supporting young people with emotional health and well-being.
 - We are co-located with the Virtual School ensuring the quality of PEP's (Personal Education Plans) is improving all the time and we have high aspirations for our children and young people. We are developing a new jointly funded post targeting raising aspirations/attainment for 16 plus young people and their education pathway.

- 4 full time equivalents CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service) Therapeutic Social Workers have newly co-located within the service. This is supported by research by Barnardo's (September 2017) that states that '*embedding mental health workers within teams has the most impact on mental health of looked after children and young people.*' This service in its infancy but is already having impact on stability of placements, social workers being empowered with the skills and confidence to support children and young people better with emotional well being issues.
- Through Care manage and run Stepping Stones Service – supported lodgings scheme for young people ages 16 to 21.
- We have a specialist worker supporting young people Staying Put and or who have been privately fostered. Currently we are supporting 29 Staying Put households and 31 young people.
- Through Care support the Children in Care Council, (CICC) where there is a regular core attendance. Bradford CICC continues to go from strength to strength and is currently working at a national level.

1.5 Through Care are also keen to ensure we get the basics right. Our aspiration is that all children will achieve permanence and have a home, through dynamic care planning. They will have their care journey recorded in an age appropriate manner that they can access as an adult. They have a network of people around them who they have opportunity to form close meaningful relationships with. They have access to basic universal services, dental treatment, appropriate education establishments, and a GP/health assessment. We want children and young people to participate and are proud that 98.5% of children and young people take part in the CLA (Children Looked After) reviews. Our plans for the service are aspirational and we are clear where there are weaknesses and areas needing developing. Some examples are; digital technology and social media for our young people, embedding reunification process, embedding an emotional wellbeing offer.

2. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 A Local Offer for Care Leavers.

Through the Children and Social Work Act 2017 the Government introduced the requirement for all Local Authorities to publish a 'Care Leaver Offer' and sign up to corporate parenting principles. Bradford's Local Offer is currently being written and consulted upon. Guidance can be sought from 'A Local Offer for Care Leavers', The Children's Society.

2.2 Council Tax

On the 9th January 2018, Council Tax exemption for care leavers between 18 and 21 was approved by the Executive. They also approved an additional caveat that single carers in a Staying Put household are still able to claim the single person's discount. Through Care are delighted by this and feel this cements the commitment to corporate parenting responsibilities. This will be part of our Local Offer.

2.3 Accommodation Provision

Leaving Care accommodation brief overview

What is Working Well

- Commissioning of Group Living Contract has been completed, providers awarded 5 year contract, and this will provide stability within 16+ accommodation pathway. This is Increased provision will be able to prioritise external residential placements and a return to Bradford. 44 beds now in place.
- Supported Tenancies contract - Jumpstart is now established with Centrepoint and Through Care. Taster flat experience embedded and preparation for adulthood work embedded. 30 young people worked with.
- Operational contract meetings embedded with all Childrens' Services commissioned providers. Young people tracked across housing pathway, managed moves, reduction in evictions/crisis.
- Supported Lodgings scheme (Stepping Stones) having a period of stability, good move on planning in place for young people, 5 new assessments on-going.
- Permanence planning in place for management of transitions and tracking of young people with learning disabilities and or mental health issues regarding 'preparation to adulthood'
- UASC population accommodation pathway now looking better with more options tailored to young peoples needs – gap identified in permanent tenancy options.
- On-going strong partnership working between Childrens Services and Housing Options. Good assessments/reviews, good use of Gateway.
- Young People in suitable accommodation outcomes have improved to 84.2%.

Challenges/Plans

- There remains occasions when there are delays in identifying tenancy for young people ready for independence – we are working with Housing Options to look at this and the proactive use of voids within the district.
- Staying Close model in place for Residential homes to facilitate staged moves out of care and post 18 provision. Linking in with BPP (B Positive Pathways). To implement model it will be necessary to identify additional housing stock
- Investment needed to be able to provide solo placements attached to Residential Homes to reduce commissioned placements out of Authority, thus providing a Bradford 'offer' for high risk 16+ young people.
- Analysis of our 16+ pathway has been completed. This is measured against St Basils, Housing Pathway gaps which have been identified, future work:
 - suitable tenancies for 18+ mindful of welfare reform
 - choice and different tenancy options, shared & solo
 - Peer Landlord models to be piloted
 - Crash pad/emergency provision to be piloted.
- Young people in custody continue to be classed as in "unsuitable accommodation" which affects performance.
- National challenge from Ofsted regarding 16+ supported accommodation becoming regulated care settings.

