

## **Summary Sheet**

### **Council Report**

Corporate Parenting Panel – 27 September 2016

### **Title**

Care Leavers Annual Report

### **Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

No

### **Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Mel Meggs, Deputy Director of Children and Young People's Services

### **Report Author(s)**

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### **Ward(s) Affected**

All

### **Summary**

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's aim is to ensure that all young people leaving care are supported through their transition into adulthood and to give care leavers the same level of care and support that other young people receive from their parents.

The Leaving Care Service assists Looked After young people through the process of Leaving Care and provides, support and financial assistance to Rotherham Care Leavers. The Service is made up of Personal Advisors (PA's) and Social Workers who work with young people to assess their needs and agree any support they may need through a Pathway Plan.

This paper sets out the support that Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council provides to young people leaving care, and how we have met our statutory duties.

### **Recommendations**

That the report is received and that Councillors are made aware of the support provided to Care Leavers from Rotherham.

### **List of Appendices Included**

Leaving Care Charter

**Background Papers**

None

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

No

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## **Title: Care Leavers Annual Report**

### **1. Recommendations**

That the report is received and that Councillors are made aware of the support provided to Care Leavers from Rotherham.

### **2. Background**

The Leaving Care Service assists, befriends and advises young people to make a successful transition from the local authority's care to independent living in the community.

Social Workers assess and draw up a Pathway Plan for young people in Care at age 16. The plan identifies the support what a young person will require to gain independence. A Personal Adviser takes full case responsibility when the young person leaves Care at age 18. The Pathway Plan sets out the support available for all aspects of their life, with a particular emphasis on securing settled accommodation and appropriate Education, Training and Employment (EET). The Plan is reviewed at a minimum every six months until the young person is 21, or later if they are completing an agreed course of education, training and employment when support can be extended up until they are 25.

### **3. Key Issues**

#### **3.1 Current Rotherham Provision**

Rotherham has two dedicated Leaving Care Teams and a Leaving Care Accommodation team which works with young people aged 16+. The teams are made up of qualified social workers, support workers and personal advisors, all experienced in working with and supporting young people. 225 young people are currently entitled to a Leaving Care Service from Rotherham.

#### **3.2 Assessment and Planning**

Care Leavers face a number of challenges as they transition to independence. Pathway Plans play a key role in preparing young people leaving care in making sure young people have the support and skills and are prepared to live independently.

16 and 17 year olds have an allocated social worker within the looked after service and are jointly allocated a personal advisor from Leaving Care. Qualified social workers undertake the assessment of each eligible and relevant child (those under 18years). Where young people have left care but are over 18, personal advisors within the Leaving care team, overseen by a qualified social worker, review the Pathway Plan.

Young people must be involved in the preparation and review of their plan and their views, wishes and feelings should be included and listened to throughout. The plan is reviewed with them on a regular basis (at least every 6 months or sooner if requested by the young person or their needs have changed). The Plan must detail how these needs will be met and who is responsible for what and by when and should address the following;

- Accommodation
- Practical life skills
- Education and training
- Employment
- Financial support
- Specific support needs e.g. Health and Family
- Contingency plans for support if independent living breaks down

### 3.3 Personal Advisors

Personal advisors work with young people to establish a positive working relationship and to effectively support the young person in achieving the targets in their Pathway Plan. Personal Advisors are also responsible for making sure that young people have had an appropriate financial assessment and that they are supported to access benefits if they are not in employment or are in education/training which precludes them from benefits.

### 3.4 Preparation for independence

The Leaving Care Service uses a resource called the Moving on Toolkit which is designed to support young people to develop their independent living skills. It is made up of fact sheets, conversation topics, quizzes and activities. It can be completed as a group, one to one with a foster carer or key worker, or independently by the young person.

The toolkit covers key areas such as safety, health and wellbeing, personal issues, education, employment and training, housing and budgeting. This toolkit allows a young person to demonstrate that they are ready for their own tenancy. It also provides evidence for the Moving on Panel, which young people must present at if they wish to access an RMBC tenancy.

