

Members are reminded that they must declare all relevant pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests relating to any items of business to be discussed at this meeting

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

SCHOOLS, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 25 JANUARY 2017 AT 13:00 HOURS
IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 3 & 4, COUNCIL HOUSE, VICTORIA
SQUARE, BIRMINGHAM, B1 1BB

A G E N D A

1 NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chairman to advise the meeting to note that this meeting will be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site (www.birminghamnewsroom.com) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs. The whole of the meeting will be filmed except where there are confidential or exempt items.

2 APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies.

3 - 6

3 ACTION NOTES

To confirm the action notes of the meeting held on the 7 December 2016.

7 - 114

4 CORPORATE PARENTING INQUIRY

Evidence gathering for the Inquiry.

115 - 124

5 WORK PROGRAMME

For discussion.

6 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

To note the dates of future meetings on the following Wednesdays in the Council House, Committee Rooms 3 & 4:-

8 February, 2017
22 March, 2017
26 April, 2017

7 **REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)**

To consider any request for call in/councillor call for action/petitions (if received).

8 **OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

To consider any items of business by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) that in the opinion of the Chairman are matters of urgency.

9 **AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS**

Chairman to move:-

'In an urgent situation between meetings, the Chair jointly with the relevant Chief Officer has authority to act on behalf of the Committee'.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

**SCHOOLS, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY (O&S) COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING**

**14:00 hours on Wednesday 7 December 2016, Committee Rooms 3 & 4 –
Actions**

Present:

Councillor Susan Barnett [Chair]

Councillors: Sue Anderson, Matt Bennett, Kate Booth, Debbie Clancy, Shabrana Hussain, Martin Straker Welds and Alex Yip.

Other Voting Representatives: Samera Ali, Parent Governor Representative, Evette Clarke, Parent Governor Representative and Sarah Smith, Church of England Diocese.

Also Present:

Councillor Brigid Jones, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families

Trevor Brown, Head of Youth Offending Services

Kay Child, Assistant Director, Integrated Services East

Colin Diamond, Executive Director for Education

Liz Elgar, Head of Service

Seamus Gaynor, Head of Strategic Management

Alastair Gibbons, Executive Director for Childrens Services

Dawn Roberts, Assistant Director, Early Help

Amanda Simcox, Research & Policy Officer, Scrutiny Office

Benita Wishart, Overview & Scrutiny Manager, Scrutiny Office

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

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2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor Barry Bowles [Deputy Chair], Councillor Julie Johnson, Richard Potter, Roman Catholic Representative, Cllr Chauhdry Rashid and Councillor Valerie Seabright.

3. ACTION NOTES

(See document No 1)

RESOLVED:-

The action notes of the meeting held on the 23 November 2016 were confirmed.

4. CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SIX MONTH UPDATE

(See document No 2)

Cllr Susan Barnett declared an interest as she works in a children centre.

Councillor Brigid Jones, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families, Colin Diamond, Executive Director for Education and Alastair Gibbons, Executive Director for Childrens Services provided Members with an update.

- Members were informed that Birmingham no longer had an Education Commissioner and thanks were expressed to Sir Mike Tomlinson for his role.
- The 2017/18 budget consultation is to be released Thursday and it was suggested that the committee looked at all the budget lines as they could affect children.
- There will be a national pot for school improvement that will be divided amongst local authorities. Birmingham's allocation isn't known yet.
- There will be a reduction in early years funding for 2017/18. The funding formula that Birmingham uses for the three sectors is to be reviewed and will go out to consultation. This will be brought to the committee for comment and it was suggested that the committee may wish to investigate how the impact of the funding changes will have on the sectors.

RESOLVED:-

- The report was noted and the following information is to be provided:
 - The current and proposed funding formula for early years to the three different sectors for each child per hour, including the percentage that is passed on.
 - The ongoing funding for school improvement when the figures have been released by Government and the future role of Birmingham Education Partnership.

5. MULTI-AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB (MASH) AND CHILDREN'S ADVICE AND SUPPORT SERVICE (CASS)

(See document No 3)

Kay Child, Assistant Director, Integrated Services East and Liz Elgar, Head of Service presented the report.

They are working with partners on the improvement plan and this will be sent to Ofsted at the end of the month. This plan will be forwarded to the committee. It is then expected that Ofsted will be returning for a couple of days in February or March.

Concern was expressed on the communication about the changes to MASH and CASS and a briefing note which sets out the communication plan will be circulated.

RESOLVED:-

- The report was noted and the improvement plan to be forwarded to the committee.
- A briefing note which sets out the communication plan will be circulated.
- An update will be provided following Ofsted's return.

6. YOUTH JUSTICE STRATEGIC PLAN 2016/17

(See documents 4).

Dawn Roberts, Assistant Director, Early Help and Trevor Brown, Head of Youth Offending Services presented the item.

Next year when they come back with the 2017/18 plan they should have more information on special educational needs (SEN).

Councillor Susan Barnett, Chair had visited the team and Members were welcome to visit and discuss ways how they can be involved and assist the Youth Offending Service.

Councillor Susan Barnett to raise with Andrew Christie, Children's Trust Chair that it was felt that the Youth Offending Service needs to be part of the proposed children trust arrangements.

RESOLVED:-

- The report was noted and:
 - The 2017/18 plan to be programmed into the Committee's work programme.

- Members who wish to visit the youth offending teams to let the scrutiny office know their availability for the visits.

7. WORK PROGRAMME 2016-17

(See document 5)

The work programme was discussed.

RESOLVED:-

That the work programme was agreed and:

- An additional meeting on the 11th January at 1pm – 2pm to be arranged for the draft budget to be discussed.
- The 25th January 2017 committee meeting will start at 1pm instead of 2pm and finish at 5pm to allow enough time for the evidence gathering for the Corporate Parenting Inquiry.
- The inclusion Commission item will be moved from the 25th January 2017 to the 22nd March 2017 committee meeting and the Child Disability Services to also be discussed at this meeting.

8. DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The dates were noted.

9. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS

None.

10. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair wished everyone a merry Christmas and encouraged the Councillors to participate in the children in care events where they can.

11. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

RESOLVED:-

That in an urgent situation between meetings the Chair, jointly with the relevant Chief Officer, has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 16.56 hours.



Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee
25 January 2017 at 13:00 – 17:00 in Committee Rooms 3 & 4

**How can Councillors support the service improvement journey for
 Children in Care through their role as corporate parents?**

| Timings | Item |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1pm – 2.05pm (1hr & 5 mins) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Parenting Overview - Andy Pepper, AD, CIC Provider Services Corporate Parenting Activity - Natalie Loon, Corporate Parenting Coordinator Children in Care Overview - Lorna Scarlett, AD, North West Central Advocacy , Voice of the Child and Children in Care Council (CiCC) - Lisa Carter, Head of Participation and Engagement <p>Q&A with Members</p> |
| 2.05pm – 2.55pm (50 mins) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fostering and Adoption – Theresa Kane, Head of Service Care Leavers and Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers Children (UASC) – Shank Patel, Head of Service <p>Q&A with Members</p> |
| 2.55pm – 3.35pm (40 mins) | <p>The Three Social Care Teams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CIC South – Sally Craddock, Head of Service CIC East – Sivay Heer, Head of Service CIC North West & Central – Manjit Rai, Head of Service <p>Q&A with Members</p> |
| 3.35pm | 15 Minutes Break |
| 3.50pm – 4.40pm (50 mins) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential Homes - Mel Page, Service Manager Accommodation/Placements - Narinder Saggu, Service Lead, Commissioning Centre of Excellence / Kalvinder Kohli, Head of Service, Prevention & Complex <p>Q&A with Members</p> |
| 4.40pm | <p>Page 7 of 124</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Birmingham Virtual School - Andrew Wright & Q&A with Members |



Corporate Parenting Children in Care and Care Leavers

Report from:
Andy Pepper, Assistant Director, Children
in Care Provider Services



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Children in Care North West and Central

Birmingham Virtual School

Residential Homes

Pathway Planning

Accommodation and Placements (to follow)

TESS

Pathway Planning

Ofsted Feedback

March 2014 Ofsted

The corporate parenting board is weak and, until very recently, there has been no corporate parenting strategy. Action should be taken to revise the function and purpose of the corporate parenting board and strategy to ensure that the needs of looked after children are paramount and that the right actions are taken to improve the quality of their lives.

September 2016 Ofsted

The corporate parenting board now has a clear focus on issues for young people and is beginning to have an impact on improving services. The Children in Care Council is established and is listened to by the council, but more work is required to ensure that it is representative of all children in care in Birmingham.

Clear governance arrangements now oversee the board and its work effectively. Although the board has achieved some improvements, it is still at an early stage of considering the full range of issues for children looked after. For example, the board has not considered the IRO annual report and, although it secured a number of refurbished laptops for children looked after, did not know how many children looked after had access to a computer or laptop at the time of the inspection. It has, however, established itself as a key driver in improving services for children looked after and has ensured that nearly all councillors have had training about their corporate parenting responsibilities.

Children in care improvement highlights

Working with the courts and the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) to ensure that children gain legal security swiftly through reducing court timescales, as well as the review and development of services that deliver good quality assessments and support for special guardians and connected persons caring for children.

Appropriate decisions are made for children to become looked after.



Most children are enabled to have meaningful contact with their family. This includes foster carers supporting some complex contact arrangements to ensure that children are able to maintain their important family relationships.

Children benefit from regular review of their care plans.

When children are placed out of the local authority area, priority is given to securing a suitable placement, with education services identified as soon as possible. This includes appropriate use of both therapeutic and secure accommodation to meet needs and reduce risks for some children.

The education of children looked after is positive, with attendance, attainment and progress being supported effectively by a well-led virtual school. An increasing range of after-school activities are enabling children to become more self-confident.

The number of children attending good or better schools has increased.

For those children who struggle to sustain a place in mainstream education, a range of alternative provision is used.

The vast majority of personal education plans are now completed within appropriate timescales and those sampled were generally of good quality

Risks for children who frequently go missing, and risks from gangs or sexual exploitation, are considered and reduced through robust plans.

Most children live in stable placements.

Children are engaged in decisions about their lives and social workers visit them regularly.

Adoption is considered for children who cannot return home and they live with their new families more quickly than at the time of the last inspection.

Care leavers enjoy positive relationships with their personal advisers, are supported into adulthood.

The majority of children who have disabilities and who are in care are making tangible progress and are positively engaged with by their social workers.

The local authority took practical and decisive action to review and improve the welfare of children living with special guardians and connected persons.

Assessments for foster carers are thorough, include relevant checks and are appropriately challenging if concerns are identified. The large majority of foster

carers spoken to by inspectors were very positive about the support they receive from their supervising social workers, describing them as 'amazing' and 'second to none'

The local authority has commissioned an effective service to support children aged 10 to 16 years who are moving from residential care to foster placements.

Children in care improvements

Some children have experienced numerous placement breakdowns due to a lack of robust matching processes.

Some children experience delay in receiving services to meet their needs and improve their outcomes.

Children, including those placed for adoption, are not consistently helped to understand their care histories through direct work and life story work.

Assessments and plans for children who have a plan to return home require improvement to ensure that risks are fully considered and that the right support arrangements are in place.

The current provision of independent visitors is not sufficient to meet the needs of children looked after.

Return home interviews are not routinely offered and completed with all children looked after following each missing episode.

Children cannot easily access timely support to improve their emotional well-being and mental health.

The large majority of children's care plans require improvement to ensure that the child's full range of needs and risks are considered, and to ensure that actions are sufficiently clear and time-bound to enable effective monitoring. Adherence to and follow-through of care plans is an area of weakness, with the lack of a sense of urgency leading to drift. This includes delay in accessing appropriate services for children, and is particularly evident for children in their junior and secondary years.

Timeliness to achieve permanence for children is variable, and for some children is poor. For those children experiencing delays, this is due to lack of swift action for access to appropriate services and assessments in identifying appropriate permanent placement options.



For some children, consideration of diversity is limited to noting the child's identity and diversity, without then developing this into a detailed plan to meet these needs

Corporate Parenting Activity 2016

What we have done well

- **Corporate Parenting Strategy and update report**
- **Corporate Parenting Board - has a clear focus on issues for young people and is beginning to have an impact on improving services.**
- **Development of mentoring scheme and academic mentors through Virtual School.**
- **Development of work with elected members across the City including District Corporate Parent Champions.**
- **Events for Children in Care, Care leavers and Foster Carers**
- **Stronger links and increase in reward partners for Children in Care.**
- **Development of Foster Friendly Family and Friends**

Corporate Parenting Governance

The 2015/16 Corporate Parenting strategy was put in place to reinforce the corporate responsibility of everyone in the Council. The strategy reinforces the corporate responsibility of everyone in the Council, both elected members and staff, and of its partner agencies, to improve the life chances of children in care and care leavers and ensure they get the right support and services where they live.

The Corporate Parenting update report was released in September 2016 and highlights the areas of development in 2016.

Corporate Parenting Board

The Corporate Parenting Board champions Birmingham's looked after young people.

The Board is a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency group chaired by Councillor Susan Barnett, comprising of, Children in Care Council (CiCC) representatives, elected members, Assistant Director Children in Care Provider Services, Head teacher,



Birmingham Virtual School, Representatives from other Directorates, Rights and Participation service, Children's Social Care; Birmingham Foster Care Association, representing the voluntary sector; Health , West Midlands Police , Other representatives where necessary to the agenda.

The Corporate Parenting Board believes that our children and young people in care are best placed to tell us how services can be improved. Members of our CiCC are the life and soul of our Corporate Parenting board, the board listens carefully to what they have to say and does all it can to meet their expectations. A member of CiCC attends each CP Board meeting to present the work of the CiCC.

Mentoring Scheme

The Corporate Parenting mentoring scheme is based on the simple idea of pairing up Birmingham City Council's large, altruistic and dedicated workforce, with our children in care and care leavers who need some extra support.

In early 2016 a bespoke mentoring scheme training package for staff was introduced through the Virtual School allowing mentors and partners to provide targeted support within all areas of educational attainment in schools and colleges throughout the city and also young people/adults placed Out of Authority.

By August 2016 204 Birmingham City Council staff and reward partners including Birmingham City University, the NHS and Service Birmingham were trained as Corporate Parents.

100 staff and partner mentors are now providing one to one support in a range of ways including support with coursework, homework, reading, and writing, securing apprenticeships, employment opportunities and life skills.

Mentors are also providing dedicated support with college and university enrolment, attending open days, supporting with the transition into independent living, mock interview and skills sessions and days out.

Other staff and partners that have received training are providing support in a number of ways including the Birmingham Virtual School Raising Aspiration Programme Careers events and participation in group activities with young people and adults.

