

Families and Children's Services Scrutiny

2ND SEPTEMBER 2021

Peer Review for Care Leavers Service-update report

Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services, Cath McEvoy Carr

Cabinet Member for Children's Services: Councillor Guy Renner Thompson

Purpose of report

To provide the members with an update of the actions to be undertaken following the Peer Challenge undertaken in September 2018 including a current view of the offer for care leavers in Northumberland

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- 1) Members are assured that there is an action plan in place to take forward improvements to services for care leavers as part of continuous improvement planning in children's social care.
- 2) Members continue to have an overview of the Northumberland offer for careleavers and understand their role as corporate parents for care leavers.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the; Living, Enjoying, Connecting and Learning priorities all included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2020-2021.

Key issues

1. A Peer challenge took place in September 2018 following which an action plan was drawn up with improvement targets. All actions identified within that plan have now been completed
2. The service for care leavers was part of the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Childrens Services (ILACS) in February 2020 where it received positive feedback as part of the overall 'Good' judgement.
3. Northumberland County Council have signed up to the Careleavers Covenant which sets out the commitment to care leavers as a corporate parent.
4. In February 2021 the service invited Mark Riddell, the DFE National Adviser for Careleavers, to come and review the service. He provided broadly positive feedback and made some recommendations which the service have considered and where relevant added this to the ongoing service action plan.

5. Performance in relation to the percentage of care leavers we are in touch with, who are in suitable accommodation and numbers in education, employment and training have continued to improve.

Background

The peer challenge which happened in September 2018 resulted in an action plan and reports on the progression of this have been provided to this committee in December 2018 and June 2019, the second particularly in relation to the education employment and training offer for care leavers.

UPDATED POSITION

All actions within the peer challenge action plan have now been completed.

Childrens social care was subject to an Ofsted/CGC/HMIP Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) in June 2019 (with a focus on exploitation) and an Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Childrens Services (ILACS) in February 2020, both of which were positive about the support provided to care leavers in Northumberland.

Further to these inspections the service invited Mark Riddell, DfE National Adviser for Care leavers to review the service; because of the pandemic this visit was delayed but took place in February 2021 virtually. His feedback was broadly positive. The recommendations he made have been looked at by the service and those deemed appropriate and relevant have been incorporated into the ongoing action plan for the care leavers service which is part of the continuous improvement plan for children's social care.

The local offer for care leavers has continued to develop since the last report to this board in relation to the action plan and Northumberland have since signed up to the Care leavers Covenant which makes a commitment as a corporate parent to care leavers.

The performance in relation to care leavers continues to be an improving picture for care leavers in suitable accommodation (95.1% 20/21 94%19/20) and in education, training and employment (53.3%20/21 49%19/20). Performance in both areas is now above the England average. The service is also in touch with more care leavers (96.7% 20/21 94%19/20)

CONCLUSION

The action plan arising from the peer challenge was an important part of the improvement journey for the care leavers service in Northumberland. There is an ongoing action plan to continue that improvement, but this has now become part of 'business as usual' operational delivery.

Providing the best services we can to our care leavers including the development of the care leavers covenant and the corporate parenting responsibilities across the council is, and will continue to be, a high priority.

Implications

Policy	To ensure that care leavers are considered as a priority group in all council policies moving forward.
Finance and value for money	No additional areas
Legal	The local authority has a statutory duty to provide support for care leavers until they are 21 or 25 in higher education or request that support
Procurement	N/A
Human Resources	N/A
Property	N/A
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
Risk Assessment	N/A
Crime & Disorder	Young people who have been looked after are statistically more likely to be represented in the justice system including custody. Providing high quality support and meaningful education, employment and training opportunities can help to reduce this risk
Customer Consideration	The local authority is the corporate parent for Looked After Children and care leavers. All council officers and members should have aspirations for this group of children and young people and be actively seeking to support them.
Carbon reduction	N/A
Health and Wellbeing	Care leavers are disproportionately represented in a number of high risk areas including likelihood of suicide and long term physical and mental health issues.
Wards	All wards

Background papers:

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Neil Masson
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Cath McEvoy-Carr
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