

## Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

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### Securing Education, Employment and Training for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Advising Officers:

Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services  
([sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

James Dove, Youth Service Commissioning Manager  
([james.dove@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:james.dove@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

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#### Purpose of this report

To provide a summary of work managed by the Central Bedfordshire Youth Support Service (YSS) for looked after children and care leavers that will help to raise their aspirations and support them to work towards their chosen careers. The summary includes:

- The responsibilities the YSS has to looked after children and care leavers
- The service the YSS provides to looked after children and care leavers
- How the YSS works together with the Virtual School (VS) and Corporate Parenting Service (CPS) to achieve positive outcomes
- Our current performance – including progress for key groups and projects
- Our plans for delivering services and support in 2016/17.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to:

1. Comment on the offer of services for looked after children and care leavers outlined in this report, our progress to date and recommendations for improvement in 2016/17;
2. Support the development of a new Council wide approach to promoting access to apprenticeships for looked after children and care leavers that are employed by the local authority.

## **Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations**

1. This report is not scheduled to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny.

### **Background**

2. The YSS supports young people to achieve their potential. Its aspiration is to ensure the needs and wishes of young people are heard, represented and they are empowered to achieve personal, social and economic success.
3. The YSS directly delivers, manages and works in partnership to secure a range of services across Central Bedfordshire. These services meet a number of statutory responsibilities and local aspirations. The offer of services includes youth work and positive activities, the active participation of young people in local decision making and securing impartial careers information, advice and guidance.
4. As part of its offer of services, the YSS directly delivers Impartial Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (IIAG) for young people with complex needs. This includes looked after children and care leavers who reside in Central Bedfordshire or in neighbouring local authorities. The work is managed by a dedicated IIAG team who also support young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and young people in the criminal justice system.

### **YSS Offer of Impartial Information, Advice and Guidance**

5. The YSS IIAG team seeks to improve the outcomes of looked after children and care leavers by raising their aspirations, enabling them to overcome barriers to education, employment and training and supporting them to work towards their chosen careers.
6. The type of work the IIAG team offers to young people helps to 'bridge the gap' from school into Education, Employment or Training (EET). It also supports young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and need to re-engage with EET. This work could include:
  - Enabling looked after children and care leavers to identify their interests, their barriers to learning and to have a plan in place for the future.
  - Ensuring looked after children and care leavers are able to navigate the local education system and access the right opportunities that would support them in working towards their chosen careers. For example, a college course or an Apprenticeship.
  - Making sure the transitions between education, employment and training for looked after children and care leavers are smooth.

- Enabling the career aspirations and interests of looked after children and care leavers to be heard and represented multi-agency meetings.
  - Ensuring looked after children and care leavers are able engage with colleges or training providers – including supporting attendance at open events or completing application forms.
  - Enabling those looked after children and care leavers who are NEET to overcome barriers to accessing EET.
7. Examples of how we work with looked after children and care leavers can be found in Appendix A – Case Studies.

8. The IIAG team is multi-skilled and is made up of the following staff:

Intensive Personal Advisers – work with 16-21 year olds:

- The team of 3 staff (2.5 FTE) work with looked after children and care leavers.

YSS/VSS Personal Adviser – work with 13-16 year olds:

- This post is jointly funded (50/50) between the YSS and the Virtual School.
- The post holder works across the Virtual School and YSS to support the engagement of looked after children of a statutory school age.

9. The team also has 3 staff (2.8 FTE) who work with special schools to support our young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The IIAG team will work flexibly with young people where they are open to a number of services to ensure their needs can be met.
10. At anyone time, the YSS supports 120 looked after children and care leavers aged 16-21 and up to 60 looked after children aged 13-16. The highest priority is given to those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), at risk of not sustaining education, employment or training (EET) and through key transition points (e.g. from Year 11 to post-16 provision).
11. Our full offer for young people with complex needs is currently under review. The recommendations of this review will be shared and considered with all partners in the coming months.

