

REPORT FOR: CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Date of Meeting:	12 July 2011
Subject:	INFORMATION REPORT - Supporting Young People and Transition to Leaving Care
Responsible Officer:	Catherine Doran, Corporate Director, Children Services
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary

This report sets out to inform and update Panel of the work being undertaken to support Looked After Children and their transitions to Leaving Care services. Specific attention to management information used to inform outcomes.

To note the progress made under the Teenage Placement Strategy.

INFORMATION REPORT

Section 2 – Report

Introduction

The Teenage Placement Strategy (TPS) which was considered by Cabinet in July and September 2010, and has a number of work streams that are inter-related and being developed simultaneously. The Children's Services new operating model proposes a single Children Looked After Service which will deliver a seamless service for children in the care of Harrow Council. The development of the TPS represents important preparatory work that will co-ordinate services for children looked after and care leavers, embed best practice standards and position the Council to realise the benefits associated with the implementation of Children's Services new operating model.

The Service Manager - Children in Need and Looked After Services, has chaired a number of operational work streams to support the development and implementation of the Teenage Placement Strategy. The Service Manager - Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and Leaving Care Team (LCT) has overseen the development of the Leaving Care Team

LEAN Review to transform services for care leavers aged 18+ years. The Placements Service Manager oversaw the recent change of use of Honey Pot Lane Semi Independent Unit & Outreach Service. These 3 Service Managers meet regularly as part of the Service Managers Performance Group to review practice, performance, policy and procedures.

Since the care and support of young people is a corporate responsibility and requires multi-disciplinary and multi-agency work there is a large group of internal and external partners who play a key role in supporting the implementation. These are listed below;

- Safeguarding, Family Placement and Support Service Division – representation from all teams
- Young Peoples Services Division – representation from Leaving Care Team & Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children’s Team, Youth Offending Team, Youth Services and Connexions
- Special Needs Services Division - Children with Disabilities
- Early Years & Extended Community Services Division – representation from Children’s Centre
- Harrow Foster Carers Association
- Adult Care Services
- Housing Services
- Primary Care Trust – Children Looked After Specialist Nurse Practitioner
- Voluntary Sector – HAVS Independent Visitor Partnership
- Child in Care Council “Beyond Limits”

Current position

This report covers the period from 1st August 2010 to 31st May 2011. The activity and progress for each work stream within the TPS is outlined below;

16+ Action Plan

Relevant Service Managers have met on a regular basis to review the Action Plan to implement the TPS and undertake the groundwork to develop a single Children Looked After Service for 0-25 year old children and young people that are, or have been, looked after by Harrow Council.

All 16-18 year old young people are now being managed within the Children in Need and Looked After Children Service. No young people will transfer to the Leaving Care Team until they are 18 years old. This is a change to the previous practice when young people transferred to the Leaving Care Team at 16 years old.

Contributions from the Youth and Connexions Services and Beyond Limits has supported this strategic development by providing learning and support to Social Workers in Children in Need & Looked After Service.

18+ LEAN Review Action Plan

In the Children’s Service new operating model the Leaving Care Team will also be part of the Children Looked After Service.

The Leaving Care Team undertook a LEAN review in 2010 achieving the elimination of non-value adding activities and replacing with sustainable value adding activities. The key improvements are as follows:

- * **Satisfying young people at the first point of contact** by providing direct numbers for access to social workers and a duty system via a free phone number.
- * **Measuring the cost of service transaction as part of the management and improvement process** by ensuring there are clear objectives to achieve effective management of access to the service, equality of opportunity, service delivery, service monitoring and development
- * **Promoting corporate responsibility and understanding** of what it actually costs to deliver a service to young care leavers by increasing awareness of the complexity of the relevant issues and the context within which work with Care Leavers takes place, contributing to debates and informing policy decision making.
- * **Understanding the dynamics of service demand** and how it can be managed more efficiently including a re-design of the Pathway Plan (introducing a more succinct plan with less duplication and more engagement from young people) enabling workers to start to address young peoples needs immediately.
- * **Reviewing quality of life indicators** and identify gaps in service as part of a continuous process.
- * **Recognising the obstacles that hamper change**, for example the burden of being too process driven and failing to keep the desired outcomes in focus, the impact of staff shortages and the restrictions of budget control measures. Staff made changes to ensure that the focus of their work is on the professional social work practice and direct work with young people.
- * **Reviewing business processes** to shape these in accordance with young peoples needs and ensure that there is an opportunity for consultation to identify issues and concerns that may arise during the process.
- * **Mapping the electronic casework system** for the new service.
- * **Managing the transitional arrangements** to deliver the new service.