2.4 Preparation for Independence

The Jump Start service supports around 28-30 young people in moving towards independence at any one time. The average period of involvement ranges from 6-12 months, dependent on the level of need and of appropriate accommodation being provided. Young People go through a pre tenancy programme, support to source an appropriate tenancy, move in and post move in support for up to 3 months, stepped down to floating support.

The Jump Start service is also working with groups of young people across the housing pathway to try and engage young people earlier and build up the skills needed to transition to adulthood.

The young people who are provided support are generally positive about the support provided and they tend to have good working relationships with the Jump Start workers. This leads to beneficial outcomes for the young people. Young People go through an accredited programme of pre tenancy work. This later on gives them priority bidding rights within the adult world of Housing Options. Within this preparation work a 2 week taster flat opportunity is made available.

Typical case examples:

Case A

A young person in high debts due to poor budgeting receiving the support from Jump Start and being in a position whereby she was able to manage her finances, sustain a college education and work towards her chosen career in catering and hospitality;

Case B

A young person supported by Jump Start to obtain his benefits and to obtain appropriate accommodation. He was able to maintain the accommodation, which was considered a successful placement, and demonstrated positive home making skills whilst being able to maintain employment involving a commute to Leeds.

Case C

A young person who had experienced domestic violence and was supported in being able to remain in her tenancy and in obtaining an apprenticeship. The young person was happy to be able to remain in the community that she knew.

The Through Care Service has identified allocation of an additional worker to look at preparation for independence and exits from care at an earlier age. We are also continuing to offer training to residential homes and foster carers around leaving care.

2.5 Financial Management

The reality of the current economic position and welfare reform is that Through Care has seen an increase in young people presenting in financial crisis and poverty especially post 18. This is a National issue and evidence based, referenced within Local Offer guidance. Historically we have always struggled to have meaningful relationships, that have a positive impact on our young people, with our local Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) partners however following an escalation to the Department of Education (DfE) via the National Leaving Care Forum, and Through Care putting resources into building relationships we are in a better position.

Local work so far:

- Established trouble shooting meetings, promoting greater understanding of both agencies work and remits
- Leaving care protocol re established locally
- Joint working partnership and information sharing agreed – to check out claims of YP so they were not claiming twice
- 2 staff attended site meetings for staff at DWP on 4 occasions to advise them of our young people and the difficulties they face
- Explicit consent explored
- Escalation policy put in place where a young person is struggling to receive benefits so the manager at Through Care speaks to manager at DWP to look into the claim – 100% success rate with this.
- Staff are aware to make advance claims once a benefit claim is in place (resulting in a saving to our department).
- Introduction of universal credit has meant:-
X3 workers at leaving care to be specialist workers to buddy with x3 work coaches at DWP who will specialise with leaving care.
On site training provided by DWP for our staff in relation to Universal Credit
Job shadowing at both agencies
Policy to be developed about agreed payments whilst awaiting benefits
Colocation of staff at each offices to be explored

2.6 Employment, Training and Education Outcomes

LEAP are currently supporting 30 young people at University. We are working in partnership with Bradford College to run a series of aspiration events targeting young people 14+, building aspirations and making university more accessible.

On the national count day for ex year 11 pupils in 2017, we had no looked after children who were NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). This outperformed our general cohort and is a real positive for all of those involved in LAC (Looked After Children) education and support, as well as the children themselves.

The percentage of care leavers aged 16-20 who were in education, employment or training is 69.1%. Through Care have recently changed how we report our EET statistics. We now include **everyone** not in education, training and employment (young people in custody, disabled young people, parents and those who have disengaged)

Local demographics snapshot (Jan 2018)

- 6 young people in custody who are automatically NEET and not in suitable accommodation.
- 32 young people 16+ recorded as having a disability and NEET.
- 9 young people undertaking ESOL courses.
- 145 young people accessing A'Levels or college equivalents.
- 43 young people in apprenticeships or employed
- 111 young people are accessing foundation training.