## Working Across Services

12. The work to secure access to education, employment and training for looked after children and care leavers is primarily delivered with colleagues from the Corporate Parenting Service (CPS) and the Virtual School (VS).
13. Managers and staff from the CPS, VS and YSS work in collaboration by:
  - Holding monthly managers meetings in order to provide management oversight of cases, to assess funding applications for local authority Post-16 funding and facilitate joint working arrangements.
  - Pooling funding and resources across each team – including the Post-16 pooled budget that will provide additional support for young people who are not catered for by the existing market.
  - Holding monthly meetings looking at young people's progress to EET with staff from the YSS and CPS to support collaborative working, joint planning and resource allocation for young people who are NEET at risk of becoming NEET
  - Developing regular and timely management information reports on the participation of looked after children and care leavers in Education, Employment and Training.
14. The YSS has also developed further partnership arrangements that underpin work to secure education, employment and training opportunities for looked after children and care leavers, including:
  - Co-ordination and liaison with schools, colleges and training providers to ensure ongoing engagement in EET. For example, supporting access to and engagement with colleges.
  - Central Bedfordshire Council's Academy of Social Work and Early Intervention has offered two traineeship programmes for looked after children and care leavers as a 'stepping stone' towards an apprenticeship as it was recognised that looked after young people are not always ready to go straight into an Apprenticeship.
  - Work with the Children in Care Council so that looked after young people have opportunities to help with the recruitment of intensive personal advisors and have opportunities to be involved in the developing shadow Children's Trust which will be made up of young people from Central Bedfordshire Council.

## How we Measure our Success

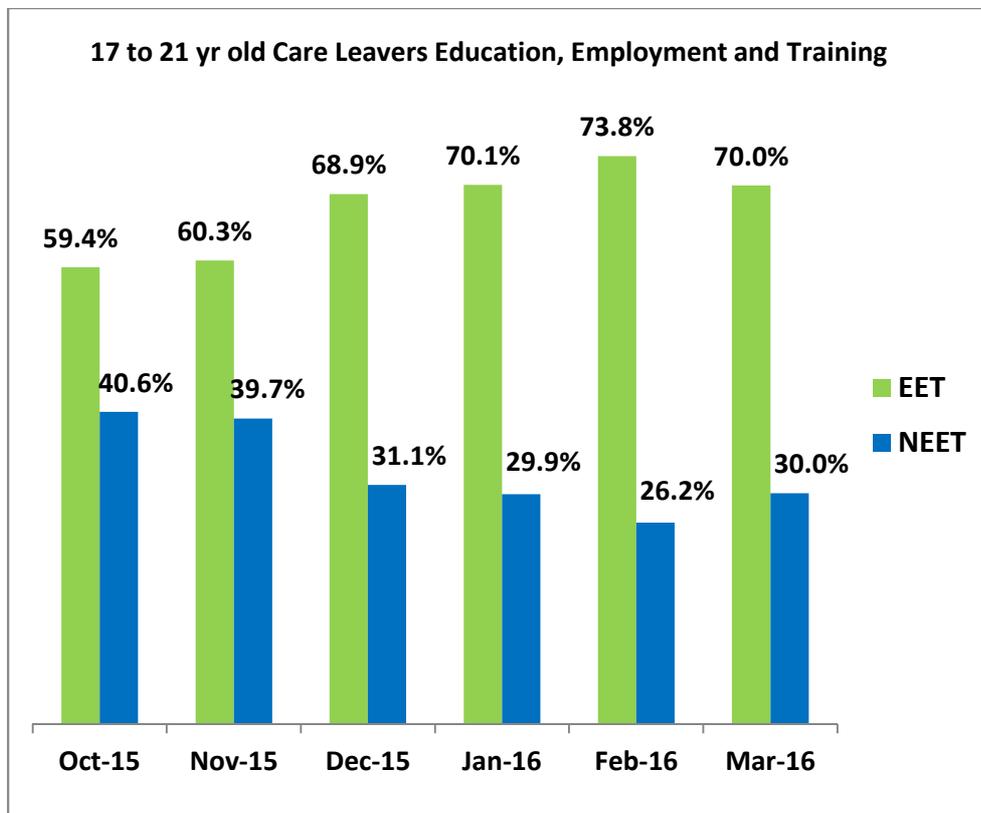
15. There are two key performance indicators that we use to measure the success of our services for looked after children and care leavers. These are:

a) The % of care leavers who are in Education, Employment and Training (Statutory Return to DfE):

The most recent national validated returns for the % of care leavers accessing education, employment and training relate to 2014/15. This data highlights the following:

- Central Bedfordshire = 42%
- Statistical neighbours = 44%
- National average = 47%

However, analysis of performance for the past 6 months shows a significant improvement in the number of care leavers accessing Education, Employment and Training in Central Bedfordshire. This improvement has also been delivered alongside a significant growth in the cohort from 64 in October 15 to 120 in March 2016.



