

## Summary Sheet

### Council Report

**Title:** The Mentoring Scheme for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

("The Fairy Godparent Scheme" as set out in the LAC and Care Leaver's Strategy 2017-20)

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?** No

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report:** Ian Thomas, Strategic Director CYPS

**Report Author(s):** Ian Walker, Head of Service, Looked After Children

**Ward(s) Affected:** All

### Summary

Despite current good performance in respect of Looked After young people being in Education, Training or Employment there remains a significant number who, for a variety of reasons, remain Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or who are in a work or training placement that may not be their preferred option or the limit of their aspirations.

As result of this supporting more of our young people into EET is an objective set down in the LAC and Care Leavers Strategy 2017-20.

By offering them the support of a Mentor who will bring with them a high degree of commitment and resilience as well as expertise, experience and local connections, it is proposed that more of these young people will be supported and encouraged to access the EET environment and/or move to a work/training placement more suited to their skills and ambitions.

## **Recommendations**

It is proposed that Rotherham MBC introduce a mentoring programme and offer a mentor for all looked after young people over the age of 16 and care leavers up to the age of 21 who express an interest. The young people who will be offered a mentor will be:-

- Those who are currently NEET and available for work.
- Those members of the Year 11 cohort who don't plan to be access Further Education after July 2017 and would benefit from the support and advice of a mentor to guide them through the transition to the world of training, apprenticeships and employment.
- Young people who may be in EET but who would benefit from some additional support to attain their career ambitions.

It is further proposed that a pool of mentors is recruited from the senior management level (Director/Assistant Director) and elected members across RMBC and that these mentors will receive formal induction and ongoing support in the role.

**List of Appendices Included:** The Mentor Handbook

**Background Papers:** None

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel:** No

**Council Approval Required:** Yes given we are looking to the whole of the senior management team across the Council and Elected members to become part of the Mentoring programme.

**Exempt from the Press and Public:** No

## **Title: The Mentoring Scheme for Looked After Children and Care Leavers**

### **1. Recommendations**

- 1.1** It is proposed that Rotherham MBC introduce a mentoring programme and offer a mentor for all looked after young people over the age of 16 and care leavers up to the age of 21 who express an interest. The young people who will be offered a mentor will be those who are currently NEET and available for work and those members of the Year 11 cohort who don't plan to be access Further Education after July 2017 and would benefit from the support and advice of a mentor to guide them through the transition to the world of training, apprenticeships and employment. In addition it will be offered to those young people who are in EET but who would benefit from some additional support to attain their career ambitions.
- 1.2** It is further proposed that a pool of mentors are recruited from the senior management level (Director and Assistant Director level) and elected members across RMBC and that these mentors will receive formal induction and ongoing support in the role.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1** The current performance in respect of Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) is comparatively positive with approximately 67% of the cohort being EET as compared to the national average of 48%. Taking into account those young people who are not available for work due to physical or mental health issues, pregnancy or parenting responsibilities or being in custody there remains a cohort of c. 34-40 young people who remain NEET and who are at risk of being excluded from the working environment for much of their adult lives. In addition there are currently 20 Year 11 young people who leave school in the summer and who appear to have no confirmed EET plan in place. There is another cohort of young people who are in EET but who would benefit from some additional support to enable them to achieve their career ambitions.
- 2.2** These young people will already have an allocated social worker in the LAC Teams and/or a Personal Adviser (P.A.) allocated from the Leaving Care Team. However, the relationship with these professionals can be quite different to that of a mentor as social workers especially may have had to re-enforce boundaries and levels of expected behaviours with the young person. There may also be some issues with previous placement moves and a poor relationship with the young person's birth family. The mentor will not have any of these legacy issues to consider and therefore will be able to focus on the pathway to employment process in a very much more unconditionally supportive manner. Further to this Mentors will be recruited with a range of experience and expertise in order to give young people the most rounded levels of support and guidance.

### **3. Key Issues**

- 3.1** A Mentor can be defined as being, “A more experienced individual willing to share knowledge with someone less experienced in a relationship of mutual trust.” (Clutterbuck).
- 3.2** A Mentor is an expert in a particular field with a wider range and wealth of experience. They will share this experience and give advice and guidance as part of a development path which will open doors and widen the Mentee’s networking systems – in this case in respect of supporting progress to EET opportunities. Ordinarily this will be a longer-term relationship that will see the Mentee through many stages in their ‘journey’ as opposed to being of a time bound defined duration focussing on short-term needs. There will be three main people involved in the process; the young person (Mentee), the Mentor and the Mentee’s key adult (social worker or personal adviser).
- 3.3** The benefits to the Mentee will include:
- An increased confidence and self-awareness, which will help them to build their skills, knowledge and outcomes.
  - Increased knowledge, technical skills and/or improving aspects of behaviour that could help them with their training and future work.
  - Better management of their time and actions to help achieve their goals.
  - Networking opportunities and the chance to utilise the connections and influence of the Mentor to receive formal introductions to training or employment prospects.
  - Specific advice and guidance and ‘tuition’ in respect of certain aspects of the employment process such as the writing of a C.V., interview techniques and managing the working environment.
- 3.4** The benefits to the mentor include:
- The chance to improve their own personal learning.
  - The chance to practice and develop interpersonal skills which can lead to enhancing leadership skills.
  - The enjoyment and satisfaction of sharing their knowledge, skills and expertise and helping someone to make progress in their lives.
  - Organisational learning.
  - Expanding their horizons and stepping out of their ‘comfort zone’.
- 3.5** The aim will be to recruit and induct a pool of Mentors from across the Council and at the same time identify a number of Mentees who would benefit from the scheme and encourage them to participate. As part of the induction programme the Mentees and the Mentors will be asked to provide some information about their hobbies, interests and experiences so that they can be best matched. A further matching consideration may be between the Mentor’s area of work and the expressed employment interests of the Mentee although this is not absolutely essential as it is more the connections and support provided that would be of more value to the young person. This matching process will be modelled on the good

practice currently being implemented in respect of the Independent Visitor programme.

