



<u>Committee and Date</u>
Young People's Scrutiny Committee
26 th March 2014

<u>Item</u>
6
<u>Public</u>

Care Leavers Pathway and Educational Achievement, Attendance and Health Outcomes of Shropshire's Looked After Children

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1. Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines national regulations and expectations for children who are looked after by the Local Authority as they move into adult and independent life. It sets out Shropshire's developments in this regard. The report also outlines the educational achievement, attendance and health outcomes of Looked After Children.
- 1.2 In October 2013 the Children and Families Minister, Edward Timpson MP, launched the cross-party Care Leavers strategy. Based on research and inspection reports which had identified that the quality of support care leavers receive is patchy and that their journey through the first decade of adult life is often disrupted, unstable and troubled and as such often means they struggle to cope and this can lead to social exclusion, long term unemployment or involvement in crime, the Care Leavers Strategy set out a vision based on the principles of good corporate parenting, that Care leavers should expect the same level of care and support that other young people get from their parent, and for longer.
- 1.3 Under the Care Leavers Regulations 2010 the new guidance for local authorities to introduce "staying put" provision was introduced as part of their range of options to provide care leavers with suitable accommodation. It says '*Local authorities should develop "staying put" policies that provide foster carers and young people with information and guidance regarding all aspects of extending placements beyond the young person's 18th birthday.*

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members to note the progress being made to develop semi-independent and supported lodging care arrangements for 16/17 year olds.

- 2.2 That Members receive further updates on the impact of the new arrangements in meeting the Government's vision.
- 2.3 Members to note the Educational and Health achievements of Looked After Children.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 Provision for care leavers to move out of high cost residential services must recognise the needs and vulnerabilities of this cohort of young people. Their need for high quality support from social workers and Personal Advisors to support them to progress through transition remains. Failure to provide the necessary support networks through pathway planning will likely result in breakdown of the placement and the potential need for crisis management associated with risk of social exclusion, disrupted engagement and progress in education, training or employment and or involvement in crime.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The step-down approach and a continuum of semi-independent provision will be cost effective in comparison to residential care continuing to age 18; Development of Shropshire's own resources for care leavers is cost effective. Indicative per annum comparative unit costs with an external provider are:

Provision	Inclusive service	Cost per annum per child
Externally commissioned provision : Keys semi-independent 16 plus supported accommodation	Dependent on number of support hours - quoted @ 3 hrs per day plus rent at £350pw and professional time	£45,624
SAAIL Project semi-independent supported accommodation	fee, allowances, professional time	£32,312
Supported Housing	rent, personal allowance, travel, professional time	£23,878
Supported Board and Lodgings Plus	fees, allowances, professional time	£21,048
Supported Board and Lodgings	fees, allowances, professional time	£15,848

Supported Housing Independence Project	rent based on Local Housing Allowance shared accommodation rate of £69.23 pw [not including water rates or maintenance/repair charges], personal allowance, travel, concierge service, professional time	£12,567
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Following development of capacity of this resource 5 care leavers have moved to an internal SBL provision since August 2013; also 4 have moved to supported housing and 2 to the SAAIL project.

Currently we have 44 young people in these care arrangements and six with a proposed plan to progress to this type of provision within the next six months (the cohort of 16/17 year old LAC is approximately 60 young people at any one time - over 70% are in semi-independent provision).

There are 6 young people with a proposed plan to progress to this type of provision within the next six months. This will create an estimated saving of £538,200 (based on SAAIL project) or £594,360 (based on SBL or Supported Housing) in the year 14/15.

5. Background

- 5.1 Volume 3 of the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations 2010 'Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers' sets out in detail Local Authorities' duties and powers in care and pathway planning for care leavers. This guidance has been followed in the proposed revision of Shropshire's transition planning.
- 5.2 The update of Volume 3 sets out the requirement for local authorities to provide 'staying put' arrangements for looked after children in foster care once they reach the age of 18. The government's target for local authorities is that 25% of care leavers will 'stay put'.
- 5.3 The Care Leavers Strategy 2013 details the corporate and operational expectations in respect of local authorities meeting the needs of care leavers as they transition into adulthood. This includes reporting on the outcomes for care leavers at ages 18,19, 20 and 21 years – previously this has only been collected at age 19.

6. Additional Information

6.1 Local Implementation - Care Leavers Pathway

- 6.1.1 A LAC Strategy Task and Finish Group was established in mid-2013 to consider these reports and specifically how the journey to

independence for young people might be improved. Implicit in independence planning is the development of coping skills and resilience. It is intended that care plans and pathway plans will incorporate strategies and opportunities for looked after young people to develop these in the same way as non-looked after peers.