### 3.5 Accommodation

98.4% of Rotherham Care Leavers are in suitable accommodation which is well above the national average (77.8%) and higher than our statistical neighbour average (74.2%). A Suitable Accommodation checklist has been devised to assist PA's when assessing whether accommodation for care leavers is of a suitable standard

Accommodation costs for those under 18 are met by the Local Authority. Young people in care are encouraged to remain in a regulated placement as long as possible. Personal Advisors work with the young person to ensure that their accommodation is suitable and safe to live in and Care Leavers are given priority

status on Rotherham's local housing register. When they are assessed as being ready for their own tenancy they will be supported to attend the Councils 'Moving On' panel which considers their application for housing and plans to make sure that appropriate support is in place to guide them through the bidding and allocation process. All young people accessing housing through this panel must agree to tenancy support for at least 3 months. Young people who progress to Higher Education are supported financially to ensure they are able to secure appropriate accommodation and living costs.

Young people who have been living in foster care and wish to remain beyond 18 years old can be supported under a Staying Put arrangement. Rotherham currently has 16 young people in Staying Put arrangements and a further 6 arrangements due to start within the next 3 months. Young people are able to maintain their Staying Put Arrangement so that they are able to return home during holidays and continue to be part of a family when they go to University. Below is an example of a young person who is being supported to attend University and continue within a Staying Put arrangement.

#### 'C'

'C' is 17 years old and due to start University in September in Leeds. 'C' and his siblings (one younger and one older) were placed together in a successful fostering arrangement where there are strong attachments to their carers and the boys are clearly part of the family. 'C's older brother at 19 remains in the home under a Staying Put arrangement. 'C' was worried about how he would manage financially at University and considering not going as was worried that he would also not be able to retain his placement with his foster carers post 18. A meeting was held with 'C' and his carers to discuss his and their anxieties and advice, support and information was provided to answer their concerns and questions. 'C' has now confirmed his place at University. The financial support available to him to ensure he is able to complete his studies without worrying has been set out in a clear plan. An arrangement has also been put in place to ensure he can return to his placement under a Staying Put arrangement during holidays.

#### 3.6 Leaving Care Accommodation Team

Rotherham currently has one specialist accommodation project at Hollowgate for young people operated by RMBC. Hollowgate consists of 10 self-contained flats. One of the flats is utilised as a resource area for group work and 1:1 work with young people. The accommodation is of a high standard and there have been significant improvements to the service offered to young people in the last 6 months. Young people housed at Hollowgate report that the service they are receiving is improved, supportive and appropriate

The Leaving care accommodation team provides support to the young residents around their tenancy and independent living skills. This team developed the local authorities 'moving on toolkit' which is referenced earlier and was recognised as an area of good practice by Ofsted in 2014.

The Leaving Care Accommodation Team also provides tenancy support to young people in their own accommodation and dispersed properties. In addition to the nine residents at Hollowgate, seven young people are receiving tenancy support services in the community, and two young people are placed in dispersed properties and have floating support in place. There are ongoing plans with housing to increase the numbers of dispersed properties available to care leavers.

Structured activities are in place at Hollowgate and open to all young people residing at Hollowgate and those receiving floating/tenancy support in the community. Examples of these activities include:

- Breakfast club 08.00-10.00 Wednesday mornings
- Cooking workshop 18.00-20.00 every Thursday
- Drop in sessions held monthly by Barnardo's & Know the Score (Substance Misuse Service)
- Monthly Residents meetings held at the beginning of every month
- Move on toolkit group workshops held every two weeks

The leaving care accommodation team work closely with care leavers who require additional support in the community. Below are two case examples of support offered to Care Leavers by the Accommodation Team;

#### **'D'**

'D' is aged 18 and was a late entry into care at the age of 17 as he was homeless and vulnerable after his relationship with his parents broke down. 'D' was placed in Hollowgate following a short period in a homeless provision and allocated a key worker. 'D's' support needs included substance misuse, self-harm, support with appropriate relationship and independence skills. A Support Plan was completed with 'D' and his Personal Advisor which included intensive work with his key worker. 'D' was supported to work with services such as 'Grow' around managing appropriate relationships. The key worker maintained good communication with Grow to ensure key work sessions and individual work complimented their work. 'D' was supported to attend CAMH's but this was declined.

