

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

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| 1. | Meeting: | Corporate Parenting Panel |
| 2. | Date: | 21 st October, 2014 |
| 3. | Title: | Looked After Children Strategy Progress Report September 2014 |
| 4. | Directorate: | Children and Young People's Services |

5. Summary

This report provides a progress report on actions taken to implement the Looked After Children Strategy.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting :

6.1 Note the progress made in implementing actions detailed in the Looked After Children Strategy

7. Proposals and Details

7.1 Introduction

The Looked After Children Strategy was drafted in January 2014 and has been considered and approved previously at Corporate Parenting Panel and at the Improving Lives Committee. The strategy document has since been amended and updated slightly and is attached for information at Appendix 1.

7.2 Strategic Priority Objectives

The strategy identifies five Priority Objectives as follows:

Priority Objective 1:

To improve the degree and timeliness of placement stability and permanence and ensure children are able to enjoy continuity of relationships.

Priority Objective 2:

To improve the emotional wellbeing and physical health of looked after children.

Priority Objective 3:

To improve educational progress and attainment and narrow the gap between attainment of looked after children and their non-looked after peers.

Priority Objective 4:

To improve the support for and opportunities open to care leavers sufficiently to increase the number and proportion of them who are in employment, education or training (EET)

Priority Objective 5:

To listen to children and young people so as to ensure that their views influence their own plans, as well as wider service delivery and development.

7.3 Progress made Against Actions in the Strategy

For each priority objective the strategy identified a number of actions required to get the service from 'where we are now to where we want to be'. The following section will list those actions and detail progress made on implementing them.

7.3.1 Priority Objective 1:

To improve the degree and timeliness of placement stability and permanence and ensure children are able to enjoy continuity of relationships.

Action

- Development of a new Sufficiency Strategy to improve the number and range of placement options for looked after children and young people.

Progress

- **Significant progress had been made in this area. The Sufficiency Strategy has been developed and good progress has been made in implementing it. Higher numbers of foster carers and adopters have been approved, more children are fostered locally and in-house, new plans have been made to provide more long term residential provision in borough at Silverwood, new schemes such as Fostering Plus and Fostering to Adopt have been established, Staying Put arrangements have more than doubled in number, and timeliness of adoptions is improving considerably.**

Action

- Development of roadshow workshops on placement stability for staff. The workshops will be delivered to children's social workers and staff in family placement and residential services over the early months of 2014. The workshops focus on good practice in achieving placement stability and are informed by theory and research findings.

Progress

- **Completed**

Action

- Restructuring the model of service delivery for care leavers and for looked after children aged 16 and 17 to ensure that organisational structures promote continuity of relationships. The current LAC service for 16 and 17 year olds and the leaving care service are provided by Action for Children. The plan is for the service to come back in house.

Progress

- **Completed**

7.3.2 Priority Objective 2

To improve the emotional wellbeing and physical health of looked after children.

Action

- We will systematically use the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire as a means to measure children and young people's emotional wellbeing on entry to care and periodically to measure progress.

Progress

- **The system has been amended so that initial S & D Questionnaires are completed 3 months after entry to care and then follows up are annually after this. The LAACTST staff have been analysing aggregate results and outcomes**

Action

- We will use collated results for the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire to inform our commissioning and delivery of therapeutic services.

Progress

- **This work is being undertaken now by our Clinical Psychologist LAACTST manager and will inform commissioning practice.**

Action

- Commissioners will work with the local CAMHS to ensure there is provision of sufficient services to meet the needs of our looked after children population.

Progress

- **Commissioners and operational managers have been working with the Clinical Commissioning Group to develop a CAMHS strategy.**

Action

- The Looked After and Adopted Children's Support and Therapeutic Team(LAACST) will support the new Fostering Plus foster care placements to ensure placements for adolescents and children with complex needs benefit from therapeutic input. We need to maintain and improve on this.

Progress

- **The LAACTST have supported the development of the scheme. The first carer was approved in September with two more projected for October.**

Action

- Managers and commissioners will work with CAMHS, the Looked After and Adopted Children's Therapeutic Support Team and other identified services to develop therapeutic support services for young people who have been sexually exploited.

Progress

- **Additional funds have been approved by the Council for the provision of additional therapeutic service to support young people who have suffered sexual exploitation.**

Action

- Joint work will take place between social care and the Looked After Children's Nurse and other health service professionals to improve timeliness of initial health assessments

Progress

- **Further action and progress is needed in this area**

7.3.3 Priority Objective 3:

To improve educational progress and attainment and narrow the gap between attainment of looked after children and their non-looked after peers.

Action

- Our Virtual School Head Teacher is now deployed full time in this role and can from now on focus exclusively on it.

Progress

- **The new Virtual School Head does now have other responsibilities. However the post holder is in a senior position in the authority with sufficient leverage to push through change and development.**

Action

- Revising Personal Education Plan templates to ensure the document more requires clear details about educational progress and attainment.

Progress

- **Templates have been amended.**

Action

- Establishing a new procedure for the completion of Personal Education Plans which involves the Designated Teacher in the school taking the lead role.