The 'My Independence Plan' booklet (attached at Appendix A) has been developed to inform the needs assessments and the pathway plans for care leavers. It will build on the young person's earlier thoughts about their transition to adulthood and the format puts the young person at the centre of the journey to independence. It is currently in draft form and consultation is taking place with both current and past care leavers.

'My Independence Plan' is based on the Dimensions of Need contained in the DoE Transitions Guidance 2010. It covers practical independence skills and also focuses on personal safety (for example, in the use of social media) and financial issues (such as interest rates on 'pay day loans').

Also attached (Appendix B) is a chart showing the transition journey for young people leaving care.

6.1.2 The LAC Strategy Task & Finish group focused on:

Developing options for Young People to move out of Local Authority residential and foster care provision to supported living and independent living accommodation as a way of meeting the requirements set out in Staying Put.

6.1.3 Progress to date has been:

- a) A Supported Board and Lodgings (SBL) recruitment campaign –we have increased the number of current providers to 43 with an additional 4 in assessment.
- b) Recruiting Supported Board and Lodgings 'plus' providers to work with care leaver's and homeless young people who may not be in education and need support to establish a settled life-style. The working title for the project is SWAN (Support With Additional Needs)
- c) A five year contract has been signed with Shropshire Housing Alliance (SHA) for the provision of four two-bed shared houses/flats for care leavers and homeless 16/17 year olds. Support will be provided by SHA and existing agencies; over- night a concierge service will monitor the properties. The aim is to help young people develop their 'tenancy skill' and have the experience of being responsible for themselves and their accommodation prior to becoming tenants as adults. The Supported Housing Independence

Project (SHIP) will bridge the transition from 17 to 18 years and allow young people to bid on Home Point for properties or access private rented accommodation via SHA. The SHIP will also provide an opportunity for over 18 care leavers to move on from Supported Board and Lodgings (allowing providers to accommodate young care leavers)

- d) The 16+ Social Work Team has also been working with a private sector provider SAAIL (Supported Accommodation and Independent Living) that is registered with the West Midlands Consortium. SAAIL's model is shared housing for two young people with a staff member present at night and in the mornings. This offers an option for young people who do not want to live in a family setting such as SBL but are not yet ready for the Supported Housing Independence Project.

6.1.4 The above developments in accommodation for care leavers will provide an appropriate step-down from residential care for 16/17 year olds, increase the range of options for young people, enable successful transition to independent housing and enable Shropshire Council to meet its responsibility to provide 'staying put' arrangements for care leavers.

6.1.5 For 2012-13 Shropshire achieved 96.5% of 19 year old care leavers in suitable accommodation; it is regarded as suitable 'if it provides safe, secure and affordable provision for young people. It would generally include short-term accommodation designed to move young people on to stable long-term accommodation' (National Indicators handbook for local authorities).

6.1.6 Whilst ensuring we meet our statutory duties to young people in care and specially care leavers the developing range of options enables the local authority to use high cost specialist resources at best value and to support 16/17yrs olds to move through a semi-independent stage to independence at a reduced cost creating savings whilst delivering good quality needs led services to support care leaver through transition to adulthood.

6.2 Looked After Children – Education Achievement, Attendance and Health Outcomes

6.2.1 Shropshire Local Authority continues to have high aspirations and expectations of our looked after children and supports the view that it is essential that all of our children perform at the highest level that they are capable of, whether that be academically or in other aspects of their life.

6.2.3 The Education Achievement, Attendance and Health Outcomes annual report attached at Appendix C outlines the statistics and performance

for the Health and Education of Looked after Children and gives some case studies detail behind the individuals.

6.2.4 Broadly the outcomes for our Looked After Children are positive. Notable highlights from this report are:

- a) KS4 GCSE passes at A*-C including English and Maths. In Shropshire for 2012-13 the figure was 21.4%. The National average for Looked After Children achieving at this level is around 11%.
- b) At KS2, 16 out of 17 Looked After Children in the cohort are making expected or better than expected progress;
- c) Attendance. Shropshire Looked After Children achieved the best yet attendance figures with only 4.7% of the cohort missing more than 25 days education in the year. Attendance rates continue to improve year on year for LAC.
- d) Post 16yr destinations. Of the 18 Looked After Children in the cohort only 1 young person was classified as NEET at the time of the report (November 2013). That young person is now engaged in County Training.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information) Care Leavers Strategy 2013
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) Cllr Ann Hartley
Local Member All Members
Appendices Appendix A: Draft "My Independence Plan" booklet. Appendix B: The Transition Journey for Young People Leaving Care Appendix C - Educational Achievement, Attendance and Health outcomes of Shropshire's Looked After Children (LAC) in the Academic year 2012-13