The key worker and staff at the service worked intensively on reinforcing positive boundaries and routines. Individual work was completed to increase his independence skills using the Moving on Toolkit such as personal budgeting plans, cooking and introducing rotas to maintain his flat. 'D's support plan included accessing EET opportunities and he was encouraged and supported in this. Local training provider, CTS was identified to support him in this and he completed Functional Skills followed by a Health & Social Care qualification and a work programme with the Princes Trust. The service provided daily emotional support and this support contributed towards developing 'D's self-esteem and confidence.

'D' has now attended the Young Person's Move on Panel and is able to bid for his first property. He will continue to be supported throughout this whole process and will transfer to the Leaving Care Tenancy support service retaining continuity

with his current key worker. 'D' has now been successful in finding full-time employment. He is very involved in the service and regularly contribute towards service improvement ideas and has participated in interviewing permanent staff to join RMBC.

## 'E'

'E' is a 20 year old care leaver. In 2012, 'E' was convicted of a sexual offence against his younger sister and received a 12 month custodial sentence. A forensic psychological risk assessment was completed prior to his release identifying risks, and offering recommendations of how best to meet 'E's future needs and the the type of support required to give him the best opportunity to reach his potential and reduce potential future risks. 'E' was accommodated based on a combination of the recommendations from assessments and multi-agency CIN meetings and discussions. 'E's parents contributed to the decision making and felt they could not offer the level of supervision necessary to keep 'E' safe and prevent any future offending.

When 'E' was sentenced the Youth Offending Service identified potential placements / units specifically dealing with sexually harmful behaviour so that upon release 'E' could be placed in an environment best able to respond to his needs. 'E' also expressed a wish upon release to go to an environment that would allow him to engage in therapy to reduce his offending behaviour.

'E' was discharged from the identified provision in January 2015 and moved into a Dispersed property. 'E' was provided with floating support provided by the Leaving Care Accommodation team. With support, 'E' was able to secure employment as a drivers mate in July 2015. 'E' has utilised the support made available to him, maintained his tenancy well managing his finances and continued in employment. The risks identified have reduced significantly and he has been supported to take on the tenancy having built links locally and settled. 'E' regularly contributes and comments on how the plans and support are making a difference. He is an active participant within the process and he contributes effectively and is clear about where he wants to be and what he sees in his future.

### 3.7 Setting up home Allowance/ Leaving care grant

In Rotherham young people who have left care are entitled to a grant of £2000. This grant is used to purchase the essential items to furnish a home and give young people a start in their home. In practical terms this may mean that a small amount is accessed in the first instance when a young person moves into semi-independent or supported accommodation as some items and furnishings are provided. A larger amount would then be accessed when the young person is successful in securing their own tenancy. Spending from this grant is supervised to support the young person to budget to get all the essential items for their home. Personal advisors and accommodation support workers are vital to this as they often have well established contacts for affordable and suitable items.

### 3.8 Other needs

The young person's assessment and Pathway Plan may identify other financial needs. The leaving care team can provide support young people with assessed needs where appropriate. This might include;

- Travel
- Family contact
- Clothing
- Childcare costs
- Education support costs
- Work support costs
- Health costs
- Prom/ Graduation costs.
- Driving Lessons

### 3.9 Keeping in touch

Personal Advisors are responsible for keeping in touch with Care Leavers. If contact is lost with a care leaver the personal advisor will take reasonable steps to re-establish contact until contact is re-established. We retain responsibility for our young people wherever they live. This means that Personal Advisors will continue to support our young people if they move to another area. Contact is made with our young people at least once every 8 weeks; however this may be more or less frequent if identified and agreed in their pathway plan and will include visiting the young person in their accommodation.

