

6 March 2019		ITEM: 6
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Transition - Preparing Care Leavers for Adulthood		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Tiffany Bright, Interim Strategic Lead of Skills		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Interim Assistant Director of Learning, Inclusion and Skills		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

Preparing Care Leavers (CL) for adulthood remains a key priority for Thurrock Council. The Leaving & Aftercare team provides a full service for 18-21 year olds and specific support, on request, for CL aged 22-25 years. The Leaving & Aftercare team is part of Inspire Youth Offer and makes the most of the Education, Employment and Training opportunities available in the borough. Head Start Housing has been created to provide a solution for CL accommodation.

The aim of this report is to provide Corporate Parenting with an overview of the offers and services available to CL and to make some recommendations for further enhancing the support provided.

1. Recommendations

That the Corporate Parenting Committee provides comment on the service's work in the following areas:

- 1.1 Work cross directorate and, in consultation with CL, to publish and promote the Local Offer**
- 1.2 Inform all CL of their rights under the Act and local policies to support them**
- 1.3 Build and maintain a diverse range of teams and partners to sign up to the CL Covenant including robust data collection and regular reporting**
- 1.4 Continue cross directorate work to extend/formalise the corporate approach to CL**

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Through Care into After Care

- 2.1.1 Monthly meetings take place between strategic leads and operational managers to identify systems and processes if we are to agree a shared vision, clear ambitions and rigorous commitment to our Children Looked After/Care Leavers.
- 2.1.2 Protocols will be written, with clear timeframes for information/case transference and acceptance.
- 2.1.3 Policy documents are being revised to reflect positive changes for CL, such as financial entitlements, accommodation, offers and services available and much more. These policies will support both the staff and CL to understand what is possible and how to access it, more consistent support.
- 2.1.4 A joint approach to the Local Offer is also underway, with Through Care taking the lead and Aftercare applying the practical advice and guidance.
- 2.1.5 Two dedicated, full time Personal Advisor's (PA) work cross directorate with multiple teams such as Youth Offending Team, Independent Reviewing Officer's, Social Workers and many more to develop an understanding the CLA/CL (16-25 years) and their needs.
- 2.1.6 The dedicated PA's attend pathway plan reviews, conferences, Education Healthcare Plan reviews, attend visits to young people etc. The PA's who lead on Information Advice and Guidance bring an optimism for education and employment and have a range of programmes that positively discriminate CLA/CL such as Duke of Edinburgh, Princes Trust, OnTrack, Next Steps into Apprenticeships and Make Happen for CL that aspire to Higher Education (degree or higher level apprenticeship), all designed to support young people to develop essential skills for successful transition into adulthood.
- 2.1.7 The result of the dedicated PA's is CL into EET is 69% which is significantly higher than the regional average.
- 2.1.8 Apprenticeships remain a challenge for CL as the weekly wage, after paying rent, does not leave much for transport to work, food or socialising.

2.2 After Care

- 2.2.1 In the 6 months prior to a young person turning 18, a Personal Advisor is allocated and begins to work cross team to develop a relationship with the young person. The Pathway Plan transfers to the Aftercare team who identify opportunities for CL personal development.

- 2.2.2 It remains the case that some CL do not want regular contact, but request support in times of crises. If the PA is unavailable, a duty PA will support the CL.
- 2.2.3 The support provided by Aftercare is diverse, ranging from asylum applications/appeals, signposting/mediating with internal teams/external agencies for offers and services or to resolve issues, purchasing items using the Setting up Home Grant, college course applications, supporting the CL to develop a positive network of support and much more, as they transition into adulthood.
- 2.2.4 There is a newly formed Head Start Housing team that manages CL accommodation. With extensive learning from the House Multiple Occupancy (HMO) pilot, March 2016-September 2018, the team comprising two officers, a mediation officer and an apprentice is responsible for exploring all options available to the CL.
- 2.2.5 The full range of options are considered in consultation with the CL, ranging from staying with friends/extended family, hostels to HMO's to single/double occupancy units with support to enable moves away from supported/semi supported care.
- 2.2.6 The team is also responsible for building compliance so we provide suitable accommodation.
- 2.2.7 Close working with Procurement and Commissioning should enable a single source contract for a local estate agent, so that over the next 5 years, we can bring all Thurrock CL back into the borough. We are also seeking to commission tiered support (24 hour incl for tagged/violent, 12 hour for advice and guidance and 6 hour floating support each week for those that are demonstrating personal development and robust life skills) for CL to successfully move on to the next level of independence.
- 2.2.8 The Head Start Housing strategy provides for Move On and Move Back, in the event that the accommodation proves too much for the CL.
- 2.2.9 Over the past 18 months, the average cost of CL accommodation is £137.50 pw (0.50p more than the local Local Housing Association rate), but the cohort is increasing - largely attributable to Thurrock's allocation of UAS (94 of 240). 54 CL have secure tenancy agreements.
- 2.2.10 Last year, saw the introduction of Council Tax relief for CL.
- 2.2.11 In all of the above, we consult regularly with CLA/CL. We do this through Children in Care (CiC), Open Door, social events, Youth Cabinet and more, so we have a service that is designed by young people for our young people.