Progress

- **A new process has been established which requires Personal Education Plans to be reviewed and revised on a termly basis. Progress monitoring returns and implementation of the plans will be linked to the allocation of the Pupil Premium.**

Action

- Establishing a new joint education and social care panel, chaired by the Virtual School Head Teacher, to address individual admissions/exclusion cases. Panel to meet monthly and include Virtual School Head Teacher, Service Manager looked after Children, Get Real Team Manager and Admissions Officer/Manager.

Progress

- **A new Raising Attainment Group has been established which meets monthly and is chaired by the Virtual School Head.**

Action

- Work towards extending the remit of the Virtual School so that it spans age 0 to 25.

Progress

- **The Virtual School is currently moving from a compulsory school age model to a 0 to 18 model and will look to develop onwards from there.**

7.3.4 Priority Objective 4:

To improve the support for and opportunities open to care leavers sufficiently to increase the number and proportion of them who are in employment, education or training (EET)

Action

- The LAC service for young people aged 16 and 17 and the leaving care service is being transferred on April 1st 2014 to become a service run in-house directly by the local authority again. The new model of service proposed will enable young people to maintain their existing social worker up to age 18, rather than having to change social worker at age 16 in the current service, and to retain the same personal advisor from age 16 to 25 rather than having one before age 18 and a different one beyond 18.

Progress

- **Completed**

Action

- We will develop our ability to enable young people in foster care to stay living with their foster carers through enhancement of a range of 'Staying Put' and supported lodgings arrangements.

Progress

- **The Supported Lodgings/Staying Put Coordinator has been re-located into the Fostering Service and Supported Lodgings/Staying Put arrangements have increased from 5 in January to 13 as at September 2014.**

Action

- We will look to work with voluntary organisations to enable young people to take advantage of opportunities to volunteer that will develop their confidence, skills, experiences and employability.

Progress

- **Work to be developed.**

Priority Objective 5:

To listen to children and young people so as to ensure that their views influence their own plans, as well as wider service delivery and development.

Action

- Development and support of the LAC Council so that it is as representative as possible of looked after children and takes a key lead role steering and championing looked after children's involvement and influence on service development and service delivery.

Progress

- **The LAC Council has met with members and officers throughout the year. It has worked as a forum for discussing service developments and consulting with young people. The Council has undertaken some of its own consultation work and presented it to the Local Authority.**
- **The LAC Council members were supported by the Local Authority to undertake an overseas trip to Portugal, having worked on the planning and organising of the trip themselves as a group.**
- **Efforts will be made to support the Council to have members involved that are more representative of the whole looked after children population.**

Action

- Regular collation and review of consultation papers completed by children and young people for their statutory looked after children review and the review of the foster carers.

Progress

- **A management exercise collating children and young people's review consultation documents over a 3 month period was undertaken and analysed. There were many positive findings from undertaking the work about how children and young people experience being in care. The same exercise will be undertaken at different points throughout the year.**

Action

- Annual survey of looked after children covering same issues as those covered by the national annual survey undertaken by the Children's Commissioner, so as to allow for comparison with what young people across the country are saying about being in care.

Progress

- **Decision made to wait for annual Children's Commissioner Survey and promote and encourage participation in that by Rotherham looked after children.**

Action

- On-going involvement of young people in staff recruitment, and staff and foster carer training.

Progress

- **Young people are involved in training of foster carers and have been involved in staff recruitment.**

Action

- On-going training for staff and carers on listening and engaging with children and young people.

Progress

- **Ongoing**

Action

- Regular meetings between the Elected Members on the Corporate Parenting Panel and the LAC Council.

Progress

- **The LAC Council have met with Corporate Parenting Panel members and presented a powerpoint presentation of their overseas trip.**

Action

- Supporting the LAC Council to review the extent to which the local authority and partner agencies are delivering on promises made in the Pledge to Looked after Children.

Progress

- **The recent work undertaken by the LAC Council consulting with looked after children about the care they receive will be analysed to measure service performance against the promise made to looked after children.**

Action

- Involvement of the LAC Council in the development of this LAC Strategy.

Progress

- **This has only been undertaken informally and the ongoing strategy implementation needs to be discussed with and involve the LAC Council and looked after children further.**

Action

- Communication strategy to be developed to ensure that all children and young people know about their 'entitlements' as looked after children and care leavers.

Progress

- **A survey of looked after children and young people was undertaken some months ago asking them to what extent they know about their entitlements as looked after children and care leavers. Whilst the young people were relatively aware of their entitlements there were some areas where there was less awareness. Further work is needed on awareness raising.**

8. Finance

8.1 There are no financial matters to report.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

9.1 This is an information report only. The risk of not developing services to looked after children is that their outcomes do not improve and in addition there is the risk of reputational damage to the Council

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

10.1 There is an increasingly high profile on looked after children and in particular there has been a lot of policy initiatives in the areas of adoption, leaving care and children missing and at risk of sexual exploitation. This strategy is looking to address looked after children's outcomes across all areas

11. Background Papers and Consultation

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