### 3.10 Education, Training and Employment

This is a major focus for Personal Advisors and young people and 68% of Care Leavers in Rotherham are in education employment or training. Whilst there is obviously room to improve this is above statistical neighbours and the national average

Personal Advisors work closely with the Virtual School and the Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS) to ensure that young people have a clear plan, encouragement and support to access Education, Training and Employment. Young people under the age of 18 are required to have a PEP (Personal Education Plan) which is supported by Rotherham's Virtual School. Young people can be supported to access Employability group work sessions to provide additional support and guidance where needed.

In the last academic year we had a number of young people who achieved in their chosen courses of education and training and a number of young people who progressed on to Higher Education. Results for academic achievements for young people studying for GCSE's/A Levels in this academic year will be available in August 2016.

Rotherham currently has 8 Care Leavers at University. The table below highlights their achievements and progression. 4 young people are planning to start

University in the next academic year and two to resume their University studies. Also below are two examples of Care Leavers pursuing higher education;

	<b>Academic Year 2015/16</b>	<b>Year</b>
1	Research- Sport Science	<b>PHD</b>
2	Digital media production	<b>Year 3</b>
3	Economics	Year 2
4	Music Technology	Year 1
5	Aerospace Technology	Year 1
6	Social Work	Year 1
7	Law	Year 1
8	ACCA (Association of Chartered Certificated Accountants)	14-17
	<b>Due to start September 2016</b>	
1	Nursing	2016/17
2	Health & Social Care	2016/17
3	International business studies	Took a year out - Y1
4	TBA	Took a year out - Y1
5	Sports Science	2016/17 start
6	Digital Media	Masters

## **Examples**

### **'A'**

'A' was voluntarily accommodated in 2008, following a long period of intervention with the family on a child in need basis from the age of 2 years.

'A' spent periods of time with extended family members however, her placement with family broke down and she was in a Residential Care Home within the Local Authority and then supported by the Leaving Care Service in a semi-independent provision and assisted to develop her independence skills and secure her own tenancy in 2011 where she remains.

A's relationship with her birth mother and younger brother continued to be a stressor and a demand on her, at times visiting them in prison and supporting her mother within her own home on her release from Prison. Despite these pressures, 'A' successfully completed her further education plan of Level 3 Health and Social Care in July 2015 and was offered a University Place. 'A' made a decision to defer her university offer in September 2014 and her Personal Advisor supported her advising the options and support available to her and her entitlements, to enable her to make an informed decision. 'A' started a BA honours Degree in Social Work at Sheffield Hallam University in September

2015 – she has received a 1st for her first year and is planning her second year attendance and placement.

‘A’ has shown resilience and determination to further her aspirations and is doing extremely well.

## ‘B’

‘B’ came into care initially under Section 20 at the age of 10 years due to his mother’s ill health and hospitalisation. ‘B’ experienced the death of both his birth parents during his childhood years whilst a looked after child. Care Proceedings were initiated. At the time of becoming Looked After, no family members came forward to be assessed as carers, however sometime later his aunt and uncle put themselves forward as prospective carers; ‘B’ along with his siblings moved into their home and they were approved as foster carers. This placement subsequently broke down and ‘B’ was placed within an alternative foster placement; however, this was one of 8 placements for ‘B’ until he moved to Leaving Care Semi-Independent provision at the age of 17 years and progressed to live in his own independent tenancy within one year.

‘B’ expressed within his Pathway Planning an aspirations around progressing his interest in Music and this has been a focus of his plan; not only could ‘B’ play instruments he completed his Diploma in Performing Arts at Rotherham College and was a key member of the LAC Council, Youth Cabinet and Drama Projects. ‘B’ has progressed to Higher Education and attends Rotherham College of Arts & Technology campus (University of Hull) to study BA Honours Degree in Music Technology and has aspirations to become self-employed and owning his own music studio and be a producer, and is working towards this with support alongside his studies. He has achieved a 1<sup>st</sup> in his first year and is looking forward to resuming his studies in September.

