

Report of the Director of Children's Services to the meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel to be held on 18th January 2021

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Subject: Youth Homelessness

Summary statement:

Update on Youth Homelessness

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Portfolio: Children and Families

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children's Services

1. SUMMARY

This report is to provide an update to the panel on developments in respect of the Youth Homeless Team in Bradford.

The team for 16/17 year olds, who are experiencing homelessness or rooflessness, is sited within the Leaving Care 16+ Service. For young people over 18, the team work in partnership with Housing Options to ensure their housing needs are met, alongside appropriate emotional support.

Since October 2018, where it was identified through the Ofsted inspection that there were failings in the service being provided to youth homeless young people. The service for Youth Homelessness has been part of the Improvement Plan and progress has been scrutinised by the Improvement Board. The most recent audit of young people presenting as homeless was written on 17th November 2020.

2. BACKGROUND

The audit considered 64 children and young people who were identified with the presenting need as “*Young person presenting as homeless*” between 1st July 2019 and 30th June 2020.

Of these children 18 young people were incorrectly identified as they were under the age of 16 years and therefore not eligible for youth homelessness services. They were all the siblings of the presenting child. These children were still subject to audit to consider if their needs were met but are not considered in this report.

Hence 46 young people over 16 presenting as homeless were audited. The audit has highlighted overall audit outcomes for children and young people experiencing homelessness has improved since April 2019.

All young people presenting as homeless are now managed at the Integrated Front Door and this is likely to have contributed to improved risk management.

In the majority of cases, children and young people’s views were well reported upon and their opinions were reflected in plans and assessments.

On a number of case files there was evidence of good collaboration with housing providers

In almost all cases audited, the needs of the siblings of children presenting as homeless were properly taken into account.

Risk was also appropriately assessed in the majority of cases. However, there are still areas that require improvement with some concerns being identified for 17 of these children and young people.

These include an acknowledgement that some young people have chaotic and abusive childhoods, where the risks are still current, emphasising the need for good social work chronologies that succinctly detail a child and young person’s experience. Although as is noted above most siblings of those young people presenting as homeless were adequately assessed there can be further improvement. On occasion it was highlighted contextualised safeguarding risks were not identified early enough for these children, including missing from home or

missing from education.

Case files do not consistently hold information confirming specific actions have been taken and information has been sought or shared such as case files not being clear if consent has been gained from the young person to share information or if independent advice has been sought for the young person.

This audit has highlighted improvements that can be made that will be incorporated into the Youth Homelessness Improvement Plan, most importantly to ensure there is consistency in social work practice for all children and young people who present or may present as homeless. Procedures and practice guidance needs to be widely available to support all workers across all of CSC service areas, with e-learning modules to support workers such as for children and young people remanded into custody in youth offending service. All case files to hold the correct information required to ensure a good service is being provided.

There is a need to ensure services are stream lined across the different services areas including prompt progression at the Integrated Front Door to assessment and support where it is identified the child and or young person is no longer living at home and that children are correctly classified as in need of youth homelessness support services.

A mediation service to be considered that can begin work with the presenting young person and their family within 48 hours of a young person presenting as homeless to ensure young people who can return home are afforded every opportunity and for those children and young people who are identified as being at risk of homelessness. For these children and young people there is consideration given to allocate a specialist worker from within the 16+ Leaving Care service to offer on-going support and/or consultation to the locality social work teams.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The Through Care service was restructured in early 2020 into under 16 yrs and over 16 yrs services. The Youth Homeless Team now sits in the 16+ Leaving Care service, where specialist knowledge and expertise is held and being developed in this area.

The DfE have approved and signed off the Protocol for Homelessness presentation of young people aged 16/17 year olds.

16+ have recently employed an apprentice young person, who is a Care Leaver and a Care Leaver Ambassador providing a voice for children and young people who have experienced homelessness.

Recently in the latter part of 2020 a telephone help line was set up for out of hours support for young people known to 16+ Leaving Care service, this is manned by qualified social workers who volunteer their time to support our children and young people. This helpline has been so successful that it was continued over the Christmas period and into the New Year. Volunteers who have offered their services have included social workers and senior managers.

As defined by Ofsted there are a number of scenarios that count as 'unregulated'.

Supported accommodation for 16/17 years is one of these unregulated provisions. This means the provision is not registered with Ofsted and is therefore unregulated.

Bradford place young people aged between 16/17 in unregulated supported accommodation. It is recognised that nationally there has been some criticism over unregulated provision, due to the opportunity to exploit a growing commercial market. Bradford strive to ensure that all our young people are placed in supported accommodation that is reputable and has gone through a commissioning process, which is currently being strengthened through all placement activity moving to the provider service area. There are more providers now registering with Ofsted who provide support to 16/17, that Bradford are able to access for our children and young people.

Children and young people who are placed in supported accommodation usually attain the status of being a child in care under s 20 of the Children Act unless they have been supported to make a decision to receive services as a child in need under s 17 of the Children Act.

The Youth Homelessness Improvement Plan considers how, the Homeless Team links into the locality model of working to better support prevention work and mediation between the young person and family members.

Young people have spoken loudly that they want a young person's hub in Bradford. They want a one-stop shop that they can feel safe in and get all their needs met in one place. This was in previously in place via Culture Fusion and young people would like this back.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- Additional resources were diverted to the Youth Homeless Team. There has been a creation of a Social Worker post.
- It is our hope that in the future we can increase social work capacity within the team.
- One stop shop young person's hub to be created for young people. Due to COVID and national restrictions this will need careful management to be able to meet the needs of the majority of children and young people whilst ensuring safety is maintained.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

N/A

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

N/A

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

Please see above. This work links into the corporate parenting stream and is cross cutting. It continues to remain on the agenda of the Cross Cutting Equality Board.

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

N/A

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

N/A

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

It is worth pointing out that if we do not get our services right to our youth homeless children they are a high profile group with a trajectory of poor outcomes and over representation within offending circles.

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

See above.

7.10 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

N/A.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

9. OPTIONS

The audit highlights the current improvement path is the right one, we have been able to engage partners at a corporate level and raise awareness.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

The views of the Corporate Parenting Panel are requested.

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Protocol for Homelessness presentation of young people aged 16/17 years old.

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None