

Summary Sheet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting Directorate Leadership Team

Report Title Mentoring Scheme for Care Leavers

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

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report Ian Thomas

Report Author(s)

Ian Walker – Head of Service
Sharon Sandell – Service Manager – Leaving Care

Ward(s) Affected All

Summary The Leaving Care Service is aiming to develop a scheme whereby the most disengaged and vulnerable looked after young people and care leavers are provided bespoke one to one support from a senior manager or elected member in the Council to assist them in accessing employment, education and training opportunities.

Recommendations

That DLT notes the contents of this report and supports the proposal that senior managers and elected members across the Local Authority are encouraged to become involved in supporting a specific young person who has signed up to the scheme.

List of Appendices Included None

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

Mentoring Scheme for Care Leavers

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That DLT notes the contents of this report and supports the proposal that senior managers and elected members across the Local Authority are encouraged to become involved in supporting a specific young person who has signed up to the scheme.

2. Background

- 2.1 Care Leavers often struggle to access and maintain employment opportunities more than their peers. This is for a range of reasons related to pre care, in care and leaving care experiences. These can include poor self-esteem, lack of confidence, not knowing what they want to do and not being able to maintain commitment. For some there are worries that, no matter what they do, something bad will happen and that they will fail as a result. This manifests itself in ways that see some care leavers scared to even try.
- 2.2 Those who work with care leavers know that a strong, supportive focussed relationship with one person can make a real difference to young people. This person can be the one that shows belief while also keeping the young person focussed. This relationship is about recognising the care leaver as a young person with value and untapped talents and yet unrecognised ambition and possibility.
- 2.3 One mechanism for providing this relationship is through a 'Mentor' which can be defined as a 'trusted and experienced advisor.' Rotherham is seeking to use this approach as a further tool to support young people access and maintain Employment Education and Training (EET) opportunities.
- 2.4 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). 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).
- 2.5 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.

2.6 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. Current position

- 3.1 Rotherham currently has 253 young people who are aged between 16 to 25. Of these there are 60% of young people aged 18 – 21 and who are not actively engaged in some kind of purposeful activity. There are barriers for half of these young people that is preventing them from accessing EET opportunities such as mental health, custody, illness and parenthood. However there remain approximately 30 young people for whom there are no significant barriers to access other than their own disengagement.
- 3.2 Rotherham has recently established an EET Action Group. This is chaired by the Deputy Head of the Virtual School. It is an advisory panel attended by Leaving Care, Early Help, SEND, Virtual School, HR apprenticeship/ work experience lead and Youth Enterprise. There is also virtual representation from housing and HR link to RIDO (Rotherham Investment and Development Office) which works with local businesses to increase economic activity within the borough. The purpose of these meetings is to enable social workers and personal advisors to problem solve and source opportunities for young people to access EET opportunities.
- 3.3 Workers are invited to attend and talk about their young people and the Action Group panel will offer ideas and suggestions to enable the young person to access to a range of opportunities that exist within the local authority or within partner agencies. In addition care leavers can also access support from an EET worker through the Early Help service.
- 3.4 The role of both of these posts to the young person are clear and while both hold relationships with the young people the value of the mentor is one where the mentor sits apart from the existing Leaving Care offer. The Mentor will present solely for the young person rather than being part of any agency remit and will enable the young person to learn in a more supportive and less directive manner.

- 3.5 The mentor will be able to support the young person as they complete work experience in the council. The mentor could also be available to young people who the service believe would benefit from work experience and would benefit from an additional voice who is not part of the leaving care bubble, but who is able to offer time and space as a person unconnected to their story and all the “baggage” this can create.
- 3.8 It is expected the mentor would provide at least 90 minutes per month for their matched care leaver. It is also expected that the commitment would be for at least 6 months but no longer than 18 months. As a result there will be the expectation that Mentors will be allowed some limited time out from their working commitments to fulfil this obligation. In addition the following potential issues have been identified with the proposed scheme:-
- All prospective Mentors will have to undergo a full day’s training in respect of the proposed scheme. This will include basic safeguarding awareness, professional boundaries, the role of the Mentor, relationship building, confidentiality and problem solving. This training is likely to take the prospective Mentor out of their work base for a full day and the agreement of respective line managers will have to be secured before any person signs up to the scheme.
 - Given that these young people are the most disenfranchised of the LAC and Care Leaver population getting them to engage with the scheme may be difficult and it may be that many Mentors will be left without a Mentee to support even after their training.
 - Mentors and Mentees will be carefully matched according to age, gender, interests and the expressed preferences of the young person. Despite this relationships may still not develop and break down so that a new Mentor may need to be allocated.
 - The Leaving Care Service will provide a formal support mechanism for Mentors to access as and when they face any particular issues.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 4.1 The Mentor scheme will include an invite to an information session on 9th November with a view to the formal training being offered to interested candidates on 30th November.
- 4.2 If, at the end of the day’s training, managers wish to progress they will be asked to complete a small form and provide a description of themselves as well as a pen picture including experience, interests and areas of expertise. This is to support the matching process with young people
- 4.3 The EET Group will identify young people who it is felt would benefit from a mentor and will be part of the process of matching although the ultimate decision will be made by the young person themselves
- 4.4 Subject to matching the Mentor and Mentee with meet at a time and venue suitable for both and together will decide the focus for the relationship. It is likely that this process will involve some financial cost eg coffees/light refreshments and this should be reclaimed from the Leaving Care Team budget.

- 4.5 At quarterly intervals group supervision will be offered to mentors who have been matched. This would be to share stories, reflect and learn together. It will also support the mentors in managing what can be both an incredibly rewarding experience but also quite frustrating and emotionally challenging.
- 4.6 On matching mentor to mentee the mentor will be given emergency contact details should any issues arise during conversations. It is expected these numbers would be in the first instance the young person's PA or duty at the Leaving Care Service so the service can support the young person. The Service Manager for Leaving Care would also be available to offer additional advice or guidance as and when required.
- 4.7 The purpose of the mentor is 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.
 - Build a trusting relationship with a young person
 - Be a 'port in a storm' for the young person
 - Be someone who understands the lived experience of our young people but who can keep the young person focussed on what they need to do
 - Have the time to be consistent, committed and at times challenged and frustrated
 - Enjoy an experience where the rewards and satisfaction are immeasurable.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Care leavers have been consulted in the formulation of this proposed scheme and whilst they have acknowledged the potential benefits their future level of engagement remains uncertain at this point in time.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 6.1 The first matching meetings to take place in January/February 2018 with a view to the scheme going 'live' in March 2018.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct legal implications from the recommendation in this report.

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. It is recommended 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.
- 9.2** Other than this there are no Human Resources implications arising from this report.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1** The opportunity is to further support Rotherham Care Leavers access opportunities available in the council or in local businesses. At present it is difficult to gauge the likely numbers of young people who will 'sign up' to the scheme.

11 Equalities and Human Rights Implications

- 11.1** None noted

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

- 12.1** The offer to become mentors is council wide and the preference would be to support senior managers to apply who are not necessarily associated with Children's Services
- 12.2** 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 for those Mentors allocated to a Mentee under the age of 18 prior to working with that young person.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Ian Walker as Head of Service for LAC and Leaving Care

Approvals Obtained from:-

	Named Officer	Date
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services	Mick Wildman	26/10/17
Assistant Director of Legal Services	Neil Concannon	26/10/17
Head of Procurement (if appropriate)		
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)	Theresa Caswell	26/10/17

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Appendices

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