- 20 young people are NEET due to being pregnant or parents.
- 90 young people are recorded as NEET – disengaged with education provision.

3. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 3.1 Numbers of Looked After Children in Bradford are increasing which continues to have an impact on the Through Care Service.
- 3.2 Embedded within the Local Offer is the requirement that Local Authorities provide a service up to 25. As yet we do not know the full resource implication that this will have. Nationally Local Authorities expect to see a third increase in number of care leavers continuing to access a service post 21. (**See Appendix 1 – Bradford 21 to 25 service**)
- 3.3 We are seeing a changing demographic within our Looked After Children with actual numbers of children from European Union States increasing and therefore as adults significant issues regarding immigration status, leave to remain and no recourse to public funds. With this there is a moral discussion to be had as these children are growing into adults who do not have access to DWP resources, but are Care Leavers and under Human Rights require resource post 18.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The views of the Corporate Parenting Panel are requested.
2. That a further report on the Local Offer for Care Leavers be submitted to the Panel in due course.

5. APPENDICES

1. **Appendix 1** - Bradford 21 to 25 service.

6. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

Appendix 1

BRADFORD CHILDREN SOCIAL CARE 21 TO 25 SERVICE

Background:

Following The Children and Social Work Act 2017 legislation 'will require Councils to provide personal advisers to care leavers up to the age of 25'.

Proposal:

If you have been an open case for more than 6 months within the Bradford Through Care Service, you are eligible to a service based on an assessment of need until you are 25 years of age regardless of eligibility criteria, as defined by the Leaving Care Act 2000.

Six months prior to a young person turning 21, they will be subject to a final Pathway Plan Review. This review will establish any on-going need for a young person. If a need is established through the final Pathway Plan Review, the case will remain an open case within the Through Care Service. The case will be closed following resolution of a young person's outstanding needs in partnership with the young person.

A young person may return at any point up to their 25th birthday and request a service from Bradford Through Care Service. The service will be dependent on the need of that young person; this will be established through discussion with the young person and any other relevant parties whom the young person identifies.

The Service

Bradford Through Care Service over 21's Service will be based on advice, assist and befriend model of care (Leaving Care Act). This may involve short pieces of information, advice and guidance or longer involvement. The young person receiving an on-going service will be based on an assessment of need and review at 3 monthly intervals.

The service will initially be delivered from Culture Fusion, where young people will initially present and be assessed. Where possible if longer involvement is appropriate the young person will be allocated their original worker.

A Through Care Team Manager has final discretion on the service an over 21 year old receives from the service.

Young People with Team Manager's authorisation may continue to access group activities post 21 up to 25.

Leaving Care Grant/Financial Assistance

If a young person has not spent their full entitlements £1200 (Leaving Care Grant) prior to turning 21 they may use any monies up to £1200 as necessary with authorisation of a Team Manager up to 25.

No other financial payments will be paid for young people accessing the service post 21.

Young people may receive food parcels.

Education

Where a young person turns 21 and are still in their education the full higher education Bradford offer will continue.

Where a young person re-enters education post 21 any relevant support will be considered as part of a needs assessment and authorisation of a Service Manager.

Young People at Risk

Some young people continue to be vulnerable and at risk of exploitation post 21.

If it is felt a young person is at risk of exploitation following their presentation at for a Through Care post 21 service we will pass information onto the Police, Adult Protection and or Children's or Adult Social Care without the young persons' permission but we will tell the young person we have done this.

A young person will sign consent details giving details prior to a service being offered.

Young People Open to Adult Services

Young people open to Adult Services may still request a service post 21, the service they receive from Through Care will be based on a needs assessment.

Service – Initial Contact up to 3 sessions

- A friendly face and a cup of tea.
- Food bank resources
- Housing advice
- Information:- Health, education, training and emotional well-being.
- Access to Internet/IT
- Welfare Benefits support/sign posting
- Befriending – we will listen to you

Following Assessment up to 3 months review at 3 month intervals

- Access to on-going support from the Through Care Service.
- Financial support (Leaving Care Grant) if funds have not been fully accessed pre 21
- Access to group activities
- Access to support re-entering education, training or employment including apprenticeships