

<b>18 June 2015</b>		<b>ITEM: 7</b>
<b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b>		
<b>Care Leavers Progress</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non-key	
<b>Report of:</b> Paul Coke, Service Manager, Through Care Services		
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Andrew Carter, Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services		
<b>This report is</b> a Public document and will provide an overview of the progress in terms of service delivery and outcomes for our care leavers.		

### **Executive Summary**

This report provides information as to the progress of our care leavers, the new initiatives put in place to address some key issues and data that gives an overview of Thurrock's performance against our statistical neighbours and England.

It also provides details of our current statutory duties and the legislation that drives our practice.

- 1. Recommendation(s)**
  - 1.1 Imbed the new ways of working such as the senior practitioner within the ACT and the Employment Worker, plus the development of new partnerships (see 2.2.3, 2.2.4 and 2.2.5).**
  - 1.2 Monitor and review the staying put arrangements and the development of Clarence Road (2.2.14).**
  - 1.3 Monitor the effects and impact of Universal Credit on our care leavers.**
  - 1.4 Ensure the new Pathway Plan is incorporated within LCS and used by all staff within the next 3 months.**

## **2. Introduction and Background**

### 2.1 Legislation and Statutory Guidance

2.1.1 Care Leavers are those young people aged 18 and over who are entitled to services under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

2.1.2 Young people entitled to this service are known as Former Relevant Children.

2.1.3 To be entitled to this service all young people will need to be looked after for 13 weeks or more, with some of that period being after their sixteenth birthday.

#### 2.1.4 Children Act 2004

Part of this legislation makes it a duty for the local authority as corporate parents to promote the educational achievements of looked after children.

#### 2.1.5 Children and Young Persons Act 2008

This legislation makes it a duty for the local authority to secure sufficient and appropriate accommodation, puts the Virtual Head on a statutory footing and makes it a duty to provide assistance for care leavers to pursue education and training.

#### 2.1.6 Children and Families Act 2014

This legislation makes it a duty to provide 'staying put' arrangements, which includes financial support up to 21.

A Children's Commissioner is in place to provide information and advice, and make representation for children in care and care leavers.

#### 2.1.7 Transition to Adulthood

This is statutory guidance that promotes the helping of care leavers prepare for adulthood.

#### 2.1.8 The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013

This deals with the responsibility of the Director or nominated person to authorise placements of children placed outside of the borough.

The 'home' authority must notify the authority where the child will be living and provide them with a copy of the care plan.

### 2.1.9 Single Inspection Framework (Ofsted – published December 2014)

Ofsted as part of their current inspection framework have made a main judgement, the experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence.

Within this main judgement, there is a separate key judgement, which addresses, the experiences and progress of care leavers.

## 2.2 Performance, data and statistics

2.2.1 Thurrock Council currently has 124 young people, 18+ who are entitled to services from the After Care Team (ACT.)

2.2.2 The ACT consists of the following:

- 1x Team Manager
- 1x Senior Practitioner
- 1x Housing Worker
- 1x After Care Team Worker/Employment Worker
- 5 x After Care Workers

2.2.3 The ACT has recruited to the post of senior practitioner who will be responsible for reviewing all Pathway Plans of our care leavers on a 6 monthly basis and work with the Team Manager to develop and co-ordinate the services required for our young people. The senior practitioner has been in post since April 2015.

2.2.4 A member of the After Care Team has been given the specific task of working with young people around the areas of employment and training. His role will be to increase the numbers of young people in employment, training or education, and sustain this. He is also working with Thurrock Careers Team to develop an overarching framework and plan for our young people, in providing opportunities for them to gain and maintain employment and training or education.

2.2.5 The role of the case holder will also be to work across the services within the Council but also externally with private providers of apprenticeships and work based training, colleges, universities and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

2.2.6 The Employment Worker sends to all staff within Social Care vacancies that would suit our young people on a regular basis.

2.2.7 The local authority has developed a new Pathway Plan in consultation with the CiCC and will be looking to integrate this into our LCS system and implement it across the service by 31 July 2015.

2.2.8 The ACT have developed a group work course, which consists of 10 weeks training in the following topics:

- Motivation Formula – Raising aspirations and self motivation
- Reality Ride – Goal Setting
- Tearing off the labels – Identity
- Climbing out – Peer Pressure
- Jumping hurdles – Problem solving
- Defence mechanisms – Emotional/anger management
- Desire, Time, Effort – Understanding accomplishment
- Lifting the weight – Taking responsibility
- Plugging in – Listening and maintaining positive relationships
- The wall – Overcoming barriers to see a vision for your future
- Careers guidance – Information, advice and guidance for future aspirations
- Mock interviews/presentations

This will be run by the ACT in conjunction with staff from the Through Care teams, and each successful young person will receive a Certificate of Achievement. This work is due to start on the 10 June 2015.

2.2.9 Universal Credit (UC) came into force in Thurrock in March 2015. At that time there were 38 young people who would be claiming this benefit.

2.2.10 Young people leaving care are able to make their application for benefits 6 weeks prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. UC is paid 5 weeks after the claim and monthly thereafter.

2.2.11 Young people will pay 25% of the cost of Council Tax, which on average equates to £3.34 per week. This could be more if they are living in Housing Association properties or private rented.

2.2.12 Young people on average will receive between £640 - £680 pcm into their bank account, with the bulk of this money being the cost of their rent. The ACT is looking to pay the landlord direct in order to ensure the rent is paid thus reducing the possibility of rent arrears and eventually eviction.