Corporate Parenting mentoring case study 1 - Sabrina

Sabrina's view



My name is Sabrina Robinson and I am 18 years old. Having a mentor has been a blessing. I'm saying this because I didn't realise how much I needed Heather until I had her working with me. She has been absolutely amazing, she definitely works above and beyond.

Heather has now been working with me for just over a year and she's been a great help. She found me two work placements, helped me sort out my portfolio (she literally didn't care how long it would take for it to be completed) as long as it was, (and when I say long, it took absolutely ages!) the persistence was real!

Shortly after we met, Heather realised that I needed help in order to move house. It wasn't an easy process but Heather went back and forth in her little car taking my things to my new house. For that I am ever so grateful. If Heather hadn't helped me, I don't know who would have.

Corporate Parenting mentoring case study 2 – Sally

Professional's view from a Birmingham Virtual School Education Advisor

I referred Sally to the Corporate Parent mentor scheme in the summer holidays of 2015. The reason being that Sally was facing a placement move, and this combined with returning to college was causing her a lot of anxiety.

Sally's mentor made contact with her very quickly. I met with Sally during the holidays and she was very dubious about why she was being contacted and how this was going to help her. I explained the role of the mentor and asked Sally to give her a chance. Sally's mentor and I kept in good contact and I encouraged her to persevere. Very quickly Sally's mentor proved to her that she was genuine, trustworthy, caring and consistent. She helped Sally in many practical ways - with her placement move, enrolling at college, and then later in the academic year, finding her a work placement for her Health and Social Care course. Sally would not have completed her college course, and been accepted on to the next level without her mentors input. Sally's mentor has been a huge and invaluable support for Sally, who struggles with independent living and personal organisation. I am hugely grateful to Sally's mentor for everything she has done for Sally and feel that her input has made Sally's experience of being in the care of the local authority a much more positive experience. Her intervention has also improved the prospects of Sally - who is now studying on a level 3 course and could progress to higher education in two years' time. Sally's mentor has enhanced the work of the statutory services by working alongside us, and she has given the time and care that Sally needs to move forward with her life at this time of transition.



Academic Mentoring

The Corporate Parenting partnership with BCU has identified over 40 undergraduate students who have been trained to become Corporate Parents.

In October 2016 The Birmingham Virtual School developed the role of the Academic Mentor in partnership with Birmingham City University and Communicate, a software-based literacy and communication teaching intervention designed specifically for use with people who have delayed literacy and communication skills.

The project is designed to focus on core communication skills along with building self-esteem and confidence. A Corporate Parent mentoring team comprising of a champion, lead mentor and academic mentors are initially working as teams with five residential homes within the city.

The mentoring team are working together to provide support to some of our young people in developing their literacy skills. They are also providing support with homework and coursework. The pilot will develop further throughout 2016/17.

Elected Members Responsibilities

In 2016 the Corporate Parenting Board carried out a series of Corporate Parenting presentations at each of the 10 district meetings. The meetings set out Corporate Parenting responsibilities to members, to enable them to get involved in corporate parent activities. Following the presentations each district elected a corporate parent district champion to work as part of a team collectively to engage with and support all elected members in their role as Corporate Parents.

Members have also been supporting children in care in a number of ways as this role develops including raising over £1,000 to ensure that 622 Children in Care received presents in 2016.

Corporate Parenting District Champions

In July 2016 the Corporate Parenting working group came together to discuss the role of the Corporate Parent Champions and how they can collectively support Children in Care and Care leavers in a number of ways across the City. The group included area director, members and key staff that work within children in care.

- The group took into consideration the following:
- Corporate parenting strategy and key priorities.
- Children in Care Council (CiCC) priorities.



- Work of the Corporate Parenting Board and Virtual School Board of Governors.
- Corporate Parenting District Champions

In August 2016 the Lead Corporate parent Councillor Susan Barnett was elected to work alongside the Corporate Parenting Coordinator and scheduled a timetable of sessions for 2016.

The group's role is to monitor the work surrounding children in care, looking for opportunities and ways they can make a difference to young people in care locally both as a group and in their individual districts. The group makes links between the corporate priorities and local initiatives.

It was decided that the group would meet on a monthly basis and the first meeting took place on the 26th September with a focus on Educational attainment and rewards.

A Workshop took place in December 2016 where District Champions met with Heads of Service to discuss in detail work around Education, Pathway Planning and Care Leavers. Three further sessions will be taking place in 2017 that will focus on each of these areas and the support champions can offer in more detail.

Foster Friendly Family and Friends

Birmingham City Council has become one of fewer than 30 councils across the country to establish itself as a Foster Friendly employer.

A partnership has now been secured with the University of Birmingham where BCC Foster Carers are being used as mentors. There is no right in law to leave for fostering purposes; however, BCC is now making Fostering Leave available to support employees who are also Local Authority foster carers or family and friends carer. This is in addition to current annual leave provisions, public holiday leave, and flexi-leave where applicable. It is also separate from the current provisions for Special Leave.

Laptops to support with Educational Attainment



Two successful applications in 2015/16 have provided 120 laptops for young people in care across Birmingham who are entering higher education and did not have access to a computer.

This project was put in place to meet a current funding gap for young people in care, giving them access to laptops in order to support their progression into continued education.

The safeguarding of the young people whilst online has been paramount to the success of the project. Policy Central Monitoring software was installed on all 120 laptops before they were distributed.

By installing Policy Central we have provided a comprehensive and automatic protection for each young person that has received a laptop. A monitoring process and team has been implemented within Birmingham Virtual School, the team take forward any captured identified by the system and action in line with the process.

CASE STUDIES

Case Study: Afra

Afra has just completed her BTEC Level 2 First Diploma in Travel and Tourism South and City College Birmingham, Hall Green Campus. She has also achieved her Functional Skills Level 1 in English and Maths.

Afra lives in independent council accommodation with her one year old son and has no support from family. She attends college three days a week.

With daily struggles of keeping a house, budgeting and looking after a young child who was sometimes poorly and unable to go to nursery it was not easy for Afra to maintain her place at college and complete the work required to pass the course.

Having this laptop has enabled Afra to complete her coursework at home in the evenings at weekends, and also keep up with her peers by working from home when she has been unable to get to college due to personal circumstances out of her control.

The laptop has also enabled Afra to keep in contact with her Corporate Parent mentor by email and her college tutors and peers which she says has made her feel less isolated.

When Afra was asked for feedback she said, "I could not believe it when my Virtual School worker told me I would be getting this laptop; I never knew that people could be so kind to me.

“It has helped me with my studies and confidence and to be honest I would not have completed my level 2 in travel without being able to study online when my son sleeps in the day or goes to bed. Thank you so much.”

Case Study: Lucy

Having her own laptop has allowed Lucy to continue with her study through her pregnancy by completing work through the online portal at home, particularly in the later stages of pregnancy when Lucy would not have managed the long journey on public transport so frequently.

Lucy, 17, from North Birmingham, said: “As a pregnant mum to be I was still given the opportunity to have a laptop, something I never thought I would have. It has opened up lots of doors for me. I can now comfortably study at home and do not have to go to the library.

“It has also allowed me to look at baby groups that I could join and learn more about what awaits me over the coming months. I have been really thankful for the opportunity to be able to research about how I can continue with my education when my daughter arrives and never knew there were so many options available to me. I cannot thank you enough; the laptop has made a real difference.”

Children in Care Events

Birmingham Virtual School Going4Success Award and Celebration Events

In 2016 three events took place for Children in Care to celebrate their educational attainment and achievements over the key stages. 27 Reward Partners supported these events in a number of ways including venue hire, reward vouchers, trophies, and activities and showing personal support at events. These events have been key in providing our Children with a tradition that throughout their school life there will be events to celebrate their achievements.

Winter Events

In December 2016 three events took place for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Carers.

On the 19th November The Winter Wonderland on the welcomed 656 primary age Children in Care, carers, family and partners to John Willmott Secondary School. The young people enjoyed an Ice Rink, Santa Grotto, Arts and Crafts, Snow Simulator, magician and much more.



This event was supported by reward partner Service Birmingham with presents donated by elected members.

442 Children in Care, Care Leavers, carers and partners enjoyed an evening's celebrations including live entertainment and a three course meal at the Holiday Inn on Sunday 4th December. This event was supported by the Lord Mayor and District champions who were table hosts.

The reward partners for this event were Service Birmingham, Teamwork's Karting and Capital FM.

The foster carer's recognition event at Aston Villa Football Club recognised the achievements over 100 Birmingham Foster Carers in a number of categories. Over 200 carers, friends and family celebrated at the event.

Going4Succes careers events

Launched in autumn 2015 and two further events took place in the spring and summer term of 2016.

The purpose of the events is to raise the aspirations and increase the vocational knowledge of our young people and their carers.

The autumn term event had a multi vocational focus that comprised of a number of workshops including theatrical make up, public services, motor vehicle maintenance, construction and art and design.

The spring term event focused on careers in health and was delivered by reward partner HealthTec and hosted at North Birmingham Academy. The interactive workshops for young people included paramedics, first aid and medical engineering.

The summer term event was hosted and delivered by the REP theatre and the event included a number of interactive workshops for young people including wigs and make up, lighting and sound, backstage tours, set design and props.

Each event has a tailored interactive session for carers on a number of topics.

Over 260 young people and carers attended the 2015/16 careers events.

Moving forward the 2016/17 careers events will have a focus on higher education and apprenticeship will take place at venues across the city.



Photos from Going4Sucess Key Stage 1 and 2 Event, Winter Ball and Wonderland

Report From: Lisa Carter

Report To: Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

Date: 25th January 2017

Title: RIGHTS AND PARTICIPATION SERVICE

'RAP aims to OPTIMISE and EMPOWER children and young people's involvement in strategic, local and day to day decisions that affect their lives. We challenge and champion children and young people's rights to ensure that when decisions are made children and young people are involved, consulted and listened to.'

The journey so far

The Rights and Participation Service provides issue based advocacy support for children and young people in care, care leavers, children and young people within the child protection process and can support children and young people when requested throughout a family group conference. We are different from other professionals because an advocate works for the child or young person to ensure their voice is heard. We do not work within best interests guidelines and work to a code of national advocacy standards.

The Rights and Participation service also supports our Children in Care Council and our Care Leavers Forum. Increasingly in the last 12 months more participation work has come to the team. We have led on young people's engagement and initial views on the Trust as well as supporting our young people to engage in a number of projects, meetings, campaigns and support in the recruitment of new staff.

What we have done

- Support and advocate for individual children and young people.
- Share quarterly reports capturing advocacy trends and individual case studies with area team and Ads
- Report back to corporate parenting board
- Support young people to make complaints and /or support within mediation process

- Collate and escalate issues where appropriate.
- Support and facilitate a minimum of 24 meetings per year of the children in care council.
- Support members of CiCC to engage with their peers and initiate and agree campaigns on a rolling 12 month program. Support young people to hold officers accountable to these campaigns and push through to completion.
- Set up and continue to support and facilitate a pilot care leaver's forum. Work with young people to develop and sustain a program of work.
- Support YP to be involved in recruitment and interviews of officers.
- Continue to attend area meetings and deliver training. Work alongside and offer support to principle social workers.
- Work with area teams (LACES/IROs Care Leavers Services) to raise the profile of MOMO. Identify and support champions.
- Visit disabled children's homes and share report with senior managers, attend and visit homes where Birmingham children are placed as and when (prioritising Priory and Meadows)
- Develop age appropriate resources as required ('first time in care' resource as an example)
- Deliver training as and when required.

CASE STUDY Care leavers Forum

An excellent discussion was had around the experiences care leavers around health needs.

It was common amongst those who attended that privacy around these was a major issue especially as they got older or if they had a question which they wanted to ask the Health professional.

'.....my carer would sit in the room – which was embarrassing, I wanted to ask about sex and contraception, but they would just think I was having sex - but I wasn't '
(CL18)

Having to register at new Doctors, Dentist and Optician each time there was a placement move was also an issues especially for those who had a number of placement moves;

'The Optician was rude – I had told my foster care that I had had an eye test but I still had to have another on. The Optician checked the system and said I had already had one and could not have another – they were not happy for wasting the appointment' (CL18)

All the Care Leavers present shared that they had NOT seen or heard of the Health Passport. All shared that it was important that a proper record was kept of immunisations, accidents, broken bones, scars etc. and these were available especially when they left care.

'....I don't know my family medical history' (CL 18)

'I don't know if I have had Chicken Pox and I have a child!' (CL 19)

Puberty: All who attended shared that this was not a good experience and no one person told them about this if anyone at all. As attendance was all female a very open and honest discussion was had and they recognised it was as difficult for boys as well as girls.

'the worst is moving to a new placement and not knowing where the pads are or the sheets it's just as bad for the boys if they have a wet dream' (CL 19)

It was common across the group that there was a presumption among professionals that they were sexually active and at least one young person was prescribed contraception unnecessarily. More than one young person had been made to have a pregnancy test.

'...when it was not positive they marched me to the doctors to have one done there!' (CL18)

For looked after children and young people who are not in school or have poor attendance it was recognised that this may mean that they were not in class for the 'puberty' lesson reinforcing again the need to have access to a constant and open dialogue with someone who they trust.

The 'first bra' experience was not a positive one with many attending sharing that they had made to feel embarrassed and often going without a bra even though they need one as they felt they had no one to talk to.

'...without the labels we are all humans' and people often forget about that...' (CL 20)

The Care Leavers forum made the following recommendations:

- That a key person who has a positive relationship and is consistent in the child/young person's life has the conversation.
- This is an open, age appropriate and constant conversation not just a one off and the child/young person is aware and happy with this.
- That all young women have the opportunity to have a positive experience in purchasing their first bra/having a bra fitting.
- A 'box' is available containing information, sanitary wear, sheets is available when arriving at a new placement.
- A new and relevant 'health passport' should be made available to all young people especially when leaving care and it is important that young people are involved in developing this.

Case study for advocacy support with a placement issue:

A referral was received from the social worker of a 12 year old young person (M), subject to a full care order. Efforts were in place to find a permanent placement for him but the social worker felt that M did not feel able communicate his placement views with any of the professionals involved. The social worker believed that M being involved with the process, and the social worker gaining understanding of his views, was imperative for the success of any long term placement.

The advocate met with M on three occasions over the course of 2 months. Whilst M had strong ideas about what his placement should be like he initially struggled to communicate this. M enjoyed computer games and the advocate suggested to M that he could build his ideal home within the game 'Minecraft'.

M did an amazing job of producing his ideal home and an example is shown below. Whilst initially this allowed a discussion of the material things important to M (a large garden, a good view and a dog to be his friend), the process allowed the advocate to encourage M to talk about wider aspects of his placement. For instance, M didn't mind that much about his carers (as long as they were kind) but felt it was important not to have a long journey to and from school.