Education, Employment & Training (EET)	Oct-15	Nov-15	Dec-15	Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16
<b>Cohort</b>	64	78	90	97	107	120
<b>EET</b>	38	47	62	68	79	84
<b>Not in EET</b>	26	31	28	29	28	36

b) The number and % of young people aged 16-21 who are looked after and care leavers who are in Education, Employment and Training:

The most recent data highlights a growth in the number of young people supported but a slight fall (4.2%) in the cohort who are EET from 61.3% to 57.1%. There remains a consistent cohort of looked after children and care who leavers who are unavailable to participation in EET due to their personal circumstances. This is largely related to emotional and mental health issues.

October 2015 (Performance at the end of Quarter 2) - Of a cohort of 173 young people:

- The proportion of looked after children and care leavers participating in education, employment or training (EET) was 61.3%
- Of those in EET, 81% were in Full Time Education, 14% were in Employment and 5% in Training (E.g. Apprenticeship)
- The proportion of those who were NEET (this includes those that cannot be contacted) was 38.7%
- Of those NEET, 58% were available to access EET with 42% unavailable (e.g. due to illness, a custodial sentence or pregnancy)

January 2016 (performance at the end of Quarter 3) – Of a cohort of 184 young people:

- The proportion of looked after children and care leavers participating in education, employment and training (EET) was 57.1%
- Of those who were EET, 82% were in Full Time Education, 14% were in Employment and 4% in Training (E.g. Apprenticeship)
- The proportion of those who were NEET (this includes those that cannot be contacted) was 42.9%

- Of those NEET, 59% were available to access EET with 41% unavailable (e.g. due to illness, a custodial sentence or pregnancy)
16. In parallel to the two key performance indicators, we will use other methods to help establish the impact of services for looked after children and care leavers aged 13-21. This will include evidence from the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) which is a questionnaire designed to show young people's emotional health and wellbeing, GCSE results, exclusions survey work and audits of case work.
  17. The development of joint working arrangements to offer education, employment and training for looked after children and care leavers will remain a priority during 2016/17, in particular, the commissioning of more bespoke education and training opportunities for looked after children and care leavers in order more effectively meet their needs.

### **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) 16-21**

18. Since October 2015, the YSS have also been reporting separately on UASC who are looked after or care leavers in Central Bedfordshire. This decision was reached in recognition that we needed to better understand this growing cohort of young people and that the group may face different barriers to accessing Education, Employment and Training. For example, being able to speak the English language.
19. The analysis of the UASC highlighted the following trends and themes:

#### October 2015 (at the end of Quarter 2)

Of a cohort of 58, the proportion of Asylum Seeking Children participating in education, employment or training was 81.0% compared to 61.3% of the total cohort of LAC / Care Leavers. The proportion of Asylum Seeking Children that were NEET (this includes those that cannot be contacted) was 19.0%. This compared to 38.7% of the total cohort

#### January 2016 (at the end of Quarter 3)

Of a cohort of 65, the proportion of Asylum Seeking Children participating in education, employment or training was 70.8%. This compared to 57.1% of the total cohort of LAC / Care Leavers. The proportion of Asylum Seeking Children that were NEET (this includes those that cannot be contacted) was 29.3%. This compared to 42.9% of the total cohort.

20. The progression and offer of education, employment and training for UASC continues to be a priority, in particular, making sure there is adequate provision of English for speakers of other language courses (ESOL) that will support communication skills and access to broader employment opportunities.

## **Future Aspirations**

21. As outlined above the IAG team in the YSS and its partners seek to raise the aspirations of looked after children and care leavers and enable them supporting to work towards their chosen careers. Over the coming months, the YSS will be working with young people to enable these aspirations can be met. It is important to recognise there is a significant variation in aspirations held by young people in the cohort, including:
  - Construction
  - Meteorology
  - Arts and Design
  - Animal Care
  - Not yet sure - but want to learn the English language so they can access employment
22. It is also important to acknowledge that whilst some young people have higher aspirations, including those seeking to access University; they also face significant barriers in their lives that would impact on them meeting these in the future. For example, emotional and mental health problems that may reduce the capacity of a young person to consistently engage in education, employment and training for sustained periods of time.

