

Report of the Strategic Director to the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel to be held on 29 June 2020

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Subject:

Report on support for Care Leavers living independently during the COVID crisis, including and update on digital inclusion in this group.

Summary statement:

Our young people

Bradford currently have 643 young people identifying as Care Leavers, 161 of the young people are leaving independently. There are 12 young people are living independently outside of the Bradford district.

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Portfolio:

Children’s Services

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children’s Services

1. SUMMARY

This report describes the support as is being provided for Care Leavers living independently during the COVID crisis including how the service has kept in touch with care leavers, partnerships formed with other agencies and how this supports care leavers. The report details how care leavers have been supported financially during this time, with their health, with any housing need and with education and employment. The final paragraph summarises information on digital inclusion and how care leavers have been engaged through a virtual platform and any support as was required and provided to facilitate this.

2. BACKGROUND

Our young people

Bradford currently have 643 young people identifying as Care Leavers of these, 161 are currently living independently. There are 12 young people are living independently outside of the Bradford district. Bradford care leavers have done their city proud during the lockdown period, in the main most young people have abided by lockdown rules and restrictions. All young people at the point of lockdown were encouraged to 'stay at home' and the service be brought to them. There has been a good level of responses from the Bradford community, voluntary sector and wider Council services to our young people.

Young people living independently have unsurprisingly struggled the most with feelings of isolation and boredom. Some young people living independently have required additional support to help them manage their emotional well-being and mental health. Within the group of young people living independently the most economically vulnerable have been young people who were in low income employment, zero hour contracts or apprenticeships where furlough rules did not apply.

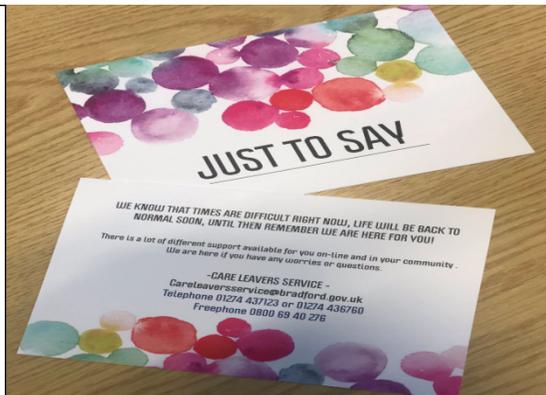
Young people have said that they have missed peers, young people who live independently, and would have previously accessed wifi in public spaces, were at greater risk of isolation. Young people initially were concerned about food, shopping and 'topping up' gas and electric. During the first two weeks of lockdown most of the services' work was ensuring the basic needs of young people were in place, food, gas, electric etc. Food parcels and supermarket vouchers were delivered to young people where needed.

Keeping In Touch

- From the point of point of lockdown young people living independently and young people identified as high needs were identified and a central list was created. All young people on this list were telephoned by the service on a weekly basis, as a basic 'check-in'.
- The weather has generally been on side, for all high needs young people and those needing additional support through lock down, workers have been completing door-step/garden visits. Workers have also joined young people in their daily exercise, meeting at local green spaces and going for walks.

- Mid April the service secured a central email address careleaversservice@bradford.gov.uk to enable all young people to be able to contact the 'service' and not rely on individual workers, duty check this daily, this is a resource that has been taken up by young people.
- All young people have been telephoned and supported to set up an email address, this has meant the service are now able to keep in touch with our young people electronically.
- Regionally we have worked with local neighbouring LA's all including us have pledged to support all care leavers living in their locality, reciprocal arrangements now in place.
- From the point of lockdown a centralised duty system has been set up at Sir Henry Mitchel House, it has been made up of 1 Team Manager, 1 Social Worker, 2 Community Resource workers and 1 Business Support, throughout lockdown duty has continued to respond to any young people in crisis, deliver food parcels and ensure basic needs are met.

In May the service sent cards out to all care leavers living in Bradford and out of area. These were well received by all and supported an increase in young people communicating via email.



Partnerships

- The care leavers service and youth service have come together throughout lockdown to the benefit of care leavers. All high needs young people and young people living independently were slotted into each of the Bradford Wards and a named youth worker identified. Youth workers have then completed a door step visits over the weekend and 'care' packages dropped off, most young people benefitting from weekly weekend visits. The youth service has also extended weekend visits to young people out of area, living independently which have been welcomed by young people.
- Feedback from young people regarding weekend contact with a worker has been positive.
- The service throughout lockdown has grown links with voluntary sector agencies and Bradford business' for the benefit of young people. Throughout lockdown the services has received an on-going supply of craft materials, jigsaws, treats (Sweets/cake etc) and games. Early May 2020 100 craft bags were distributed and welcomed.
- Young people who have needed to, have been supported in accessing the Broadway food bank, successfully.

Care Leavers Service receiving products from local Greggs stores following them closing down Mid March.



Finances

- At the point of lockdown the Government issued guidance to DWP to increase universal credit payment by £20 per week. The service has ensured that all young people receiving income maintenance received this additional payment in line with DWP guidelines.
- All care leavers have received an additional £10 per week, initially this was needed for gas and electric as a result of the young persons spending more time in the home. As lock down has progressed young people have been using it to support wifi costs and or leisure and recreation – for example purchasing Netflix.
- No young person has been left destitute – emergency provision has been facilitated.
- At the point of lockdown workers ensured that as many young people as possible had bank accounts, the service worked closely with Bradford Credit union, to ensure this happened. The services has acted as a guarantor to enable an account to be opened. This has reduced the need for young people and workers to handle cash. There are only have 16 young people receiving cash payments each week, all of whom have specific reasons for this to happen.