M was able to discuss with his advocate his relationship with his siblings, and his thoughts and feelings about being separated from his siblings and why. This information could potentially be used by the social worker to provide specific emotional & behavioural support for M, leading to a greater chance of a successful long term placement.

Case study for advocate support for young people to be involved with meetings:

A referral was made by the allocated social worker for 3 female siblings (aged 15, 12 & 11). The referral was received shortly before the 2nd Child Protection Review Conference due to concerns that the young people did not feel able to attend meetings, share their wishes & feelings and be involved in the decision making process.

The advocate met all of the young people prior to conference. One young person felt able to attend their conference with the advocate's support and share their wishes and feelings at the start of the conference. The advocate worked with the other siblings who produced a report each to be shared with the conference. One of these young people said "I am happy to make a wishes and feelings report. I have said in this report what I have wanted to say for ages".

The advocate regularly met the young people, often using drawing and craft to help them consider their thoughts & feelings and to express these. When discussing the advocate's role, one sibling stated "You go to the meetings and are a voice for young people to speak. It is good because if I am shy then you can speak for me. The advocacy meetings give me a chance to really think about how I feel".

The advocate was also able to work for the children's rights. There were periods where their case 'drifted', together with a change in social worker and Child Protection Officer. The advocate was able to appropriately escalate child protection concerns arising from her advocacy visits.

All of the siblings felt able to attend their next Review Child Protection Conference. One sibling said:

"It was good and I am finally happy that I got to say what I wanted to say. I also think that I am more confident when I speak when my family isn't there because if they are there I get shy and I don't speak and I am scared of what they would think of my opinion. Advocacy is really good because they really help you to speak and boost your confidence.

Each young person produced their own report (prepared with the advocate) and able to speak freely of their experiences and feelings. The CPO emailed afterwards:

"I just wanted to say what a great job (the advocate) has undertaken with the children. It was a joy to have the child's voice at conference and to have a child in person is even better. (The advocate) enabled the three children to make their views known"

The advocate supported the children in attending a Family Group Conference and their following Review Child Protection Conferences. The advocate continued to provide resources and time for the young people to explain their wishes and feelings and support for them to share these.

All three siblings are now placed together with a family member. The children are sad that they cannot stay with their mum but feel that by being involved in their Child Protection Conferences they understand why this is & that they have been involved in the decision making about who cares for them now.

Disabled Children's Homes visiting Advocate

The role of a visiting advocate to a children's home is to get to know the children and get a feel for how a home functions including any informal practices. The advocate can then showcase any excellent practice and also act as a critical friend and identify areas that may raise concerns.

'D chose a purple ribbon out of 7 coloured ribbon options. He had a smile on his face as he swirled the ribbon around making circles and shapes. He examined the stick he was holding and the ribbon. The advocate asked him and signed if he liked playing with the ribbon he smiled and signed thumbs up sign. D played with the ribbon for a considerable time. He seemed to really enjoy the activity. He was quiet, peaceful and relaxed. D joined the group and did some ribbon dancing in the garden before saying goodbye to the advocate and going to judo class. The advocate asked M, C, M, C and D if they wanted to do some ribbon dancing in the garden. The young people enjoyed making shapes with the ribbons. They formed a circle and moved in and out moving the ribbons up and down. Each young person had a turn to dance with the ribbon in the circle. C then led the other young people and told them what to do next. The advocate and the young people all sat down on the bench with the ribbons and swirled the ribbons around on the floor. They pretended they were fishing in a river and then sang lots of songs together. M said she liked the ribbons. D didn't want to participate in the ribbon dancing. C said that she had had a great time and would like to dance and sing with the ribbons again'

We have been visiting our 5 homes fortnightly to build relationships and have now reduced to monthly visits with reports sent to senior managers and shared with the homes.

The good things/improvements

- Continue to see regular and constant referrals for advocacy (evidence positive outcomes for young people)

- Key trends and themes are received positively and beginning to see reflected in area team discussions/schemes of work
- Quarterly reports appear to be well received – focus on trends and individual stories
- Good working relationships with other professionals.
- Increase in number of young people involved in CiCC/Care leavers Forum.
- Successful campaigns with improved practice that evidence voice of the child priorities.
- Innovative practice that can evidence voice of the child – Trust engagement day being one example.
- Increased use of new technologies (MOMO/you tube)

What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it.

- Continue to work with care leavers group – embed the work in, create an engagement plan and develop campaigns. Monitor progress.
- Support CiCC to develop and grow – create exciting opportunities and programs of work that will help us engage and share information with more young people. Evidence an increase in young people's involvement and engagement.
- Utilise social media tools more fully – link this to ensuring that young people have appropriate information around rights and entitlements.
- Continue to embed MOMO – encourage and champion its use outside of children in care teams.
- Identify best advocacy practice and link to quality standards

Report From: Theresa Kane HoS & Sara Delaney Assistant HoS

Report To: Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

Date: 25th January 2017

Title: Achieving Permanency for children: Making Adoption Work

Summary: Birmingham Adoption Service undertakes statutory adoption work; recruitment and assessment of prospective adopters, Family Finding, post adoption support, birth record counselling and management of letterbox contact. The adoption service is regulated by Children Act 1989, 2002, 2004, Children and Families Bill 2014, and National Minimum Standards 2014, supported by the Adoption Statutory Guidance 2014.

The journey so far

Ofsted Inspection 2016 stated that the Adoption Service is moving in the right direction, a rating of Requires Improvement was given compared with Inadequate rating in 2015.

“Steady progress over the last 15 months, under a new manager, has improved the adoption service by increasing staffing, expanding family-finding teams and establishing a post-adoption service. A clear improvement plan identifies the areas requiring urgent attention, such as improving the timeliness of, and monitoring the progress of, adoption plans”.

Performance Improvement--Adoption Scorecard Data.

- 140 children placed for adoption between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016.
- 107 children have been placed between 1st April 2016 and 30th November 2016
- Average Time between entering care and being placed for adoption = 660 days, in line with England average and below statistical neighbours of 651 days.
- Average Time from authority to place and achieving Match for adoption= 263 days, above the England average of 223 days, but below statistical neighbours of 254 days.
- The percentage of children who wait less than 16months between entering care

and moving in with their adoption family is 38%. The England average is 47% and our statistical neighbours are 41%.

- Adoptions as a percentage of children leaving carer is 14%, which is above the England average of 16%.
- Adoptions of children from ethnic minority backgrounds are 11% which is above the England average of 9%

Ofsted recognised mitigation in the scorecard and the impact of Adoption Service tenacity to place complex children-- *“ In particular, delays relate to the time taken to identify suitable families to meet the needs of harder to place children. Delays are mitigated by the council’s tenacity in identifying adoptive families for children with complex health and disability needs”.*

Post Adoption Support Team, (PAS).

A Post Adoption Support team established in December 2015 Clinical Psychologist provides highly specialist support to meet complex needs of children through a Clinical Psychologist able to develop psychological formulations to target appropriate intervention.

Assessments and Interventions are delivered by Social Workers, TESS, and Forward Thinking Birmingham (CAMHS) or through the commissioned framework funded by the government led Adoption Support Fund. Links with the Sexually Harmful Behaviour Team, (SHB) team provide advice, assessment and intervention for children and adopters where sexualised behavior is problematic.

109 applications have been made to the Government funded Adoption Support Fund between June 2015 and December 2016, this led to delivery of a funded therapeutic package in 108 cases.

Assessment of Prospective Adopters.

- Assessment are now completed in-house without the use of Independent Social Workers
- To promote Foster carer adoption specific workbook and training has been developed.
- Positive Parenting Strategies programme has enhanced adopters confidence and skill base.
- Foster For Adoption early discussions with prospective adopters supported by workshops and training has been delivered to area workers.
- Good feedback from adopters on training.

70 adopters have been assessed and approved between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016

Panels.

- Eight Adoption specific panels are held monthly.
- In the previous 12 months 66% of reports met the required timescale, the quality of

these reports has been good.

- PAR's submitted to panel have been of a high standard.
- The quality of Matching reports and support plans has been good and detailed how adopters will meet the needs of children.

What we have done

Recruitment: A new corporate rebranding campaign under the #changinglives has been designed and led to more enquiries converting to placements for children. Closer working relationships with the LGBT community have been developed. Partnership with First4Adoption and Mirror newspapers to promote children waiting for adoption during the National Adoption Week in October 2017.

The Recruitment teams monthly Information events including specific events aimed at LGBT and UASC applicants has enabled attention to attracting applicants wishing to adopt within the priority groups for the service; ----children with disabilities, siblings groups, BME children, older children with development trauma and attachment difficulties

The recruitment team is working with Corporate Communications to ensure that the recruitment strategy is in line with council priorities and their expertise promotes the activities of the team.

Performance: Ofsted (2016): children now move to adoption more quickly than at last inspection, more consistently helped to understand their history through direct work and life story work.

Planning for permanence is stronger, parallel planning proactive and timely intervention Joint work with courts, SW and Carcass has reduced delays.

Regional Adoption Agencies: The service is in discussion with other statutory (Hereford) and voluntary sector agencies to move to a Regional Adoption Agency with the benefit of developing a centre of expertise promoting timeliness and economies of scale for matching, adopter recruitment and adoption support.

Family Finding

Permanency Advice Clinics: for each area provide advice and support on permanency decision making, planning, CPR's and life story work.

FF workers facilitate CPR training, providing expertise and skills.

Partnership with Adoption Focus to hold profile exchange events has increased family finding.

Service Re-design: (aimed at reducing delay and improving timeliness against scorecard above)

A move from two Family Finding teams to three Family Finding teams has promoted greater communication and working links with area Children Service Teams, this enables early referral of children and prevents delay.

Ofsted recognized the strength of matching adopters and children:

“Matching practice is effective, considers the strengths of adopters, their capacity to meet the needs of children with complex needs and the level of support they will need. As a result, children and their adoptive families receive the right support”.

Post Adoption Support: joint TESS and Adoption Service partnership has provided specialist advice and psychological formulations of need to inform referral for therapeutic work.

Workforce Development.

Workforce development--has ensured stability and a significant reduction in agency posts. A rolling training programme reflects the DfE Knowledge Skills and Practice standards for Permanency.

Evidence and innovative practice supported by reflective supervision improved assessment, matching and support for families.

The good things/improvements

- Recruitment of staff across the service has led to a stable workforce
- Training programme developed managerial supervision and support of staff and practitioners skill sin assessment, placing and supporting adoption
- Adoption scorecard performance data has shown reductions in the number of days between children entering care and moving to adoptive family
- The Recruitment team has improved co-working with fostering and adoption assessment teams to develop and strengthen the initial enquiry and first home visit targeting recruitment and applicants understanding and knowledge in preparation for assessment.
- Liaison with family finders to strengthening understanding of the children waiting for adoptive placements promoting recruitment to meet need.
- Development of Permanency Clinics to promote identification and referral of children, placement decision making and presentation of sensitive information in CPR reports and life story books
- Staff trained in therapeutic interventions and links made with commissioned services to enable timely and appropriate support.
- Improvement in collating and the needs and profile of children requiring permanency through adoption.
- Developing a commissioing framework of providers for post adoption support

What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it

1) Achieve permanency for children without delay.

- Establish Permanency Panels to increase capacity and prevent delay from thirteen separate Adoption and Fostering Panels to Permanency panels will increase capacity and prevent delay.

- Monitor Permanency Advice Clinics to strengthen decision making and referrals
 - Early Tracking of children to track timeliness of adoption plans and time Placement Order to Improved quality of CPR's through training from specialist Family Finders and support for area Social Workers.
 - Improved Life Story Books through training and support for area Social Workers
 - Adoption Monitoring Meetings with Heads of Service to identify delay and drift
 - Quality Assurance--Child Permanency Record's, (CPR)- This document is an important record for the child to provide understanding of their birth family, their journey into care and adoption. The reports submitted to panel this year have shown an improvement in quality.
 - CPR training co-facilitated by FF practitioners.
 - Work on improving report quality has also been offered by Panel advisors through one to one support for area Social Workers
 - Head of Service quarterly performance reports to identify the child's journey and barriers.
 - Improve assessment timescales
 - Improve the recording of children with disability
- 2) Ensure a sufficiency of appropriate prospective adopters to meet need.**
- Increase recruitment of prospective adopters through the enhanced recruitment strategy
 - Improved use of social media
 - Targeted events to recruit adopters for hard to place children
 - Improve and evaluate the initial experience of enquirers through the use of Mystery Shoppers.
 - Links with the Penny Appeal to broaden adoption and fostering knowledge within the Muslim community through the use of ambassadors promoting the message that adoption is compatible with religious teaching
 - Early discussion with approved adopters about children before the Adoption plan is finalised
 - Co-working of initial home visit by recruitment and assessment team to share knowledge and expertise at the front door
- 3) Prevent Adoption Breakdown.**
- Staff trained in therapeutic intervention
 - Development of in-house specialist support programmes
 - Development of a commissioned framework for therapeutic providers
 - Increased capacity of Clinical Psychology time to provide robust formulations of need
 - Parental support groups and training in therapeutic Positive Parenting Strategies
 - Use legislation to expand support for adopted children in school via Virtual Head



Feedback on the Assessment and Support teams work from Prospective Adopters after their assessment and training

- ***“We would like to place on record our appreciation for all the hard work carried out by M as our foster child D moved on for adoption. M put in additional hours due to the unfortunate illness that stuck both the foster and adoptive families. We were constantly kept informed of anticipated revised timescales and arrangements for D’s move. M was always kind and supportive to all parties and treated everybody with the utmost consideration.”***

Feedback on Support Activities

“We just wanted to take this opportunity to praise all the good work carried out in making our dream a reality. We are forever grateful for having such a social service. We currently take our daughter to the stay and play which we value and appreciate. We would also like to mention the training team who do a wonderful job. We are now at the stage of doing letterbox contact, again this team are also great to deal with.”

Feedback on Family Finders Activity , matching and introductions between child and adopters

“Thank you for all of your hard work and professionalism in making our dream come true. Your guidance and support before, during and after introductions is very much appreciated. We feel that you are an asset to Birmingham City Council’s family finding team and are grateful to you for finding us S.”

Report From: Theresa Kane – HoS & Michelle Gardiner – Assistant HoS

Report To: Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

Date: 25th January 2017

Title: The Fostering Service

Summary:

The journey so far

Birmingham City Council (BCC) aims to provide the most effective intervention in a proportionate and timely way that engages with children and their families. The fostering service is an integral part of Birmingham City Council's Children's Services.

The aim of the service is to provide the opportunity for all looked after children and young people to experience positive family life through the provision of high quality substitute family care.