2.2.13 The Housing Worker attends the DWP Working Group within the Council.

2.2.14 Social Care have acquired 4 new units specifically for care leavers who will be supported by Family Mosaic at a new site in Clarence Road. This is in partnership with Family Mosaic and the Housing Department. We are currently awaiting the work to be completed and a date for when the units will be available.

2.2.15 An agreement has been signed for a year and the cost is coming from existing finance within the After Care Team (ACT) budget. The project will be managed by the After Care Team.

2.2.16 The ACT currently manages 11 properties in the private sector. These properties are used for young people who maybe in the transition phase of moving into their own accommodation or unaccompanied asylum seeking young people who have no recourse to public funds. They are also used for emergency purposes where young people require accommodation for a number of reasons.

2.2.17 We continue to promote 'Staying Put' arrangements, which came into force on the 1 April 2014, via the Children and Families Act 2014.

2.2.18 We currently have 6 young people in staying put arrangements.

2.2.19 A Celebration Event took place on 26 May 2015, to celebrate the achievements of our looked after children and care leavers.

### **2.3 Data**

2.3.1 The local authority has to provide the DFES with data in respect to our care leavers on a yearly basis.

2.3.2 We need to report on the following:

- 19, 20, 21 year olds Not in Employment, Education and Training
- 19, 20, 21 year olds in Suitable Accommodation

2.3.3 National Context

#### 19, 20, 21 year olds Not in Employment, Education or Training

The cohort for the period of 2013/14 was 110 care leavers

- 38 (35.4%) – Employment, Education or Training
- 45 (40.9%) – Not in Employment, Education or Training
- 27 (24.5%) - Unknown

#### 19, 20, 21 Suitable Accommodation

The cohort for the period of 2013/14 was 110 care leavers

- 83 (75%) – Suitable accommodation
- 26 (24%) - Unknown
- 1 (1%) - Unsuitable accommodation

2.3.4 Local Context

2.3.5 As of the 27 May 2015, the current cohort of young people recorded for the purposes of NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) was 124 18+ young people. The following figures are as follows:

- 78 (63%) – Employment, Education or Training
- 39 (31.5%) – Not in Employment, Education or Training
- 7 (5.6%) - Unknown

2.3.6 We currently have 11 young people who are in higher education (university)

2.3.7 Our current accommodation data as of 27 May 2015, out of 124 care leavers is as follows:

- 116 (93.5%) – Suitable
- 8 (6.5%) – Unsuitable

2.3.8 Of the 8 in unsuitable accommodation:

- 7 – Custody
- 1 – Whereabouts unknown

2.3.9 The suitable accommodation ranges from Social housing, private housing to living with friends and family, and staying put arrangements.

2.3.10 In the financial year of 2014/15 there were no evictions and we have not had any as yet within this financial year.

### **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

3.1 The data in respect to our NEET figures need improving, which has been acknowledged by the Department.

3.2 Our Suitable Accommodation figures locally are positive, but this is very early on in the year and will change as time goes on.

3.3 We will be addressing the issues of NEET and Suitable Accommodation, with the new senior practitioner who will review all Pathway Plans in order to ensure they are robust, fit for purpose and SMART.

3.4 As mentioned in 2.2.4 and 2.2.5 the role of the Employment worker will be to increase our numbers of young people in employment, training and education, and to support young people in sustaining it. We have set ourselves a target of 70% of our care leavers to be in employment, education or training for the year 2015/16.

3.5 There has to be a recognition that the increase in our unaccompanied asylum seeking young people will be a challenge especially in terms of our NEET figures. We will need to continue to work with the Virtual School in identifying appropriate courses for them and working with our educational colleges.

- 3.6 Developing and creating alternative methods to engage our care leavers is another way of providing an array of services that our young people can involve themselves in, such as the group work.
- 3.7 We need to imbed these new initiatives, review their impact with the young people to ensure they are having the desired outcome.
- 3.8 Again the staying put arrangements and the development of Clarence Road will need to be monitored and reviewed.
- 3.9 The Department is aware of the continual financial constraints within the local authority as a whole and, therefore will continue to monitor its activities and ensure they are in line with its budgets.

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 The purpose for these recommendations is to ensure the Department continues to develop and improve its services and outcomes for our care leavers.
- 4.2 The services provided need to be consistent, joined up with other professional agencies and in line with the budgetary constraints of the local authority.

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

- 5.1 None

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

- 6.1 The Council's responsibilities for its care leavers, as corporate parents, are unique and sit at the heart of all priorities.

#### **7. Implications**

##### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**  
**Finance Manager**

The new initiatives will be delivered within existing budgets and it is hoped that by working in partnership with other Departments they will be able to acquire additional funding from the private sector.

##### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**  
**Principal Solicitor Children's Safeguarding**

The local authority has a duty to provide services for our care leavers, which includes promoting their educational needs.

### 7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Teresa Evans**  
**Equalities and Cohesion Officer**

The local authority has a duty to care leavers, which includes working with all young people from different ethnic backgrounds, those who have a disability and regardless of sexual orientation. This cohort of young people may also have been involved in offending behaviour or have mental health issues. It is therefore important that all professionals working with the young people are aware of how this can impact on prospects for employment, education and training supporting the best outcome for all individuals leaving care. These outcomes will be monitored by the protective characteristics (Equality Act 2010).

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

#### 7.4.1 None

None

### 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):

- Local Authority data

### 9. **Appendices to the report**

None.

### **Report Author:**

Paul Coke

Service Manager

Care and Targeted Outcomes