2.2.12 Work has started with Spectre First to maximise the benefits of the CL Covenant and will seek formal agreements with local partners including employers to positively discriminate to allow CL to access local opportunities.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 One of the key areas of development over the last 12 months is the development of a cross directorate approach, in consultation with CL to refresh policy documents, develop the Local Offer and promote this, is the only way forward.

3.2 Research and working in partnership with local authorities with Ofsted ratings of outstanding will continue so we can continue to enhance the service and learn from other local authorities.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

4.1 It is requested that the Committee agree the recommendations and use the reporting mechanisms to support and challenge the work of the Aftercare team responsible for co-ordinating a cross directorate approach to offers and services on behalf of CL.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 There is no additional information for the committee as part of this report.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 This report relates to the council priorities: People, where all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay; and Prosperity, a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Michelle Hall**
Management Accountant

This report asks that the Committee notes the increasing work to improve CL awareness of services and accommodation by CL. The responsibilities of the Aftercare team have increased to support those aged 22 – 25 years after changes to legislation implemented 1 April 2018. The growing demand for accommodation, including financial support for UAS children, often with no recourse to public funds is impacting on the budget.

There are no financial implications at this stage; however any costs associated with this report need to be met from existing resources.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Legal

Any joint working arrangements between a children's services authority and a housing authority for care leavers' transition to independent living should include ensuring the delivery of effective preparation for independence with planned, sustainable moves into supported or independent accommodation. Local processes and/or practices should not involve care leavers routinely being treated as homeless when care placements come to an end in order to place the housing authority under an obligation to secure accommodation under Part 7 of the 1996 Act.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, which came into force in October 2001 and gave Local Authorities the statutory duty to provide significantly **enhanced** leaving care service, with the intention to raise the quality of our support to that of good parents.

"Care leavers should expect the same level of care and support that others would expect from a reasonable parent. The local authority responsible for their care should make sure that they are provided with the opportunities they need, which will include offering them more than one chance as they grapple with taking on the responsibilities of adulthood." Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations - Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers.

The main purpose of the Leaving Care Act 2000 is to:

- Delay young people's discharge from care until they are prepared and ready;
- To improve the assessment, preparation and planning for leaving care;
- To provide better personal support for young people after leaving care;
- To improve the financial arrangements for care leavers.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduces 3 new provisions:

1. A duty on local authorities which requires them to offer **Personal Adviser** support to all care leavers towards whom the local authority had duties under section 23C of the Children Act 1989, up to age 25 - irrespective of whether they are engaged in education or training. This includes care leavers who return to the local authority at any point after the age of 21 up to age 25 and request such support. (Under previous legislation, local authorities were required to only provide care leavers with support from a Personal Adviser until they reached age 21, with that support continuing up to age 25 if a care leaver was engaged in education or training. However, this support was not available to care leavers aged over 21 who were not in education, training or employment);

2. A duty on local authorities to consult on and then publish their '**local offer**' for care leavers, which sets out both care leavers' legal entitlements and the additional discretionary support that the local authority provides; and
3. A duty on local authorities which requires them to have regard to seven '**corporate parenting principles**', that will guide the way in which the local authority provides its services to children in care and care leavers.

The ultimate aim of leaving care services is to support care leavers so that they can live successful independent lives. Each care leaver will reach that point at a different age and there should be no assumption that the duty means that all care leavers will require statutory support until the age of 25.

The duty therefore means that local authorities do not necessarily need to provide the same level of support to care leavers aged 21 to 25 as it does for those aged 18-20. The duty does however enable local authorities to respond positively to requests for support from care leavers aged 21-25 who may be continuing to struggle with the transition to independence and adult life.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Strategic Lead – Community Development

Supporting CL as they transition into adulthood including support on accommodation targets Thurrock's most vulnerable young people. Data is collated to understand the profile of young people supported. Individual plans are informed by each young person's personal needs, including equality and diversity as well SEND and emotional health needs.

The Authority recognises the importance of ensuring that young people who are leaving the care system can and should have access to the offers available locally – given the large regeneration agenda it is important that we work in an holistic way to provide CL's with the best life chances that we can identify recognising the importance of working closely with the young people to ensure that they have a voice in the decision making process.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

There are no other implications as a result of this report.

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

There are no background papers to this report.

9. Appendices to the report

There are no appendices to this report.

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