The fostering services were working on a patch basis up until 2016 when the operational decision was made to co-locate in Woodcock Street. The aim of the co-location was to offer a consistent placement and support service across the City.

Connected Person Assessment & Support was transferred across from the mainstream fostering service to a newly formed Special Guardianship, Connected Person, Private Fostering Service in 2016. The rationale for the move was based on the size of the fostering services and the differing priorities that needed to be driven forward. The separation within the service allowed for mainstream fostering to focus on placements, recruitment, assessment and support for foster carers.

The service has formed a partnership relationship with the Corporate Communications Team. This has allowed the service to benefit from the knowledge and expertise within the council around marketing and recruitment.

A dedicated training officer has been in post since 2016 at senior social worker level. The worker has the responsibility for ensuring that there is a specific training programme in place for foster carers. The training programme is based on

the needs of the children and carers and is reviewed annually.

There have been changes to the way the service works and the co-location has enabled closer working with the Placement Team.

The service has a target of recruiting 8 new internal fostering placements per month.

What we have done

Ofsted recognised the limitations of our current IT systems. The service was commended by Ofsted for being proactive in identifying our system limitations. Ofsted were impressed with the plan in place to take forward to the Carefirst Replacement Project Team.

The Fostering Service has been working closely with the Information Management Team to develop a fostering scorecard. When completed this will provide us with crucial performance data e.g. timeliness of annual reviews, numbers of enquiries received and the conversion rates of these enquiries.

The service has recently undertaken a targeted recruitment drive which was aided by an interview on Switch Radio. Following on from the success of the interview, Switch radio station have offered the service a monthly slot on the radio and we are planning a focused marketing campaign in the lead up to fostering fortnight. The focus for the marketing campaign will be on teenage placements, sibling groups and UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children) and Long term fostering, these areas were identified as areas for improvement of future sufficiency.

Ofsted recognised the benefit of bringing the fostering assessments back in house. The improvements were as follows:

- Overall quality of the assessment has improved
- Assessments are being completed in a more timely manner
- Improved Quality Assurance
- Improved consistency of assessments

In bringing the assessments back in-house the service has reviewed the Training and Support programme for Foster Carers, Connected Persons, SGO and Staff Training. A Training Coordinator has been appointed and implemented Attachment and Safeguarding Training as mandatory.

Partnership working has improved through work with Dr John Hoffman and the research project, 'Dealing with Attachment Issues', Leicester University. The fostering service has been collaborating with the Rees Centre and Oxford University on other research projects such as the study into a cross-country

comparison of the factors that contribute to a successful foster placement.

The fostering service facilitated a three day visit with Swedish social work colleagues from Vallentuna. The purpose of the visit was for Swedish colleagues to learn from our practice procedures and legislative requirements within Fostering. This visit resulted in building further international social work relations for the Fostering Service.

Other examples of what we have done:

- Co-location of the entire service to Woodcock Street.
- A Rewards and Recognition event for foster carers in December 2016. The event was a resounding success and in attendance was Peter Hay (Strategic Director), Councillor Brigid Jones and the Lady Mayoress of Birmingham City Council.
- Ofsted recognised the work undertaken by the fostering service identifying foster carers that have not been utilized for long periods. This has enabled the service to have an accurate fostering register.
- A representative from the service attends the monthly Recruitment and Marketing West Midlands Consortium Group. A project derived from this group is to produce a marketing video that is funded by the local authorities collectively. The aim is to use combined budgets and resources to produce a marketing video which can be tailored to each individual LA's needs and used as part of recruitment improvements.

The good things/improvements

- There are currently 445 internal foster carers approved providing a total of 747 potential placements
- There are 12 EDT (Emergency Duty Carers).
- December 2016 there were 614 internal placements versus 591 external placements.
- There have been 75 de-registrations of mainstream foster carers up to the end of December 2016. This figure is high due to the service undertaking a data cleanse of the fostering register and removing foster carers from the register who were no longer providing fostering placements.
- December 2015 to December 2016 there were 26 new mainstream fostering approvals providing an additional 33 fostering placements.
- The average number of case allocations a full time fostering support social worker has across the service is between 17 to 20 cases.

- The current recommendation for a fostering assessment is 16 weeks. The service are currently completing assessments within 8 – 12 weeks timescales as part of improved performance.

A planned approach has been made to provide a more joined up approach to recruitment and marketing with the Corporate Communications Team. The focus is on delivering targeted and evidence based marketing through the positive promotion of fostering and the financial package offered by Birmingham City Council. We are currently in the process of developing a new Fostering Website. The new site will help aid the recruitment of potential foster carers, by allowing the service to control the content enabling fostering to evidence the competitive package on offer.

The service was tasked with providing data for the Ofsted return for 2014/2015 and the data quality was poor at this time. The service developed new systems for monitoring and the return in 2016 was provided internally evidencing an accurate picture of the service.

Targets have been set for our Recruitment Team to obtain a net gain of 8 internal foster placements a month. The Fostering Teams are working closely with the recruitment and assessment teams. A geomapping tool has been produced that shows the geographical areas where children in care are placed. This will help identify potential hotspots where the recruitment teams can target for sufficiency requirements for children in care in the future.

Staff recruitment and retention has greatly improved. Staff absence in 2016 has significantly reduced. The service was previously showing one of the highest sickness absence rates within Children's Service and is now the lowest. This has been as a result of senior management applying a consistent use of policies and procedures across the service. This improvements has resulted in significant financial savings.

Accurate recording of children missing from care has improved due to new systems that are monitored regularly across the fostering service in conjunction with area services. Capturing the data accurately has improved safeguarding for vulnerable children and young people.

What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it

During the past 12 months the service has been able to identify gaps in service provision and planned how these can be rectified. The key objectives for service improvement:

- Improve internal placement levels

- Net gain of 8 new fostering placements per month
- Better use of the internal fostering estate
- On-going Improved Practice development

Monthly monitoring meetings are held with team managers and senior management to scrutinise blocked beds and internal vacancies. This ensures that there is an accurate picture of the fostering households and an efficient use of the internal fostering households.

Partnership working between internal fostering and the placements team is underway and an integral priority to allow greater autonomy and control over the internal fostering estate.

The fostering service will continue to prioritise the recruitment and retention of foster carers in order to meet the demands of sufficiency for all children in care.

Ofsted highlighted the importance of Birmingham City Council upgrading their systems and following on from this the service is part of the Carefirst Replacement Project. The Fostering Service is at the forefront of this project and have numerous representatives from various parts of the service. The delivery of the new system is due to take place late 2018.

Birmingham City Council is a 'fostering friendly employer' and aims to encourage as many staff as possible to foster for the Local Authority (providing they do not work directly with looked after children in front line children's teams). The benefit of the scheme is that fostering friendly employees can take an additional 10 days leave per year. Foster carers for local authorities are eligible.

The service continues to review/update policies and procedures in line with legislative requirements and required practice improvements. Currently within the service the Smoking cessation policy has been implemented and the Fostering Financial Agreement is currently in the final stages of review.

The Fostering Service have achieved a lot in the past 12 months and this has not only been beneficial to staff and foster carers but it has also had an effect on the level of support we are able to offer our children in care. The service recognises that there are still improvements to be made and there is continued work and development around our systems and working practices.

The continued work in improving the service is monitored monthly via the Provider Services Action Plan and also by ensuring that we as a service are working within the requirements of the directorate and service improvement plans.

Report From: Theresa Kane HoS & Kim Smith Assistant HoS

Report To: Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

Date: 25th January 2017

Title: Review and improvement work undertaken: Special Guardianship Orders and Connected Persons Arrangements.

Summary:

The journey so far

In 2015 Birmingham began to review and develop their arrangements for Special Guardianship (SGO) and Connected Persons Assessments. This led to the introduction of an in-house team of assessors in July 2015, until this time assessments had been commissioned externally to independent assessors. There were concerns in relation to the quality of some of the external assessments and the short time scales that were being allowed to complete the work. The in-house team has continued to develop and there are now two large teams undertaking assessments and providing support.

Alongside the above development work a review of historical SGO cases was undertaken and where cases raised concerns, dependent on level of concern, arrangements are being made to visit or contact and offer support, training and guidance, as may be appropriate.

The Review identified a number of issues that contribute towards an SGO arrangement not working:

1. Households where there are two carers, and only the "connected person" is really keen to care.
2. Single carers or couples where there are already similar aged children in the household, in particular where the children do not have a strong relationship already.

3. Single carers where the impact of another child joining the family mean the day to day logistics of caring for another child make life very difficult
4. Situations where the suggestion/ invitation to care has been driven by the Gal; the child's solicitor; the Court; a social worker and where the prospective carer has found it too embarrassing/awkward to say no.

The above learning is now incorporated in all assessments undertaken and in the "Why Would We" training completed by all staff in the SGO/CP/PF service.

The quality and robustness of assessments has been improved through training, supervision and quality assurance. All assessments consider thoroughly:

- Capacity of applicant's to care throughout childhood.
- Relationship between child and prospective carer.
- Ability of carers to support the child to overcome impact of abuse or neglect.
- Effect of the child into adulthood of being cared for under SGO or connected persons arrangement.
- Ability of carers to manage any risk from birth parents.
- Applicant's relationship history.

What we have done

- All assessments are now completed in house in collaboration with the area worker. Assessments are not independent but are completed on behalf of Birmingham.
- After close working with the Courts and our colleagues in legal services the standard time for completing an assessment is now routinely accepted as a minimum of 12 weeks.
- Introduction of Coram BAAF Form C template.
- No recommendation will be made in an assessment without all checks completed and DBS and Medical viewed by assessor. To assist the Court and assessment will be filed, but without a recommendation. An addendum will be provided once the outstanding checks are received.
- Mid Point Reviews have been introduced at week 6/7 to discuss the progress of the assessment and examine any issues.

Post Order SGO Support

- All new SGO arrangements now remain open to children's services for 3 months post order and to SGO service for 6 months after the order is granted. During this time training, support and guidance is provided.
- A comprehensive list of children subject to SGO in Birmingham and their address details has been compiled– currently at 655.
- A letter has been sent to all to advise them of our Helpline number, support/training/drop in sessions available to all SGO arrangements.

- The Viability Pilot (South Team) was due to conclude in September again the outcome of the pilot will inform the development of the policy. The pilot was extended to December and a report is now being prepared.

Dialogue with Other Agencies and Court

We are having regular meetings with the Courts and CAFCASS to ensure they are aware of the changes we are making to our service.

Current cases

There are currently 49 connected persons carers providing 57 placements for children known to them and 95 cases currently allocated to workers for assessments and support.

The good things/improvements

Ofsted Inspection 2016 recognised the work undertaken and the improvements made.

“The local authority has taken robust action to ensure, following a recent child death, that the circumstances of children subject to a special guardianship order (SGO) have been reviewed to ensure their welfare. Current assessments to place young people under SGOs with carers are now of satisfactory quality”

“The local authority took practical and decisive action to review and improve the welfare of children living with special guardians and connected persons following the death of a child in 2015. Detailed reviews of children who were subject to proceedings for special guardianship orders, and those who had been placed with special guardians over the preceding two years, was undertaken. Appropriate follow-up action was taken when relevant to promote individual children’s welfare. The local authority has added substantial resources to develop the assessment and support service for SGOs and connected persons to ensure that these placements are timely, safe and supported for children. SGO and connected persons assessments are now of a good quality. Furthermore, the local authority is in the process of identifying and contacting all special guardians to explain its offer of support”

We have also received positive feedback from fostering panel and the courts.

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| What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it |
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It has been recognised that there is often a need to “test out” a placement if the child is not already living with the applicants. We are currently considering ways of doing this.

- The Mid-Point review could consider if the assessment is progressing well enough to consider moving the child in during the assessment period.
- Secondly we can consider approving applicants as connected person’s carers initially with a plan to move to SGO after a period of 12/18 months. It is recognised that initially this may result in an increase in our connected persons numbers, but it is hoped that with close working between the connected persons team and the SGO Team that the transition to SGO should be encouraged and eased.

These approaches are welcomed by the Court who have indicated that they are likely to move towards not making the SGO if the child has not lived with the applicant for a reasonable period of time.

Greater use of Family Group Conferences to establish at the earliest opportunity which family members are in the best position to offer alternative care arrangements.

Report From: Shank Patel – Head of Service

Report To: Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

Date: 25th January 2017

Title: Scrutiny Evidence Gathering - 18+ Care Leaving Service

The journey so far

The 18+ Care Leaving Service is city wide service that supports care leavers from the age of 18 to 21, or up to the age of 25 if they are in higher education, this being mainly University. The support is offered and co-ordinated through an allocated personal advisor to each care leaver.

With additional investment in the service a fourth leaving care team has been created to support a rising number of unaccompanied asylum seeking care leavers

as well as care leavers who were as children in care allocated to the disabled children's social care service.

Week beginning 9th January the service was supporting 708 care leavers. x30 FTE Personal Advisors assigned to the service, x4 FTE vacancies are to be recruited to by the end of Jan 17.

Both internal and external partnerships have been developed and strengthened. This has been focused on assisting and supporting care leavers with housing, accommodation, emotional and mental health, finance / DWP, Education including bursaries (Eve Brook Scholarship), apprenticeships, discharge planning from custody and transition planning with adult service.

What we have done

Continued to focus on the relationship based practice of the Personal Advisor and with this their pathway plans have focused on their support needs as well as factors of concern and vulnerability.

Developed and revised the Pathway plan so that it clearly resonates the voice of the care leaver and their involvement and contribution to their pathway plan is clearly evident

Strengthened the relationship with the Child in Care and Care Leavers Council

The good things/improvements

- Ofsted Inspection Judgement Nov. 16 – Experience and Progress of Care Leavers – Requires Improvement

‘Considerable work has taken place since the last inspection to improve practice. Young people say that they feel well supported by their aftercare advisers and show confidence in seeking advice and support when they need to. Personal safety and keeping safe are key themes which are regularly discussed with care leavers, and when interventions are required they are duly recorded....’
- In touch with 97% of care leavers, better than the national average of 88%
- 94% in suitable accommodation
- 101 care leavers at University, which is approximately 15%, this against a national average of 6%

- YP choosing to stay in care until their 18th birthday at 78% against 68% nationally
- Staying Put – doubled since the last inspection, x35 to x77.
What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it
- Pathway Planning – To revise and compress the 18+ Pathway Plan
- NEET – 46% NEET against a national average of 40% - Support from Core Assets through the YEI funding has been secured and is operational
- Transition planning 16-18 with CiC, DCSC & Adults
- TESS / Forward Thinking B'ham – Access & Support
- NHS England – To support care leavers with their emotional / mental health needs through Personalised Budget Pilot
- Health Passports – Ensuring that all care leavers aged 18 have all their health needs documented for future use and reference
- Housing & Accommodation – To implement the St Basil's- Barnard's accommodation framework
- Finance- Universal Credit, benefits, DWP, poverty
- Council Tax Exemption
- Care leavers in custody, better release planning & support
- Celebrating success and achievement
- To establish a dedicated duty service operating from the Light House and away from New Aston House

Report From: Sally Craddock

Report To: Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

Date: 25th January 2017

Title: South Children in Care Service

The journey so far

There have been significant improvements in the last 12 month in staffing retention, a reduction in the number of agency staff and an improvement in all the key performance indicators.