## **Apprenticeships and Traineeships**

23. Alongside academic, other vocational and traditional employment routes, one of the potential post-16 learning options available for looked after children and care leavers is an Apprenticeship.
24. Since 2012, there have been 11 looked after children and care leavers who have accessed Apprenticeships. A majority of those have accessed these Apprenticeships since 2014.
25. The Apprenticeships have been with a number of employers, offering varying types of employment and with a number of different training providers. With regard to Apprenticeships with Central Bedfordshire Council, fewer than 5 of the 11 were employed and supported by the local authority. Unfortunately, the course was not completed by any of the apprentices on each occasion.
26. In response to a need identified by a number of partners, the Academy of Social Work and Early Intervention has also been able to deliver two recent traineeships programmes focused on young people with complex needs – including one course specifically focused on supporting care leavers. Each programme has been designed to develop both the qualifications and skills of participants in order for them to progress to future Apprenticeship. In terms of success:

- 8 looked after children and care leavers started traineeships
- 5 were able to secure qualifications through traineeships
- Fewer than 5 were able to access an apprenticeship following the qualifications and skills gained on these courses

27. In April 2016, the YSS was requested to be part of a Council wide approach that would enable better access to looked after children and care leavers to local authority Apprenticeships. This work is currently under development and we request the support of the Corporate Parenting Panel in its development, implementation and review.

### **Council Priorities**

28. The work delivered by the Youth Support Service and its partners is contributing to Council Priorities outlined in its 5 year plan, in particular:

- *Improved Education and Skills*
- *Protecting the vulnerable: Improving Well-being*

29. The Council's Executive approved the Partnership Vision for Education in August 2015 which supports our ambition to:

- We will be in the top quartile nationally at the end of each Key Stage
- The Free School Meals Gap and other Vulnerable Pupils Gap will narrow
- Young people valuing the Information, Advice and Guidance they receive
- Young people having the work skills to secure and maintain employment
- There will be clear progression routes for all young people for the next level of training/learning and into work.

30. The work will also make a significant contribution to the emerging council All Age Skills Strategy. In particular:

- Raising Individual Aspiration and Achievement
- Developing our Workforce across Central Bedfordshire

### **Corporate Implications**

31. As Corporate Parents all members of the Council have responsibility for supporting improving outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. The YSS and its partners meet these duties through its work to help young people raise their aspirations and support them to work towards their chosen careers.

## **Legal Implications**

32. The council has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children it looks after regardless of where they live. In Central Bedfordshire, this duty is delivered by the YSS in partnership with the Virtual School and a range of partners

## **Financial Implications**

33. There are no Financial Implications that result from this report. The support currently delivered by the YSS is done so within the allocated budget.

## **Equalities Implications**

34. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age; disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
35. Research indicates that education is a key determinant of life chances. As well as being a right in itself, education is an enabling right, allowing individuals to develop the skills, capacity and confidence to secure other rights and economic opportunities. Education-related inequalities have an impact over an individual's life-span, not just in childhood. The Children and Families Act 2014 provides greater protection to vulnerable children in relation to education and learning. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has recently highlighted that whilst some improvements have been seen in relation to the attainment of looked after children, performance remains below that of other pupils and should continue to be seen as a priority.

## **Areas for Development**

36. The YSS and its partners have identified the following areas for development in 2016/17:
  - Ensure looked after children and care leavers continue to have a comprehensive offer of IIAG that will enable them to make informed decisions regarding their careers
  - Enable looked after children to manage the transition between statutory schooling and post-16 provision through closer collaboration between the YSS and VS
  - Ensure there are clear and robust integrated working arrangements with health services to ensure barriers to accessing EET for looked after children and care leavers can be addressed at the earliest possible stage

- Ensure the council can secure more bespoke education and training opportunities for vulnerable young people – including ensuring we have sufficient ESOL provision to support looked after children and care leavers
37. We would also request the support of the Corporate Parenting Panel in developing a council wide approach to promoting access to apprenticeships for looked after children and care leavers within the local authority. This approach would need to consider in full the work required in planning for, delivery of and transition from Apprenticeships for this group.
38. The areas for development outlined above will be considered as part of the transformation programme and the identified need to develop a more comprehensive service for vulnerable adolescents. They will be reflected in the YSS plan and the VS development plan. Regular reports on progress will be made to the Virtual School governing body and the Corporate Parenting Operations Group.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Case Studies

## **Background Papers**

None