**3.6** A small panel of managers within the LAC Service and Leaving Care Service will then review the respective pen pictures to ensure, as far as possible, that a good match is made. Once matching has taken place information will be provided to both parties and the Mentor will then contact the Mentee to arrange the first meeting. Should the match be deemed to be inappropriate or unworkable by either party then it can be ended but only following a discussion with the social worker or PA and their line manager. It will be emphasised to the prospective Mentors in the induction programme that many of these young people will have already experienced a series of rejections and losses throughout their childhood and time in care and so if they cannot give this process their absolute commitment then this role may not be right for them at this time. If the Mentee/Mentor relationship does break down then the matching process can be revisited and the young person could be matched with a different mentor.

**3.7** The mentoring process will comprise of regular meetings agreed by the Mentee and the Mentor which will probably last approximately an hour and take place on approximately a 3-4 weekly basis. For safeguarding reasons these meeting would be best to take place in a public space such as the Riverside café or similar venues. During the first meeting, a joint agreement will be made about what the relationship will involve. This will include the following:

- What each party hopes to achieve from the meetings i.e. the expected outcomes
- How often they will meet, the length of time and where they will meet
- A review date to check progress and the anticipated end date.

The length of the mentoring relationship will vary for each person and will depend on how long it may take to achieve the agreed objectives but mentoring relationships usually last between 6 and 9 months. Both parties will be expected to maintain confidentiality of discussions during the mentoring relationship unless the young person discloses information of a safeguarding nature. The Mentor will be expected to complete a recording form with the Mentee, during, and at the end of the programme to check agreed outcomes have been achieved. There will also be a formal review of the scheme at 3 and 6 months after the initial round of matching has taken place which will afford the young people the opportunity to express how useful the mentoring programme has been and if it could be improved to meet the needs of everyone taking part in the future. If the programme is deemed to be a success then it is planned that it will take place on an annual cycle between June and the following Spring.

**3.8** It may be that there is a mis-match between the numbers of Mentors and Mentees in which case a stand-by list will be maintained by the Leaving Care Team until a suitable match is identified.

**3.9** In more specific terms the role of the Mentor will be to:-

- To act as a sounding board by giving the young person a chance to develop new ideas and approaches in a safe environment.
- To support the development of self-confidence.
- To explore reality, rather than offer advice
- To explore options, rather than offer solutions.
- To help the young person structure ideas on how to define, analyse and tackle issues and opportunities.
- Challenge assumptions and offer a wider perspective on issues.
- Signpost and develop connections to gain knowledge and new experiences.

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

**4.1** This proposal arises from a commitment made in the LAC and Care Leavers Strategy 2017-20 that was endorsed by the Corporate Parenting Panel on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017. As a result there are no alternative options being considered.

#### **5. Consultation**

**5.1** The Care Leavers Council have been consulted regarding this proposal and although it was generally thought to be a good idea the numbers of young people who would request a mentor were felt to be relatively small in the first instance.

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

**6.1** It is planned that Mentors will be identified and inducted into the role and be ready to offer support to young people by July 2017. Ian Walker, Head of Service, will be the accountable person for this scheme.

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

**7.1** There are no significant financial implications arising from this report. The only cost implication will be where mentors have to undergo a full Advanced Disclosure Check prior to working with the young person in order to mitigate safeguarding risk. These costs will be contained within existing budget provision.

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

**8.1** There are no legal implications arising from this proposal other than the need for all mentors to have an Advanced Disclosure Check in place. Local Authorities have broad duties to encourage, enable and assist young people in their area to participate in education or training and the

recommendations in this report will contribute to the Council complying with those duties.

## **9. Human Resources Implications**

- 9.1** Mentors may have to negotiate with their line manager to be given time from their mainstream duties to undertake the mentoring role within working hours in order to facilitate contact with the mentee. I would recommend that mentors elicit the support of their line manager before signing up to the programme so as to best ensure that they can sustain the necessary commitment to the role and to the young person.

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

- 10.1** This Scheme will be designed to support more young people into work and training opportunities and thus improve their outcomes and their prospects as adults.

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

- 11.1** By providing LAC and Care leavers with an additional level of support it is intended that their Human Rights will be protected and the disadvantage they experience as children in care will be reduced.

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

- 12.1** The implication for Other Directorates and Elected Members is that those who are matched as Mentors will be supported and encouraged to provide the mentoring role at times and venues that are most convenient to the young person. As such it may require Mentors to be allowed some small amounts of time out from their substantive roles.

## **13. Risks and Mitigation**

- 13.1** There is a risk that few/no young people will take up this offer but this will be mitigated by the Leaving Care Team working pro-actively to engage young people in this process.
- 13.2** There is also a small safeguarding risk so all mentors will have to undergo a full Advanced Disclosure Check prior to working with the young person.

## **14. Accountable Officer(s) Ian Walker, Head of Service**

Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services: - Mick Wildman

Director of Legal Services: - Neil Concannon

Head of Procurement (if appropriate):- N/a

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