This has enabled:-

- Children to have a consistent social worker
- Children to build a better relationship with their named worker
- Permanency Planning to be improved with more children in permanent placements
- Better partnership working

Child in Care Reviews, Area Resource Panels and regular, robust reflective Supervision allow robust planning and challenge to plans for children as well as tight management oversight.

The area is embedding an external placement panel to ensure that children's needs are being met in external placements and that the placements are cost effective and provide value for money.

The social work interventions being delivered are more focused to the needs of the child and their family/carers. The quality of interventions have been enhanced through discussion between managers and social workers in supervision and using feedback from children and families and carers about how they have experienced our intervention and its impact.

What we have done

We:-

- exercise our corporate responsibilities with pride and care
- provide good quality responsive services to all children aged 0 -18 years who are in care
- ensure no child is unallocated
- ensure every child has a social worker who they are able to contact
- ensure good retention and positive development of staff

- create a positive work environment with a learning culture

We have ensured that our staff team is stable and able to meet our children's needs. Our team comprises of 6 team managers, 4 senior practitioners, 23 senior social workers, 18 social workers and 5 senior social work assistants. 8 of the staff work part time, which adds to the flexibility of our service.

Over the last 12 months we have:

- improved the quality and practice of the service we deliver, and this has been reflected in an improvement in all the key performance indicators
- maintained the percentage of our children that are visited within timescales at 97%
- increased positive service user feedback about the quality of the social work interaction
- reduced the number of complaints our service receives
- delivered interventions which are more focused and purposeful using child focused tools
- improved planning for permanency within the child's journey
- successfully increased the number of children matched to adoptive placements
- reduced the number of children subject to a placement order
- significantly reduced the number of s20 children

There are currently 519 children allocated across the South Child in Care Service comprising of:

- Section 20 = 52
- Care Order = 351
- Interim Care Order = 79
- Placement Order = 34



- On remand / LA accommodation = 3

We have strengthened our partnership working evidenced in:

- increased understanding and implementation of right service right time
- joint recruitment initiatives between the area services and fostering and adoption to recruit new carers for Birmingham
- local development of relationships with partners in 18+; Tess; placements; Laces and the Virtual School.
- attendance at school and police panels within the area

Our improved partnerships have established a better understanding of each agencies offer to our children and how we can work more effectively operationally to achieve improved outcomes for our children.

Compliment from a parent:

From: A Father

Sent: Friday, November 18, 2016 8:01 PM

To: M B

Subject: H M(SOCIAL WORKER)

Dear M B,

I would like to express my deep appreciation and satisfaction regarding the services provided by the above-named social worker over the past couple of years in dealing with my daughter's case.

Since H has worked with my daughter, she has been so dedicated, resilient, cooperative and committed to the course and left no stone unturned in arriving at this later stages of revoking the care order,

As the care Order has been revoked at our last family court sitting on the xx November, 2016

I would therefore like to convey a special thank you to H on behalf of my entire family and wish her success in all her future endeavour. We are ever so grateful to her.



Many thanks and best Wishes,

A Father

The good things/improvements

The key improvements have been:

- the retention and stability of the workforce with all our posts filled
- the reduction in the number of agency workers, with several becoming permanent staff
- positive recruitment and promotion opportunities for both senior practitioners and newly qualified staff
- practitioners are clear about their role and are committed to the young people for whom they are the corporate parent
- a number of historical orders were revoked and children were safely returned to parental care where possible
- a practice focused training programme for all staff was embedded which included the training of team managers in systemic practice
- introducing a south monthly service meeting where all of the children in care team staff come together to share and learn about different good practice and develop their knowledge

The improvements have enabled us to:

- develop a strong working environment, good team cohesiveness and morale as well as a supported environment where staff can learn and develop
- ensure each child has a named social worker who is consistent in their lives and therefore able to build meaningful relationships with the young people.
- undertaken a number of new ventures introducing a summer trip to the seaside for some of our children and their social workers to add another dimension to the intervention offered by their social worker
- collect and make Christmas hampers for all of our young people aged 16-18 years who resided independently to provide extra support



- increase the number of children placed in adoptive placements, particularly in respect of older children, sibling groups and harder to place children
- engage in a Partnership with a local College where some of our children in care “took over” their social work course on Take Over Day

Compliment from a partner agency:

From: Elizabeth Freeth

Sent: Wednesday, December 21, 2016 11:23 AM

To: L G

Subject: South CIC

Good Morning .

I would like to say a big thank you to you and your team for the support you have given to the young people who reside with us.

I was extremely pleased with the extra thought your team have put into thinking about the support for the young people, all of whom are 16+ at Christmas time.

My residents have received hampers from your team which I know they have fundraised for this themselves. The team should be commended as the extra little touches make all the difference to the young people.

Thank you again from all of us.

Kind regards

Elizabeth Freeth

Project Co-ordinator -

Direct Dial: 0121 667 1098

ElizabethFreeth@bvt.org.uk | | Facebook | Twitter | YouTube

What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it

We need to continue to improve the child's journey and direct experiences by:

- Continuing to work in a child focused way with the child remaining at the centre of all that we do all of the time.
- carefully review each child's plan regularly to ensure that it remains the best plan for that child
- securing permanency plans more quickly
- improving our placement choices for children
- reducing the number of placement moves for children
- reducing the number of external and residential placements where our children live
- ensuring we achieve value for money in our external placements
- Improving our matching processes for placements
- consistently re-inforce interventions to reduce our numbers of children that are missing, at risk of child sexual exploitation, at risk of female genital mutilation or missing education

How will we do this:

- by reducing the court timescales, improving our pre proceedings work and continuing to develop our partnership working with Cafcass and the IRO service
- providing placements that are timely and fit for purpose and meet the child's needs. This would allow for more planned moves, children having choices in their moves and introductory visits.
- offering a wider spectrum of placements that can cope with multiple difficulties and challenges that some of our children present
- continuing to develop our partnership working with other agencies both internally and externally to ensure matters are tackled consistently and robustly

- endeavouring to place our children with Birmingham foster carers
- ensuring that we seek and listen to feedback from children and their carers
- continuing to invest in staff development and training to ensure that we maintain our current positive workforce

Report From: Manjeet Rai

Report To: Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

Date: 25th January 2017

Title: Head of Service. Children In Care North West and Central

Summary: 8 Children in Care Teams all based at New Aston House.

The journey so far

Area Resource Panels on a weekly basis as assisted hugely to reduce the children in care, agreement to Legal Planning Meeting and funding issues.

Overall reduction in children in care via rehabilitation home, adoption, special guardianship orders and revocation of care orders

Focused on practice through Practice Forums, completing practice evaluations and learnings from these. Ensure that SWs complete quarterly case summaries, updating chronologies.

Children who are in care now are in the right service except for those that are Section 20 with plans of rehabilitation remain with our safeguarding teams

What we have done

Continues to be stable work force with a total of 53 staff.

Overall Morale is positive and good in CIC.

Total of 2 agency workers covering maternity leave, 1 covering sickness.

8 agency workers across the whole service

Group Supervisions continue within teams where Snr Prac lead on, discussing complex case looking at themes, practice and reflection. Learning to improve on practice.



CIC Practice Improvement Forums are used to improve areas where staff could benefit from. Monthly meetings with all CIC social work teams to focus on practice issues/policies/procedures.

Focus on care planning in adoption cases/procedures

Court Skills – completing statements/ giving evidence/completing Child Permanency Reports

Transition process to adults

Learning from Serious Case reviews

Three Monthly Case summaries to reflect on what has worked well, what hasn't worked well and why this has not. Child being the focus.

3 managers have completed the Systemic Supervision Training and further 2 managers are on the course. Attempts are being made to embed this into supervision

The good things/improvements

Reducing Children in Care

We have tracked our Section 20 children in care. These have been reviewed and for those where parental responsibility needs to be shared we have initiated care proceedings. Worked closely with Edge of Care to return children to families where it has been safe to do so.

As part of our CIC improvement plan is to look at assessing possible rehab of children to families from LA care. This again following discussions with our IRO colleagues is being progressed and family assessments are being completed to focus what changes have occurred within the family and how these have been sustained, reassessing children's needs and how parents can now meet them. We are completing family assessments on these cases.

External Panel reviews – Monthly

Reviews have led to case determine cases for Complex Care Planning

Planning of YP to transition team and step down to semi-independent living.

Addition funding is challenged and what value for money we are getting from providers. – focussing also on whether SW were fully aware of how YP's needs are



being met within the financial package. Ensuring the package for the young person is outcome led. Focus is on high cost placement

Revocation of Care Orders

We have successfully completed revocation of Care Orders on children who are have been living with their families and this has assisted our numbers being reduced

Updating assessments on Children who are Placed with Parents. Ensuring Schedules 3 assessments are completed and updated for every child who is placed at home on a care order. Assessing whether circumstances of the parent(s) have changed to enable our involvement to cease,

We have good links with our fostering and adoption services. Early identification of children that is likely to have plans of adoption for family finders to be identified. We now have permanency clinics where practitioners from the adoption service are available on a fortnightly basis to discuss cases

What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it

CSE/MISSING

Consistency in recording. Use of return interviews

Improving partnership working with Police.

Develop a local missing person forum to discuss/share information collectively, including SWs, TMs commencing 13/1/17

Use of statutory visits to discuss risks/vulnerability/impact.

Use the CSE area coordinator and area lead TM to support social workers working with CSE- focus on tools/relationship/

Have Clear understanding of processes of transfer to transition teams, criteria for service, timescales for assessments.

Develop relationships with the adult transition team. Early referrals to transition teams to enable the process of assessment to commence sothat when young people with complex need have appropriate support identified from the transition team. Building better links with the transition team/ inviting to team meetings having a linke TM with adults transition teams.

Court Work

Whilst there has been improvements in court work we still have some way to go to ensure that we complete court cases within the 26 weeks. We are working closely with our safeguarding teams for early identification of court cases so that these can come at the point of issuing care proceedings. We are also using the joint practice forums for CIC and safeguarding to learn and improve on court work particularly where pre – proceedings should commence much earlier. This is working progress.

Report From: Andrew Wright

Report To: Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

Date: 25th January 2017

Title: Birmingham Virtual School

What we have done

Head-lines

- Management Tools – e-PEP, improved from 80% to over 90%
- Safeguarding:
- Attendance – upward trend
- Persistent Absences (PA's) - reduction
- Exclusions – reduction (11 to 0)
- NSP – reduction
- NEET's – reduction

- Less than 25 hours education - reduction
- Programme – RAP, e-learning, personal tuition, literacy (letterbox, communicate)
- Events – Reward, Careers, Unlink programme
- Emotional Well Being – Vulnerable Pupils Project, Malachi, BCAT, ARC launch.

What still needs to be done

- Improve educational outcomes/more intelligent understanding of CiC progress – NCER national project
- Develop Attachment Aware Schools across Birmingham – Lead city strategy
- Increase number of CiC in good or better schools – enhanced links with schools

| Focus Area | Detail |
|--|---|
| 1. Raising Attainment (a) Outcomes | <p>KS2:</p> <p>B'ham Lac (achieving Level 4 and above) improved in all areas between 2014 and 2015 with the exception of writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading increased by 4% in 2014 • Writing decreased 3% (but remained an increase from 2013) • Maths increased by 3% • GPS increased by 7% <p>The results in 2016 show us that there was a big drop in Reading, Writing and GPS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls did better than boys in all subjects. • Children placed in Birmingham tend to have better attainment than those placed OOA. • Of those children placed OOA children who were in West Midlands Local Authorities did achieve better than those who were placed further away. <p>KS4:</p> <p>2014- 2016</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5+ A* - C's inc E&M increased by 1.1% in 2015 and reduced by 5% to 13% in 2016 (including Special Schools) |

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| <p>(b) NCER</p> <p>(c) Electronic Personal Education Plan</p> <p>(d) Learning Toolkit</p> <p>(e) Raising Aspiration programme (RAP)</p> <p>(f) E-Learning</p> <p>(g) Literacy</p> <p>(h) 1:1 Tuition</p> <p>(i) Going For Success Reward Events</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5A*-C increased by 5.8% in 2015 and reduced by 8% to 19% in 2016. • the number of YP gaining 5 A* - G has improved over 3 years as does the number of YP gaining 1A* - G • The Virtual School have had less missing results this year. • The 2016 national Progress 8 score for state funded pupils was -0.03 and for Birmingham it was 0. The Virtual School Progress 8 score for 2016 was -1.2 • The 2016 range of Progress 8 scores for the Virtual school was -7.1 to 3.2, with 35 pupils exceeding 0 (all of whom were OOA) and 24 with less than -2. <p>BVS is part of the national pilot for data</p> <p>The e-PEP was introduced in Jan 2016 after a term of intense training for all VS, DT's, IRO, SW Teams. E-PEP Champions support the development across BCC and OOA. This has enabled 95% (ex. Post 16) of PEP's to be completed in the summer term 16. (90% inc Post 16). The latter figure has increased to 91.6% for the Autumn term 2016.</p> <p>The 'menu' of interventions has been developed considerably over the academic year (see areas detailed below). The processes for ensuring these are personalised for all learners are being refined.</p> <p>A 'one-site' holiday period learning programme for targeted pupils is the focal point of this strand. The RAP integrates the Learning Link activities detailed in section 2.</p> <p>A number of software packages have been introduced. These include age-specific software, intensive learning packages and study/revision guides.</p> <p>All pupils up to Year 8 receive 'Book Parcels' sent to their placement address. These are age specific and aim to support pupils enjoyment of reading, to encourage reading with an adult and help to raise an interest in Numeracy. This is currently being evaluated by Leic. Uni. In addition Communicate (Rapid English) is being piloted in Bham Residential Children Homes.</p> |
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| | <p>A large proportion of our children are behind in their age-related education. As a result of the PEP meeting a number have personal tuition in target subjects.</p> <p>The branding of 'Going For Success' has allowed a new Reward System (effort, progress, attainment, achievement and attendance) to be developed. There are three formal events in the year (Primary, Key Stage Three, Key Stage Four/Post 16). All involve a formal presentation process at a large venue, followed by an informal social gathering for the young people, their Carers, teachers, SW and VS staff.</p> |
| <p>2. Data</p> <p>(a) Attendance</p> <p>(b) No School Place</p> <p>(c) NEET's</p> <p>(d) Less Than 25 hours</p> | <p>The Virtual School dashboard is reviewed on a monthly basis with weekly analysis of vulnerable groups</p> <p>The attendance for Primary LAC has been consistent for the last three academic years. In secondary school LAC attendance has a slight upward trend over the same period.</p> <p>The current attendance is:</p> <p>Primary (Bham) – 96.62%</p> <p>Primary (OOA) – 97.62%</p> <p>Secondary (Bham) – 92.14%</p> <p>Secondary (OOA) – 92.98%</p> <p>Primary - (96.0% – 14/15, 96.06% – 13/14)</p> <p>Secondary – (91.15% - 14/15, 90.62% - 13/14)</p> <p>This has been reduced by 50% and is around 1.4% per month.</p> <p>The NEET figures follow an annual trend of a low point in October which rises up to the end of term. YEI mentor team expanded for Spring term.</p> <p>The number of CiC without a full-time offer has been reduced this academic year from 1.8% in Sept to 1.5% in Dec.</p> |
| <p>3. Learning Pathways</p> <p>(a) Curriculum Links</p> <p>(b) Arts Links</p> | <p>The 'Learning Links' within the 'Learning Toolkit' includes a number of strands to raise the aspirations and expand the learning experiences of our young people:</p> <p>This engages CiC in after school activities at their host school alongside their peers. This is a new learning experience not previously offered at the school.</p> <p>A range of providers offer holiday, after-school and weekend courses across the Arts, a school partnership across a number of Bham Schools for curriculum-based projects for CiC and their peers, music lessons in the children residential homes – all leading to an Arts</p> |