Health

- The Service have continued to work in partnership with care leavers nurses in order to prioritise young people needing health assessments, the majority of which have been completed virtually, however some where needed have been completed face to face.
- Young people have continued to be supported to access sexual health advice and support, including contraception advice and administration.
- There has been an increase in young people struggling with their emotional wellbeing and mental health. We have seen an increase in serious self harming episodes, young people in crisis or generally low mood. Positively, there has been a sharp increase in the number of our young people accessing Youth in Mind support; this has been as a direct result of young people accessing youth service support.
- The Service has supported young people accessing self help apps and emotional wellbeing tools. Workers confidence in using them has improved and therefore their ability to support young people accessing them has improved.

- The Service has welcomed 6 UASC into Bradford, all young people were age assessed at the point of arrival. All young people were tested for Covid-19 immediately to ensure they could be placed safely and quickly into secure supported accommodation.
- The service have at the time of writing this report had 7 young people who have tested positive for Covid-19. 2 young people have been hospitalised, both had underlying conditions. For each young person a team of workers have come round them to ensure daily contact, virtually and door step visits, each young person receiving a hot meal everyday along side care packages and emotional support.
- Where young people have been anxious about going outdoors PPE has been provided to young people to support their safety and emotional wellbeing.

Housing

- Due to Covid-19 the timeframes have been extended, normally young people would have had to transition into independent living within a short timeframe of their 18th birthday. The service have worked with our semi-independent living providers to ensure that no young person has moved out post 18 and no evictions policy where possible applied.
- Along side housing colleagues the service have successfully housed 2 chaotic young people and prevented street homeless as a result of the Covid-19 housing provision in the district.
- The service have supported successfully 8 young people who have presented as homeless during lockdown. This has involved securing accommodation, ensuring all basic needs have been met, assessments completed and on-going support provided to young people.

Education and Employment

- All young people have continued to be subject of PEP's (personal education plans) with workers ensuring school have inputted into the plans or the virtual school. Currently 91% are completed.
- The service has ensured that young people have access to lap-tops and or tablets to enable them to access home learning. It was hoped by these would be provided by the Government via school settings however as yet this has not been the case. Some schools have provided our young people with IT equipment as a good will gesture; however this has not been consistent across all education establishments. Hence the service has also ensured that wifi enable devices have been given to young people to allow them to access wifi in the home.
- LEAP have continued to support 18 young people, who were previously attending LEAP. These young people have not accessed education for a significant period of time, are complex young people with multiple issues. LEAP have continued to support young people achieve Entry Level Maths and English in order for young people to be able to progress into mainstream 16+ educational settings.

- As lockdown has progressed workers have accessed support from LEAP who have responded in setting worksheets and targets for young people to try and sustain motivation and engagement in learning.
- The service has supported 35 University Students in moving back to Bradford as a result of Universities closing or maintaining tenancies in the local area to where they are studying.

Let's celebrate

- Young People have continued to achieve and inspire, achieving Maths and English qualifications to being award winning Grime artists.
- Throughout lockdown we have celebrated Easter and Eid with our young people.



Easter Eggs/gifts were donated from community groups and Morrison's. Young People received treat bags and Easter Eggs.



Over 100 Eid Hampers were created by volunteers from TCD Bradford and volunteers at the Broadway Food bank. Donations were also received from community organisations.



Route 6 delivering Eid Hampers across Bradford. Shearbridge drivers volunteers with Shaheen our Team Manager.



We wanted to ensure that our young people have felt part of a the Bradford Care Leavers family. The staff team came together and created our utube boggie.

<https://youtu.be/UnYj0wS1VAM>



Digital Inclusion

Care Leavers have been provided with wifi enabled devices to allow connection with the internet and allow a digital connection with services. This has been through a number of means including via schools, internal resource and young peoples own resources. There has not been support as was hoped via central government. Hence there is not a standardised offer but a number of variables. However this has allowed care leavers to access wifi and the internet, self help apps, emotional well-being tools, emails and virtual contacts between workers and care leavers. The majority of care leavers have their own email address and access to a centralised email address within the service. This central email address has been effective at obtaining support for our young people when in need.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Continuing with areas of good practice that are highlighted including

- Feedback from young people regarding weekend contact with a worker has been positive.
- Young people accessing Youth in Mind support; this has been as a direct result of young people accessing youth service support.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

N/A

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

N/A

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

N/A

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

N/A

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

N/A

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

N/A

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

N/A

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

N/A

7.6 TRADE UNION

N/A

7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

N/A

**7.8 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS
(for reports to Area Committees only)**

N/A

7.9 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

The provision of a good quality services within COVID 19 pandemic is crucial to the well-being of care leavers and would have significant impact upon corporate parenting if not available.

7.10 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

N/A

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

N/A

9. OPTIONS

This report is for information only.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to acknowledge the information contained within this report

11. APPENDICES

N/A

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

N/A