‘B’ is a motivated, mature and articulate young man who is able to manage his finances well utilising the support provided to him.

### 3.11 Care Leaver Engagement and Local Offer

There has been consultation with young people through an engagement day and further days are planned. A Care Leavers Forum has been established to enable consultation around matters which impact on young people in and leaving care and to involve young people in the shaping of the Leaving Care Service. The Forum has been consulted on the Care Leavers Charter which is attached as an appendix for consideration and approval.

The Care Leavers forum are keen to be involved in the development of the service making useful suggestions towards the development of the service and the use of Chatham Villas in the second phase. The group identified that they have not previously felt involved. This group of care leavers agree with the principles of the Care Leavers Charter and would like the local authority to

commit to this. The group have offered good ideas and insights into the service giving a balanced view. Young people have suggested different ways to demonstrate the local authority's commitment such as demonstrating that they are providing a service to young people in line with what a reasonable parent would provide. This includes young people being able to "borrow" money for a special night out / if they are short as they might from a parent if they were living at home. One young person stated there should be "less corporate and more parenting" a view echoed by other young people within the group.

There has been a Review of the Leaving Care Teams and Leaving Care Accommodation Team and how we deliver services to Care Leavers in Rotherham and we are updating Policies/Procedures and Joint Protocols for Care Leavers.

A Leaving Care Guide and Leaving Care entitlement booklet is being developed which will set out clearly Care Leavers entitlements and the support they will receive from the Local Authority – this will be done in consultation with young people and the Corporate Parenting Board. This will be ready for consultation by the second week of September and will reflect the Bill and the new Care Leavers Strategy.

Leaving Care are planning an event for all Young people who are thinking about applying to University in August 2016. The event will be delivered in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University and young people will be provided with Information packs about going to University to complete a degree qualification and information to enable young people to be prepared for University and answer any questions or worries they may have including finances.

Planning is underway for National Care Leavers week in October (22<sup>ND</sup> – 30<sup>TH</sup>) The Theme for 2016 is "Care to Where?" and the week is an opportunity to highlight the needs of Care Leavers and celebrating Care Leavers achievements. The achievements of our young people are important, academic and otherwise and the Leaving Care Team will be planning an event to celebrate our young people's achievements in October during Care Leavers week as well as other events.

### 3.12 Accommodation for Leaving Care Services

The Leaving Care Service has now relocated to Chatham Villas. This is the new dedicated support 'hub' for care leavers, and is somewhere that young people can come to when in need or to 'drop in' to have contact with staff. Young people leaving care do not always have positive links with their birth family or previous carers so it is vital that we can create a homely environment where they feel comfortable to drop by and feel at home. The 'Hub' is in response to young people's wishes that they would like a building that is for them dedicated to them. Care Leavers have previously spoken about not feeling that they had a place that was theirs or that they could just drop in to see staff or where they felt comfortable.

Personal Advisors and the Leaving Care Team are available on site during the week at Chatham Villas and offer a duty, drop-in and a 1:1 service.

The second phase of the hub is in development with an expected completion date of mid-October 2016 and the plan is for a launch to take place during Care Leavers week. The Hub will offer a range of facilities including a breakfast club, drop in space, group work targeted around themes relevant to young people such as health, education and employability; a learning space, relaxation/recreation area and access to life-skills areas including a kitchen and laundry. Workshops are being carried out with young people to co-design the service.

### 3.13 Other Opportunities

3 young people recently participated in an activity based week away offering them the opportunity to explore new environments and experiences. There are plans to organise future events such as activity days and residential weeks where young people can meet each other and take part in activities together.

### 3.14 Health

The Specialist Looked after children's nursing team provides support to young people leaving care. Young people leaving care are able to access a Health Assessment if required from this team or can be supported to access their GP and universal health services.