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| <p>(c) Health Links (d) Cultural Links</p> | <p>Showcase event at the Rep Theatre. Other partners include Geese theatre, The Drum. Currently developing an Arts Connect programme across West Midlands Virtual School Network First Aid courses for children in residential homes DofE for post 14 yr olds, JASS Award for 11 – 14 yr olds, Gateway for Children with Disabilities, Music lessons in residential homes</p> |
| <p>4. Employment Pathways</p> <p>(a) Going For Success CEIAG Events</p> <p>(b) Work Experience</p> <p>(c) NEET's (d) Higher Education</p> <p>(e) Reward Partners</p> | <p>The vulnerability of CiC and the potential for a disjointed educational pathway can create gaps in an individual knowledge and understanding of the world of work. There are a number of initiatives that help to guide and support CiC in this and enhance anything provided in their host educational setting</p> <p>There are three termly events based around an employment sector, organised in a twilight session, offering immersion and active workshops from professionals in their field, with complimentary Carers development programme and activities for younger children. In 15.16 these included Vocational (based at an FE College), Health (supported by HealthTec and based at a secondary school), and Arts & Culture (based at the B'ham Rep Theatre). The first for 16/17 was at Aston Uni across STEM.</p> <p>A new programme offered during the holidays by BCC, HealthTec, Bham Rep, KPMG for one-day work-link activity supported by the Corporate Parent Mentor. There have been two NEET mentors working with targeted CiC.</p> <p>A growing number of partners inc. Aston Uni, BCU. The KS4 Reward Event was hosted and supported by BCU. A new Uni Link programme launched in Nov to pull together the range of activities currently offered (eg. Unifest) and to offer a longitudinal programme from Year 7 for identified CiC with the potential to progress to Uni. A growing number of businesses support a range of events, rewards etc.</p> |
| <p>5. Corporate Parenting</p> <p>(a) Mentors</p> <p>(b) Academic Mentors</p> | <p>The Virtual School continues to develop positive role models from other adults in the lives of CiC.</p> <p>The Corporate parent Mentor is a growing group for Birmingham CiC, both within and beyond the city. There are 204 CP Mentors who have undergone initial training, with 100 supporting CiC.</p> <p>The partnership with BCU has identified over 40 undergraduate students who have been trained to</p> |

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| (c) Foster Carers | <p>become CP Mentors. A number of these are Academic Mentors working in Children residential homes to support literacy currently being piloted.</p> <p>The training programme for Foster Carers continues to grow and develop alongside the Fostering & Adoption Team. A conference is held annually for carers with Early years children</p> |
| <p>6. Emotional Well-Being</p> <p>(a) Staff Development</p> <p>(b) Malachi</p> <p>(c) Therapeutic (d) Schools Link/Vulnerable Pupils Project</p> | <p>It is highly likely that the vast majority of CiC have experienced high levels of emotional trauma. There has been considerable thrust on supporting our young people to be included in their education to help them succeed.</p> <p>The Virtual School offers a diverse training programme for DT's, SW, IRO's, FC. This has been enhanced by joint work with FTB/Ed. Psys. service.</p> <p>The Virtual School is an integral part of the launch of the national initiative Attachment Research Community (ARC), linking with Adoption UK and contributing to national research via REES centre (Oxford University).</p> <p>The current system for emotional support is saturated by demand with the potential of some CiC not being able to access this in a timely fashion. The VS works closely with other providers who have two peripatetic services in two locations across the city. These complement TESS and FTB. Malachi are able to offer support to families as well as to individual CiC. Supervision is also offered to VS staff with plans to make this available for Corporate Parent Mentors.</p> <p>A further provision for targeted CiC as identified in PEP meetings.</p> <p>There have been two national projects that have helped to shape the emotional well-being offer for CiC. The Schools Link Project has developed a range of collaborative strategies (between Health & Education) for supporting very needy children in schools settings. The Vulnerable Pupils Project directly is working with VS, COBS, FC, Esd. Psych. In both the projects a Primary Mental Health Worker bridges Health and Education.</p> |
| <p>7. Governance</p> <p>(a) Board Of Governors</p> <p>(b) Corporate Parenting Board</p> <p>(c) BCC Scrutiny</p> | <p>A new Board was introduced 2015.16 with a committee structure being added for 16.17. There is a direct link to the CPB with shared Chair. Representation from FC, BCC, Education, Business, VS.</p> <p>VS reports to BCC scrutiny around outcomes.</p> <p>Meets Termly with VS representation</p> <p>Reported termly</p> |

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| 8. Pupil Behaviour | <p>There were no permanent exclusions of Children in Care from Birmingham schools throughout the academic year of 2015/16. This has been achieved by direct partnership work with schools, Head Teachers/Principals, City Of Birmingham School and other agencies.</p> <p>This has been maintained during the Autumn Term 2016.</p> |
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Birmingham Virtual School
Going 4 Success

Careers guidance –Healthtec

HealthTec hosted ePEP training for 70 teachers from schools across Birmingham in October 2015

HealthTec begun hosting First Aid courses for Virtual School members of staff, with the first cohort being trained in October 2015.

A series of First Aid courses for Virtual School students in the homes, which commenced in January 2016.

A bespoke careers event took place at North Birmingham Academy in March 2016.



Birmingham Repertory Theatre

- Year 5/6 - 'Spy' School
- Transition Project (Year 6)
- KS2 - Thematic work around The Lion, The Witch & The Wardrobe
- KS3 - What It Means To Be A Brummy
- Residential Homes - Toy Theatre
- Arts Link NSP Support
- Arts Showcase

Outdoor Activities

- Outdoor Activities Programme – MENCAP
- JASS Award
- Duke Of Edinburgh Award
- Residential – North Wales



Birmingham **Virtual School**
Going 4 Success

Developing Partnerships With Foster Carers

- CEIAG Events – Development Programme
- Early Years Conference
- Board Of Governors
- Going For Success Reward Events





Report From: Kalvinder Kohli – Head of Service, Commissioning

Centre of Excellence

Report To: Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

Date: 27th January 2017

Title: Development of a positive accommodation and support

Pathways for young people in care aged 16 plus

A small number of development projects are currently in progress to improve the accommodation and support options available to young people.

The emphasis is upon positive transitions into adulthood that achieve good outcomes in terms of young people's ability to live independently, to succeed economically and enjoy good health and wellbeing.

The journey so far

In 2016, Birmingham was one of the first local authorities to formally adopt the Barnardos/St Basils Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Pathway. This builds upon and sits within the context of the existing Positive Pathway for young people developed by St Basils. Both models have national recognition as models of best practice and have been adopted by a number of local authorities.

The St Basils Youth Hub continues to work with over 4,000 young people a year that may be at risk of homelessness or entering children's social care. 84% of young people are successfully prevented from becoming homeless or requiring social care. The Youth Hub model has been adopted by a number of authorities nationally and has also received European recognition through the Cities for Active Inclusion initiative. The Youth Hub also provides access to a range of supported accommodations through Supporting People for young people including 16 year olds that are in the care of the local authority.

Birmingham one of 7 local authorities to successfully receive Local Government Association funding for a children's efficiency project. The aim of the Birmingham project is to explore the reasons for high cost packages of supported accommodation for 16/17 year olds and to seek solutions to improve both outcomes and cost.

A Skill's to Life wheel has been designed with the aim of seeking corporate sponsorship from local businesses to support a young person's journey into

independence. The model has been presented to the Children in Care Council and young people have agreed to support the work to identify further projects and activities that they would like to see as part of the project.

Housing Strategy and Homelessness Transformation. Work is currently underway between the People and Place Directorates to develop a Housing Strategy and Supported Housing Policy for the City. This will set out the housing offer to young people in the City which includes a positive pathway response to tackling homelessness.

Supported Lodgings models have been commissioned for young people in care for a number of years. This provides an alternative to foster care and other forms of supported accommodation. A family/home environment is provided for young people who otherwise would not cope so well in other settings. Recently the service has been expanded to take UASC aged 16 plus and continues to achieve some very positive outcomes.

What we have done

St Basils/Barnardos Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Pathway

Three initial workshop delivered by DCLG funded facilitators have taken place for BCC staff, supported accommodation providers, and key stakeholders from health in order to start to map the existing services against the accommodation and support pathway, identify gaps and enable participants to consider how they make a contribution to delivering the pathway within Birmingham.

Local Government Association: Children's Efficiency Project

The project has now been scoped into three distinct areas in terms of our approach;

- 1) Challenge and Review, using high cost case studies as a learning exercise to determine the factors that resulted in an escalation in price and to determine what could be done differently.
- 2) Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE) and Mental Skill Training (MST), to build the resilience of both young people and the staff that support them.
- 3) Development of an early identification tool, which places a focus upon progressive outcomes.

Housing Strategy and Homelessness Transformation

Young Peoples housing needs will be a key feature of the proposed housing strategy and associated work in relation to the Supported Housing Policy and Homelessness Transformation. The positive pathway approach which is recognised within young people services will be developed further within the context of the homelessness transformation work. The work has been presented to the Housing and Homes Scrutiny Committee on the 17th January 2017.

Foyer Style Employment First Model for Young People in Care 16 plus

12, self - contained supported accommodation flats have been secured through a purpose built scheme in Great Barr. The scheme will offer onsite employment and training resources to young people accessing the supported accommodation. The aim is to take an employment first approach whereby, the access into training; education and employment are a key offer of the service provision. The first referrals are due to take place this month.

ESF – YEI funding match with Supporting People Funding

Supporting People funding has been matched to the ESF – Youth Employment Initiative, therefore enabling greater capacity for housing related support provision to deliver EET outcomes for young people the furthest away from the labour market. This includes young people with an in care background.

The good things/improvements:

A closer relationship between disciplines particularly in relation to housing, children's social care and commissioning colleagues.

Ofsted recognition for the work that is currently being undertaken to develop best practice models in relation to housing and support through the use of the St Basils/Barnardos model.



What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it

Want to get to a point where as a City we do not confine or define young people by their past experience but makes an outcomes focused offer in relation to their specific circumstances.

Work to fully embed the St Basils and Barnardos care leavers accommodation and support pathway with providers and partner agencies.

Linked to this is the need to ensure that all providers deliver tenancy ready programmes for young people as part of their transition into independent living. This is already a requirement of all Supporting People funded supported accommodations. It was also a line of inquiry by Ofsted in terms of the discussions relating to the provision of accommodation options for young people leaving care.

Scope out the possibility of a radically different approach to commissioning supported accommodation for young people aged 16 plus in the future. There is an opportunity to draw together the expertise, learning and best outcomes for young people from across supporting people funded provision and current provision through the proposed Staffordshire Framework.

Report From: Melanie Page

Report To: Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

Date: 25th January 2017

The journey so far

The BCC Childrens Residential Service has been reduced over the past five years through a number of closures; the 5 mainstream homes were subject of TUPE to Priory education service in October 2016. The remaining service offers permanency and short breaks for disabled children across five sites. The services provide 27 long term beds and 120 short break placements.

In April 2015 the Childrens Homes regulations were revised and reissued including the Quality Standards. The Ofsted inspection framework was also revised, the grade descriptors and Judgment names changed.

The Disabled Childrens Residential Service has struggled over the years to have its own identity and has generally had to follow the recording systems and processes that were implemented across the estate. Ofsted made a requirement in 2015 that there should be an improvement and reduction of paperwork and recording systems, so that children and families can understand what is written about them and the progress their child makes. Also the paperwork will be more suited to children with disabilities, complex needs and non-verbal communication.

All of the homes have two inspections a year from Ofsted, they have an independent visitor who visits monthly to comply with section 44 of the children homes regulations. Managers undertake a 6 monthly analysis of the progress of the home and this is sent to HMCI, the managers also produce development plans for the homes based on the reports from these audits.

At Edgewood Road there is a working agreement with health; nurses are employed to provide care for children with additional health care needs. The social care staff are also specialist trained.

Ofsted Judged Edgewood Road as inadequate in January 16 and issues 12 compliance notices this was a difficult time particularly after a solid inspection record of being good for years. Both social care and health worked closely together to rectify all of the issues and Edgewood road was judged as requires improvement

when re inspected in February 16. A recent Ofsted inspection in October 16 has judged Edgewood Road to be good.

There are requirements in three of the homes to improve the decoration and fabric of the building. Works are being carried out and there have been huge improvements, however progress can be slow. Managers from property maintenance have visited the sites again in October.

The children must have access to aids and equipment to be able to communicate and express their views. A substantial amount of training and purchasing of equipment has taken place as well as visits to services that have embedded strategies for communication. The inspector highlighted the difficulties staff have engaging with some schools to access communication passports and the homes are not consistently using the resources available to them.

The positives are broad, generally children enjoy living in the homes and receiving short breaks. There was positive feedback from Parents, social workers, health and schools. Children make progress and have good relationships with staff.