Preparing for transition

Work has been undertaken to support children looked after and care leavers to make preparation for leaving care, to acquire necessary life skills and make the transition to adulthood and ultimately to full independence.

The objectives for this work are as follows:-

- * To deliver improved outcomes for young people in transition to independence
- * To employ an empathic and considered response to emotional barriers faced by young people in transition to independence.
- * To consider how we can best meet the needs of young people in transition to independence in a climate of financial constraints.
- * Overall objective- to build on the strengths of the team to ensure best practice and service delivery to young people in transition to independence.

The next steps for this work are as follows:

- Review the social work establishment within the Children in Need & Looked After Service to accommodate the increase in 16 – 18 year olds being supported with transition
- Implement the 18+ transfer protocol with the Leaving Care Team
- Review and implement the Leaving Care Charter and Harrow Pledge
- Review placements for all of 16+ Placements

The existing Children with Disabilities and Adult Services Transition Protocol has been reviewed and an amended draft is being finalised for wider consultation.

One of the key considerations in the revised draft has been concerned with how children with additional needs, other than physical, learning or sensory disabilities, need to be supported better. This includes those looked after young people with mental health needs and needs associated with substance misuse, for example.

The Divisional Director – Special Needs Services will to review and circulate the revised protocol for consultation in June 2011

Life skills Programme & Independent Living skills

Good progress has been made to produce a comprehensive model of approach to deliver a life skills programme and independent living skills training and support with young people. The Independent Visiting Co-ordinator has been commissioned to co-ordinate the research to date and present the draft life skills programme for final consultation in July 2011. The life skills programme is designed to inform and support direct work with looked after young people from the age of 14 years right through until they leave care.

The 18+ Independence review will identify any additional needs and support that may be required. An independent living plan has been designed to assist the young person to become fully competent in all the core independent living and will be supported by the Leaving Care Team.

A gap analysis has been introduced to identify any significant skills gaps that a young person looked after may have prior to leaving care or living independently. This is to ensure that all young people looked after are assessed in accordance with identified life skills in order to make a judgement about whether they are prepared to live independently. Any gaps that are identified will be addressed in a variety of ways to ensure that young people are equipped to make a safe transition to young adulthood and full independence in a timely and considered way.

Regular support, guidance and advice is provided to young people looked after meetings are carried out

Key next steps:

- Review feedback from the life skills programme consultation in July 2011
- Start to implement a pilot to test the programme in August 2011 – October 2011
- Refine programme and launch programme for all young people in November 2011

The overall aim is to build on young people's practical skills, addressing any gaps and assessing overall competence and confidence on an on-going basis. By ensuring that the programme is an on-going consideration, is consistent and co-ordinated and starts before or at 14 years of age looked after young people will be better prepared. The delivery of the programme will be achieved through a multi-agency approach, mobilising relevant multi-disciplinary input from professionals working together as a team around the young person.

Employment, Education & Training

A draft Education, Employment and Training Protocol is being prepared for consultation. This will focus on the education, employment and training standards and commitments that Harrow has for looked after young people and care leavers and will include a scorecard to manage and monitor performance. The draft Protocol is due to be circulated for consultation in June 2011.

Children Looked After Supervised Contact

Arrangements for supervised contact for looked after children have changed. Since 1 April 2011, supervised contact has taken place in a number of Children's Centres. And this has been made possible following close collaboration between managers and practitioners. Silverdale is no longer in use as a venue for contact. A first review of these arrangements is scheduled for July 2011

Housing

Links with Housing have been established for some time and these are being revisited, to strengthen the partnership working in line with the above developments and the plans for a single Children Looked After Service. A partnership and review meeting was held in May 2011 to look at ways of strengthening current working practices and processes and this is work that will be on-going.