Personal Advisors also support young people to access sexual health, substance misuse, mental health services and clinics and drop in sessions where required. The number of Looked After young people aged 16 & 17 years attending their review health assessment is currently 84%.

A Health Passport has been developed for all young people, which contains all their basic health details. However, this still requires further active promotion and is not fully embedded.

### 3.15 Policies and Procedures

It is important for young people and those working with them that are clearly written and transparent policies and information about their entitlements in place including the following;

- Provision for the allocation of leaving care support to young people who are eligible, relevant or former relevant children
- The allocation of leaving care Personal Advisors
- Consulting with young people and how their views contribute to developing/improving leaving care services
- The review of Pathway Plans
- Financial Policy
- Staying Put Policy

- Joint Housing Protocol

The following Care Leaving Policies and Procedures are in the process of being updated/developed;

- Finances
- Staying Put
- Care Leavers Charter
- Leaving Care Guide
- Rights and Entitlement Booklet
- Joint Housing Protocol

#### **4. Options considered and recommended proposal**

None

#### **5. Consultation**

RMBC Directorate Leadership Team

#### **6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

Not applicable

#### **7. Financial and Procurement Implications**

Finance for Care Leavers is detailed within the councils leaving care financial policy. This guidance was updated in April 2015 and requires updating in particular to take into consideration and reflect changes to student finance for young people attending university, supporting young people with driving lessons and incentives.

#### **8. Legal Implications**

RMBC must ensure that they are meeting their legal requirements under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

#### **9. Human Resources Implications**

Arrangements to recruit to permanent positions within the structure which are currently covered by agency staff are underway.

#### **10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

The Leaving Care Service provides advice, guidance and support directly to young people leaving care.

## **11 Equalities and Human Rights Implications**

Young people leaving care are one of the most vulnerable groups in our society who have diverse needs which are based on background, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and any disability they may have. Those working with these young people, or advocating on their behalf, are expected to support pro-actively their human rights, including their right to equal opportunities, through anti-discriminatory practice.

Research into outcomes for care leavers has identified ;

- 20 per cent of young homeless people were previously in care;
- 24 per cent of the adult prison population have been in care;
- 70 per cent of sex workers have been in care;
- Care leavers are roughly twice as likely not to be in education training or employment at 19 than the rest of the population; and
- Only six per cent of care leavers are in higher education at 19, compared to roughly 30 per cent of young people nationally.

Survival of the Fittest – Improving Outcomes for Care Leavers, Centre for Social Justice (2014))

## **12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates**

In order for young people leaving care to be supported effectively partners and other directorates are required to provide services and ensure that young people leaving care are supported by their corporate parent. This is relevant to the council as a whole.

Corporate Parents are responsible for ensuring the rights of the children and young people in their care are respected. They should do this by:

- considering their wellbeing
- assessing their needs
- promoting their best interests
- making sure their voices and opinions are heard
- providing opportunities for them
- providing advice and assistance when they're needed
- making sure services are easy to access for them.

## **13. Risks and Mitigation**

Service for Care Leavers is part of the Ofsted Inspection Framework and as such carries a separate judgement; in 2014 the Leaving Care Service was graded as

inadequate. There is a focus on improvement and development of the service to ensure that progress is made and young people's outcomes are improved.

Areas for improvement/development include;

- Limited choice of appropriate accommodation particularly for those care leavers with complex needs.
- The potential impact of changes in financial support to young people in further education on care leavers in further education.
- The numbers of Care Leavers accessing Apprenticeship opportunities.
- EET opportunities for Care Leavers
- The development of group work and community based activities.
- Provision of information to young people about Rotherham's offer to young people.
- Considerations of the implications of the Social Work Bill for all Care Leavers to have access to a Personal Adviser up to age 25

#### **14. Accountable Officer(s)**

Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services:- Named officer

Director of Legal Services:- Named officer

Head of Procurement (if appropriate):-

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<http://moderngov.rotherham.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?Categories>