What we have done

The requirements brought forward by Ofsted has focused the service to meet all of the requirements however some are still to be embedded and the requirements have been repeated for two homes, the round of inspections before Christmas recognised the vast improvements made with recording systems, communication for children, working with schools and assessing and monitoring deprivation of liberty as well as enabling children.

We work very closely with property maintenance to improve the homes living environments for the children. A range of decorating and maintenance is currently taking place in the homes.

We have had two new sensory environments installed which are very popular with the children. Edgewood Road have a garden project where they are raising money for outdoor play equipment. All short break bedrooms are themed and have points of reference for children with Autism.

The home managers have successfully obtained funding from Service Birmingham Staff Benefit Scheme to purchase I pads and communication software, computers as well as play equipment and garden play equipment.

An audit of training and development was taken early in the year and each home manager has engaged in developing their staff teams and undertaken training. This

year in addition to the core training specialist Autism tiers 1 -3 training has been undertaken by staff and managers.

The umbrella project is working with sexual health coordinators to provide training to all staff.

The home managers and service manager have visited other residential services to share good practice.

The homes have developed their working relationships with schools, in particular Calthorpe School has responded to arrange a regular meeting to share good practice regarding communication.

Parents are regularly invited into the homes and encouraged to give feedback.

Supervisions and team meetings are reflective and regular. Each home has engaged the staff in development days focusing on the development of the service.

5 staff have been trained by Makaton to local tutor level which enabled them to train staff, we have invested in communication symbols, pictures and I pads.

Safeguarding disabled children through the BCSB has been accessed as well as a bespoke training package by Trinity Training in Nov/Dec.

The management teams have engaged with all of the briefings offered by HR in people management. Strengthening the support to staff and ensuring procedures are followed and absence is robustly managed.

During the TUPE mainstream staff were interviewed for various posts. An internal and external recruitment drive ensured that all of the current vacant posts were filled. Significantly reducing the need for agency staff.

The Rights and participation Service have always supported the residential homes particularly with projects such as funding for Arts awards and events. Unfortunately due to resources the visiting advocates to the home were stopped and it became a referral based service. After discussions in January the visiting advocates have been reinstated and the children now have access to a visiting advocate once per month.

The good things/improvements

At Warwick House the Communication and Autism Team, Children Out of School Project has been operating from the building for three years. This year building



works were undertaken to completely separate the short breaks from the school and give them their own environment a service level agreement has been put in to place.

There have been Improvements in all homes environments

Recruitment of new staff. This Included a successful children's panel that were supported by the RAP advocate.

A project of leasing appropriate transport for the children including minibuses and people carriers.

Celebrations – cooking project at Warwick House, Arts awards, educational achievements.

Parents have set up their own forums at Warwick and Charles House this has come out of regular coffee morning started by the homes.

Staff have been recognised by being nominated for shining star and chamberlain awards

Children have learned new skills and moved on to Foster care or returned home as well as successful transitions to adult care. With OT assessments children with high dependence using high sided beds have progressed to using ordinary beds.

Positive things reported about the service.

The staff team demonstrates a high level of understanding of the young people's needs and know what the young people like and don't like and how they like to be treated. Staff now have a greater understanding of Deprivation of Liberty and how it applies to the work they do. The home continues to have strong links with other agencies, particularly around young people's medical needs. A Speech, Language and Communication Audit has been completed and look at ways of communicating with young people. Edgewood Road Independent visitors report Dec 16

Children and young people progress across all aspects of their lives. They grow in confidence as they try new experiences and consistently celebrate their achievements.

Children and young people hold the home in high regard. One said, 'The staff are all kind and I get on with most people, and this means that we can all do activities and be like a normal family.'

Both health and education staff are very complimentary about the staff. Teachers value staff's knowledge of autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. They

are keen to extend the behaviour management strategies used at the home across to school

Camborne house Ofsted report Oct 16

The first time I came to look around here I thought it looked great. I am really looking forward to going to Drayton Manor Park on Thursday. It is going to be epic. A child Wrote – CHARLES HOUSE, CHARLES HOUSE – VERY GOOD. Charles House. Independent advocate report Oct 16

Mom of twins who are aged 11 and attend the home together - they have been attending for just over 6 months. Mom reported that they used to go to a play scheme for children with ADHD/Autism where they used to get bored, but they really enjoy and love coming here. Mom explained the difference it has made – previously she had only got about 3 hours sleep and now she gets about 5 or 6 hours. Her daughter has now learnt that when she is in bed she needs to go to sleep. Warwick House Independent Visitors Report August 16

Staff are extremely dedicated and are innovative about how they work with young people. They embrace change and the new leadership in the home.

Young people enjoy better quality and more meaningful contact because of improving communication and behaviour management strategies.

Managers and staff are keen to visit other providers and work in partnership with schools to look for and implement new ideas at the home. Reservoir Road Ofsted report Oct 2016

What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it

- Embed the communication framework and Makaton training.

Each home has a repeated requirement from Ofsted. The newly qualified Makaton tutors will be running workshops for staff. Each home has a communication framework which they will tailor to each child, working closely with school and home. This will be audited monthly by the independent visitor.

- Ensure recording is fit for purpose and meaningful.

Discussions are still taking place with health to tweak the new recording system at Edgewood Road so it is more meaningful but meets with the CQC requirements.

Charles House is piloting a child friendly daily record which has been very successful and will be rolled out to other homes.

- Ensure the homes environments are fit for purpose.

Decorating, repairs and maintenance schedules of work will continue to progress.

The savings proposal will be consulted upon, it is part of the proposal that the building at Reservoir Road is used for short breaks currently delivered from Charles House as it is a much newer building.

Report From: Steve Mennear Head of Service TESS

Report To: Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

Date: 25th January 2017

Title: Therapeutic Emotional Support Service (TESS)

Summary:

The journey so far

The purpose of TESS is to promote the health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people and to support those who have responsibility for their care. The underpinning approach is 'Relationship-based Practice'. This acknowledges that relationship is a central element in practice and draws on the extensive evidence base that confirms a good therapeutic alliance is the key to a positive outcome for any intervention. The aim is to build resilience rather than 'treat' difficulties or problems with a focus on supporting the development of secure attachments.

Fully staffed the service has 27 workers and managers - predominately therapeutically trained social workers who include fully qualified family therapists, play therapists and counsellors. We also have an art therapist and two clinical psychologists with plans to recruit a third.

TESS was established in April 2013 as an 'in-house' emotional wellbeing service for Birmingham's looked after children. It also covers care leavers and more recently extended its support to cover children on the 'edge of care'. The service had previously been part of Looked After Children CAMHS, a joint venture between BCC and the NHS which had the aim of providing a 'Comprehensive CAMHS' for looked after children. LAC CAMHS ended in March 2013 due to the need for BCC to make significant budgetary savings.



The NHS staff returned to 'mainstream' CAMHS hosted by Birmingham Children's Hospital. Since then NHS CAMHS has been re-commissioned as part of the new 0-25 Mental Health Service – Forward Thinking Birmingham (FTB).

What we have done

The service has gone through a number of changes in the past three and a half years to make it more efficient and responsive to requests for support. We offer three levels of response in respect of meeting the emotional wellbeing needs of looked after children:

Level 1 – Consultation, Advice and Support

We provide a Helpline from 9am to 12noon weekdays for social workers and carers to ring up for advice regarding children and young people and to discuss potential referrals along with a 'TESS Referrals' inbox. Consultation is provided at the three area main offices twice monthly with opportunities for bookable and drop-in sessions and monthly to the Fostering Service for link workers and their foster carers. TESS is also represented at the Area Resource Panels and the Birmingham Complex Care Panel.

Level 2 – Initial Screening and Team around the Child meetings

All new referrals are screened for level of urgency and prioritised. There are good links with FTB to discuss more serious presentations with joint FTB/TESS 'Initial Screening'/'Choice Appointments'. The majority of referrals will be booked into a TESS – only Initial Screening meeting and if a direct therapeutic intervention is identified as appropriate children will be allocated depending on level of priority and the nature of the intervention required. For children placed out of city support is offered to identify a local service and for children who do not meet the threshold for NHS CAMHS we can commission a local therapeutic service.

As of the end of December 2016 the average waiting time for an Initial Screening to be offered was 5.3 weeks

Level 3 – Direct Therapeutic Intervention

TESS offers a wide variety of therapeutic interventions. These include Systemic Family Therapy, Play & Art Therapy, Counselling, Video Interactive Guidance (VIG), Filial-based Therapy, Dialectical Behaviour Therapy Skills (DBT), Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) and resilience-based approaches. While some approaches are designed to develop secure attachments within stable placements the majority of TESS interventions are delivered to children in temporary placements and to support transitions through to permanency.

As of the end of December 2016 the average wait for a direct intervention to commence was 9.4 weeks from date of referral or an average of 4.1 weeks from when the need was confirmed at an initial screening.

The good things/improvements

The initial screening / team around the child meetings are generally viewed very positively. People are asked to fill in a questionnaire and comments include:

“It was very helpful in providing further insight into the behaviour and emotional presentation of (child)” (social worker)

“I was able to speak freely...my points and observations were valued...comfortable environment to speak in” (foster care)

“Talking therapy helped me loosen up” (young person)

At the end of an intervention children, young people and carers are asked to complete the ‘Children’s Experience of Service Questionnaire’ (Chi-ESQ). These are also generally positive and include comments such as:

“What was really good...was how at ease the child was made to feel, enabling them to express themselves...the continued advice to use whilst at home...the play that would reveal what was going emotionally and information given on how best to deal with it.” (foster carer)

“I think the support we received was really good. There was lots of strategies to try and help my child” (foster carer)

There has been a lot of positive feedback from the Edge of Care Teams regarding the support offered from TESS to date. They have appreciated the offer of strategies, guidance, suggestions and new tools to use. They have

also appreciated the time to reflect and look at things from a different perspective – particularly with regard to their ‘stuck’ cases.

We have introduced two new interventions to help support carers and children develop secure attachments. Filial therapy is a psycho-educational family intervention in which the therapist coaches a foster carer to hold special child-led play sessions with the child in their care. The aim is to build the attachment between the child and the carer, and to enable the carer to become more attuned to the child’s needs. An example was our work with ‘David’, a 15 year old with a male carer. David had a traumatic history including sexual abuse from his father. By the end of the intervention David had become a very different lad - more confident, more self-aware and more able to engage socially.

Another approach we have developed is Video Interaction Guidance (VIG). This is a NICE guidelines approved intervention that uses video-feedback in order to encourage positive aspects of the care-giver – infant interaction. This was offered to ‘John’ and his carer. John was a 4 year old with a significant history of parental neglect and abuse, witnessing parental violence and drug abuse. Through observing the videoed sessions the carer was able to reflect on their attuned responses to John that provided emotional containment and reassurance. The carer reported that outside of VIG sessions, they saw John growing in closeness, seeking hugs, and using his carer to make sense of his day; this in turn helped secure his relationship with his carers and allowed John to feel more settled and safe.

What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it

1. Improvements to our ‘front-end’ response.

The main criticism from the OFSTED report related to response times within both TESS and FTB. Our aim over the next twelve months will be to continue the reduction in average waiting time for first appointment and to remove any waiting time for allocation once the need for a direct TESS intervention has been established.

2. Develop and embed the ‘LAC Pathway’ in conjunction with Forward Thinking Birmingham.

Joint ‘Initial Screening’/‘Choice Appointment’ slots began in September 2016 with the aim of ensuring there was no more ‘bouncing’ of referrals between FTB and TESS – which was also picked up on by OFSTED. We

also need to ensure that Birmingham's looked after children have appropriate access to care pathways within FTB. We now have an 'nhs.net' email account to facilitate transfer of confidential information between ourselves and FTB – streamlining communication. We still need to finalise a data-sharing agreement so we can be clear who is accessing what service. We also need to finalise some of the care pathways including access to psychiatric opinion and neurodevelopmental assessments.

3. Embed support to the Edge of Care Service.

Two systemic practitioners (including one 'trainee') were recruited to provide half time clinical input to each of the three Edge of Care teams. Consultation is also provided by our qualified Systemic Family Therapists. Feedback on the support offered so far has generally been very positive. As part of a TESS restructure a systemic team was developed to support this work with a dedicated manager to oversee the Edge of Care development.

4. New evidence-based interventions.

As noted above we have introduced two new interventions to help support carers and children develop secure attachments – Filial Therapy and Video Interaction Guidance (VIG). The service is committed to ongoing training of staff to ensure we remain at the cutting edge of evidence-based interventions.

5. Care Leavers.

The Public Health funding of the Care Leaver's Mental Health Service came to an end in March 2016 and this left a gap that was not covered by the developments in Forward Thinking Birmingham. Public Health have initiated a pilot project around Integrated Personal Budgets for care leavers and as part of the government's 'Future in Mind' initiative to promote, protect and improve children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, a small amount of transformation money has been identified to support care leavers. In addition TESS has identified resources to provide bookable sessions for young people and their personal advisors and we will be looking to develop this over the next twelve months.

Care leavers accommodation and support framework

In partnership with

| | |
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Acknowledgements

The framework has been developed and produced by Barnardo’s and St Basil’s with support from Anna Whalen. The following organisations are members of the working group and have provided support in developing the framework. We are very grateful to the individual staff and young people who have taken the time to share their expertise.



This project has been funded by Barnardo’s as part of its policy and practice work to support care leavers. St Basil’s is funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to support local authorities across England in the prevention of youth homelessness. St Basil’s role in the development and dissemination of the Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework with Barnardo’s is part of the DCLG funded work.

Executive summary

Young people leaving care need somewhere safe and suitable to live to help them make a positive transition into adulthood. Good housing underpins success in other areas of life. This framework draws together expertise from local authorities, voluntary sector organisations and young people across England on how to provide appropriate accommodation for care leavers.

The framework has been developed for local authority commissioners, leaving care and housing managers, and for providers of housing and support for young people in England. It is intended to be used flexibly to suit local circumstances and needs, and provides a model that local authorities can adapt. It can be used both to help individual young people find the best accommodation locally for them, but also by commissioners to inform housing strategies and the supply of appropriate accommodation.

There are five stages to the framework which reflect the journey of a young person as they leave care:

1. Preparing for the reality of housing options

Young people still in care are given the opportunity to consider their housing options, including information about the housing market in their area. They are supported to gain the skills for increasing independence, including around managing a household, finance and budgeting.

2. Planning young people's accommodation and support options with them

When young people are ready to leave care, they are supported to choose the accommodation that will best suit them, given the constraints on local provision. They are given as much notice as possible for their move out of care, including those in different settings such as residential care, those in custody and those with on-going mental or physical health issues.

3. Reducing housing crisis

Some young people will experience problems with their housing and need emergency or short-term alternatives. They need to be accommodated in safe and appropriate housing options and receive support to help them resolve the cause of the crisis.