For those 18+ young people Leaving Care, Independent living is central to the strategy to delivery the best outcome for care leavers. The LOCATA housing option is utilised and support provided to young people in the application and bidding process. For those young people with additional complex needs a more extended support plan to achieve independence is employed along with Adult service direct support where appropriate, as identified with Transition Protocol.

Honey Pot Lane Semi Independent and Outreach Service

The new operating model for Honey Pot Lane has been launched and the unit is now a semi-independent unit for 16 to 18 year olds with 24-hour support. There is a focus on preparing young people to leave care with appropriate independence skills training.

Ofsted undertook an unannounced inspection visit on 22 June 2011 and awarded a "Good" judgment. This is the first Ofsted inspection since the change of use arrangement came into force so this is an important outcome.

There are currently five young people in residence, all whom have a tailored independent life skills training programme in place. The staff team are also providing outreach support to a number of young people and families where preventative intervention is helping to avoid a reception into care.

The Teenage Placement Coordinator at Honey Pot Lane has been involved in the life skills training developmental work and maintains strong links the multi agency partnership. As the centre develops the intention is to provide a base for a range of targeted and complimentary young people's services.

User Feedback

User feedback is a key tool in reviewing and developing service delivery. All young people are consulted prior to their reviews and the Young People's Consultation Officer passes that information to the relevant Independent Reviewing Officer and Team Manager. So far the feedback from young people placed at Honey Pot Lane has been very positive and their individual care and pathway plans are being reviewed regularly.

Young People receiving a service from the Leaving Care Team were also consulted about the Leaving Care Team LEAN Reviews. Feedback from young people helped to identify and prioritise life skills and practices that they felt were essential and beneficial. The Lean Review consultation also included consideration of the 'voice of the child' and sought care leaver views on what they consider to be their priority needs and how the service can be configured to provide a more effective and joined up service.

Future Work

The priority actions for 2011-2012 are as follows:-

- Consulting, piloting and launching the agreed life skills programme by November 2011
- Developing a single protocol for education attainment and achievement recognition to be launched in September 2011
- Reviewing the existing Leaving Care Charter and re-launching this in September 2011
- Reaching full capacity at Honey Pot Lane Semi Independent Unit, embedding the Outreach Service and starting to deliver a range of additional complimentary services on site by January 2012
- Review all 16+ placements via another Placement Challenge Panel scheduled for 28 July 2011
- Ensure all TPS work streams are monitored and reviewed via the Children Looked After Life Chances Forum from July 2011.

Financial Implications

The CLA and Leaving Care placements budget are demand driven and therefore highly volatile. Although still in its infancy the TPS is already demonstrating a positive impact on the placements budgets, including :

- Honey Pot Lane is forecast to operate within budget for 2011/12 compared to an overspend of £268k in 2010/11 and £342k in 2009/10.
- The Teenage Placement Strategy has enabled more robust monitoring of Placements for 16 to 18 year olds with a number of young people moving on from residential and fostering placements to Supported Lodgings and semi independent placements which are more suited to their needs and offer more value for money. Currently the average cost of a semi independent placement is £464pw compared to £2,886 pw for a residential placement. This has led to a considerable reduction in the placement costs of the 16 to 18 cohort and based on the current

cohort of CLA the service is forecast to operate within budget for 2011/12.

The service aims to maintain this achievement as placements are to be again reviewed at 16 plus Challenge Panels which have been set up to ensure they continue to meet the young peoples needs and provide value for money. There are two Challenge Panels scheduled for July 2011.

Risk Management Implications

There are no risk management implications, this is an information report only.

Equalities Implications

The Honeypot Lane Change of Use Cabinet report in September 2010 contained an equalities impact assessment.

Corporate Priorities

This work supports the Council's corporate priority to support and protect people who are most in need. Young people who are looked after and care leavers are additionally vulnerable by virtue of their care status.

Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Emma Stabler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
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Date: 24 June 2011

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

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Background Papers: None