4. Accessing housing and support as needed

Young people in different situations will need different types of housing and support, ranging from 24/7 supported housing through to their own independent flat with floating support. Some young people will want to stay in a family environment like supported lodgings. As their needs and circumstances change, young people should be supported to find accommodation that best suits them.

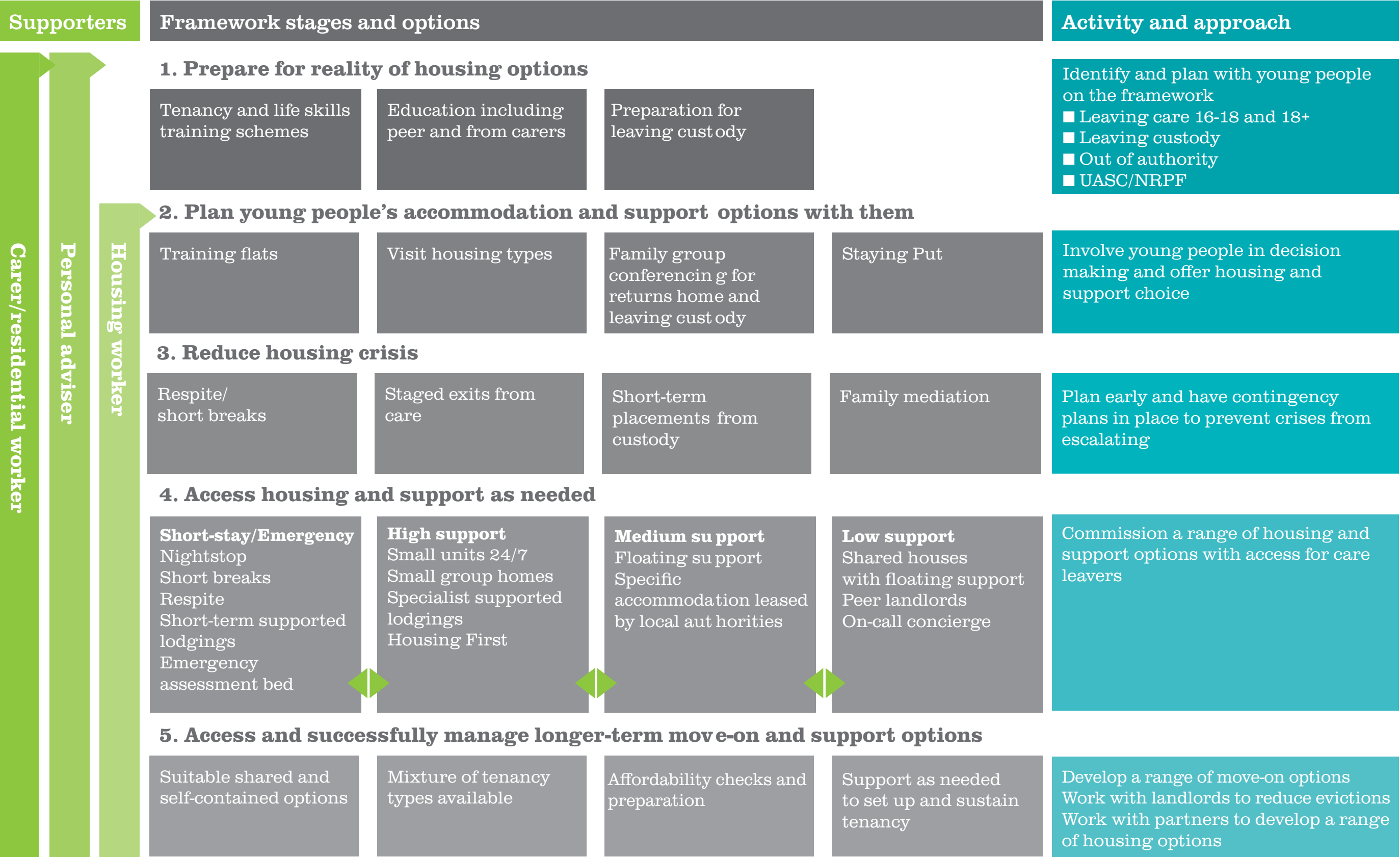
5. Accessing and successfully managing longer-term move-on and support options

As they become ready, young people will need support to access longer-term housing, such as their own tenancy, a shared flat or long-term supported housing. They will need help to understand their options and know where to go if they need extra support in the future.

The framework is based on some key principles which also underpin the corporate parenting role. Young people leaving care are:

- given as much information, choice and control as possible
- able to make mistakes and never 'fall out' of the framework
- helped to succeed
- offered flexible support that adapts to meet their needs
- offered supportive and unconditional relationships
- the shared responsibility of their corporate parent.

Care leavers accommodation and support framework



Underlying principles – young people are:

- given a much information choice and control as possible
- able to make mistakes and never ‘fall out’ of the framework
- helped to succeed
- offered flexible support that adapts to meet their needs
- offered supportive and unconditional relationships
- the shared responsibility of their corporate parent.

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Introduction

The Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework is a model which aims to help organisations that support young people in making their individual journeys to leave care in England. It has been developed collaboratively with a wide range of partners who together have pooled their knowledge and ideas about what works well in helping care leavers transition to adulthood.

The framework is written for:

- local authority commissioners
- leaving care managers
- housing managers
- providers of housing and support for young people.

Having somewhere safe and secure to live is central to young people having a positive exit from care. Research¹ shows that young people highly value having choice about where they will live and being involved in decisions that will affect them. Young people's involvement in these decisions is a valuable learning experience as they make the transition to adulthood and more independence and, as well as reducing their anxiety about the future and how they will cope, it also makes them more likely to invest in sustaining their housing choice. A secure housing base is also critical to young people progressing in other areas of life, such as education, training or employment, improved mental health, relationships and building of social networks. However, there is no blueprint for success in terms of what needs to happen and when. Each young person's experience of being looked after is different, and their experience of leaving care will also be different.

The transition to adulthood for all young people, including care leavers, is about progression. For care leavers, this may be a series of small or larger steps, both within care and also leaving care and beyond. Some young people may get their own independent accommodation at 18 but they will continue to need support as they develop their skills, learn from experience and react to their changing life circumstances. Realistically, however, most young people at 18 – not only care leavers – will find it difficult to manage their own tenancy successfully even with some support, and any experience of 'failure' can damage them practically and emotionally so early on their journey to independence. As care leavers, young people need support from their corporate parents throughout and beyond this transition.

What brings young people into care?

Although over half of children enter care before age 10, currently 43% have their first experiences of care as an adolescent or teenager, with 15% entering care

at age 16 or older (Department for Education, Children looked after in England including adoption, 2014²). Many become looked after for the same reasons as younger children, but older teenagers are more likely to enter care through the following routes:

- as a homeless 16 or 17 year old
- as an unaccompanied asylum seeker
- because they were accommodated on remand.

Young people leaving care have a wide variety of needs and wishes which will have been influenced by their childhood experiences of living with their family and also living in care. For example, young people who have been in care since they were small children will be more familiar with having a social worker, pathway plans and personal advisors whereas, for those entering at 16 or 17 because they were homeless, all this can seem irrelevant and interfering. The range of young people's pre-care and in-care experiences will mean that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to supporting care leavers.

The accommodation framework aims to show a range of options for housing and support that care leavers may need as they move into adulthood. In using this framework, it is helpful to keep in mind the diversity of experience that lies behind "leaving care".

Who developed the accommodation framework?

The care leavers accommodation and support framework was produced in 2015 by Barnardo's and St Basil's. It is based on the Positive Youth Accommodation Pathway that was developed in 2012 by St Basil's for the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to support the housing needs of homeless young people. A survey by Homeless Link (2014)³ found that 50% of the local authorities that responded were developing a Positive Pathway approach for young people or had one in place already. The care leaver framework builds on the Positive Pathway but also reflects the specific legislation and rights affecting care leavers in England as well as providing examples that are relevant to their housing experiences.

Barnardo's and St Basil's worked with a group of local authorities, leaving care providers, youth housing providers and central government representatives to develop a framework for care leavers which recognised their statutory entitlements as well as the additional challenges that they face on entering adulthood. Young people in and leaving care were also asked what support they wanted to see in the framework. All of these views and ideas were collated together and developed into this framework by Barnardo's and St Basil's.

¹ http://archive.c4eo.org.uk/themes/vulnerablechildren/careleavers/files/increasing_care_leavers_in_safe_accommodation_full_knowledge_review.pdf

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption--2>
³ <http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/201411%20-%20Young%20and%20Homeless%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf>

How should the accommodation framework be used?

The framework is not prescriptive but gives a model for how young people can be supported as they leave care. The framework itself is very simple and represented in the diagram on page 7. The rest of this report gives background information, examples, checklists and top tips to help in using the framework. Your own unique set of local services and partnerships – what’s working well, your plans and your ideas – can be mapped on to this model. It is yours to use as flexibly as you want to.

For example, you could use the framework:

- to carry out a needs analysis of care leavers in your area
- to review your existing services through a commissioning audit
- to identify your service strengths and gaps
- as a template for service re-design.

The framework identifies five stages that young people may experience as they leave care. The stages are not always sequential and young people may move several times between different stages. They have been identified, however, to help you think through the range of areas in which young people will need support as they leave care.

The stages are:



How can children and young people be engaged in using the framework locally?

As you develop the framework locally, a key to real improvement is the involvement of children and young people. Using your Children in Care Council and other participation groups will help to find out what care leavers want locally and what (often small) things make positive differences for them.

You can also draw on the wealth of information available in young people’s pathway plans. Drawing all of these plans together can help you analyse the strengths and gaps in your current service provision. This approach will also make sure you hear the voices of all care leavers in your area – not just those who are willing to join in with groups. In addition, feedback from local providers and support services will be important too, giving different perspectives on what works well and areas for improvement.

What will make the framework work well?

The framework is based on some underlying principles to give young people the best start possible as they leave care. Although the framework gives practical ideas for delivering good services for young people, the attitude of their corporate parent is key to making it work well.

These principles are that young people leaving care are:

- given as much information, choice and control as possible
- able to make mistakes and never ‘fall out’ of the framework
- helped to succeed
- offered flexible support that adapts to meet their needs
- offered supportive and unconditional relationships
- the shared responsibility of their corporate parent.

The framework also relies on different parts of a local authority working effectively together. Experience from all those already using an accommodation framework demonstrates that effective joint working between Housing, Children’s Services, Housing Related Support commissioners (often known as Supporting People commissioners) as well as with health commissioners and providers, education, training and employment agencies, criminal justice partners, the voluntary sector and the private sector, is an essential driver of a successful approach. This is “corporate parenting” in action.



1. Prepare for reality of housing options

| Supporters | Framework stages and options | | | Activity and approach |
|---|--|--|---------------------------------|--|
| Care/residential worker Personal adviser | 1. Prepare for reality of housing options | | | Identify and plan with young people on the framework ■ Leaving care 16-18 and 18+ ■ Leaving custody ■ Out of authority ■ UASC/NRPF |
| | Tenancy and life skills training schemes | Education including peer and from carers | Preparation for leaving custody | |

‘[Living independently was] lonely, most young people really want to move to independent living but it’s not the same as you think it will be. It’s you and this house, if you don’t have any savings or not enough money to buy a TV or something to entertain yourself, sometimes it can be really, really lonely.’
(Young person, Barnardo’s)

Young people in care need sufficient relevant and accurate information about what will happen when they leave care, where they might live and the pros and cons of various options. Foster carers, residential workers, social workers and personal advisers have a vital role to play in preparing young people for the reality of living more independently and making them aware of their housing options when they leave care. The preparation and intended next steps should be written into the young person’s pathway plan.

Looking back, many care leavers have reflected that their expectations about living independently were unrealistic. Most advocate strongly that local authorities should give young people much better information, advice and practical preparation as well as contingency plans in case things go wrong. An important principle of this framework is its flexibility, so that young people can move back into more supportive options if they find they are not ready for greater independence.

Because young people who are looked after live in a variety of different arrangements, it is important to make sure they get bespoke information and tailored advice, based on their individual circumstances alongside more general information about housing options. For example, where a young person is going to have a Staying Put arrangement with their long-term foster carer, or is likely to go to university, there is no real benefit in giving them very detailed information on supported accommodation and tenancies whilst they are still in care. Should things change, then the level of advice and information can change.

Depending on a young person’s circumstances, this preparation can start well before they want to leave care, and could form part of more general life skills training. You may be using a locally developed preparation for independence programme. Some examples of existing schemes are given on the next page.

Example

Start Smart⁴ is a peer mentoring programme in Merseyside to help young care leavers get ready to live independently. Developed and run by Barnardo's, the service trains older care leavers to become peer mentors, through an accredited training scheme, who then support younger adolescents to take their first steps towards independent living. The programme is supplemented by intensive support from staff to develop wider life and social skills.

Example

The Money House⁵ is delivered by The Hyde Group in partnership with the Royal Borough of Greenwich, MyBnk, Meridian Money Advice and Greenwich CAB. It is aimed at 16-25 year olds who are prospective social tenants in Greenwich or those who are already living as a young tenant in social housing but need more help around money and budgeting. 96% of young people complete the course and as a result get greater priority in the bidding process for move-on social housing in Greenwich. Young tenants who have attended the course are doing better in managing their rent accounts as a result, with graduates three times less likely to be in arrears of over £500 than those who didn't attend. Using a real flat, young people attend 5 days of training. It uses the real setting to deliver practical learning which looks at:

- tenancy agreements;
- costs of moving in;
- avoiding eviction;
- paying household bills and choosing utility providers;
- banking, saving, borrowing and budgeting;
- spending habits and shopping; and
- claiming benefits.

Young people who complete the course come away with an AQA in Budgeting and Debt Management.

Example

Crisis has developed a training toolkit⁶ aimed at support staff working with young people to educate them about living in the private rented sector. The toolkit explains about tenants' rights and clarifies some myths such as around eviction and rental increases. It also provides links to other pre-tenancy training programmes.

4 <http://www.barnardos.org.uk/start-smart-wirral/service-view.htm?id=221639502>

5 <https://thefirsthouseblog.wordpress.com>

6 <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/move-on-to-private-renting-.html>

Joint working

As their parents, our children learn from us about the 'real world' – having a job, finding somewhere to live, managing money. But the housing market has changed so much in the last few decades that what was once common practice is often no longer an option. Are your foster and residential carers and personal advisers up to date about housing for young people today?

There will be issues particular to your local area but here is some general information about the housing market:

- social housing waiting lists can be very long and no longer offer a tenancy for life
- care leavers aren't always given priority for social housing in all areas – allocations policies vary from area to area
- from age 22, care leavers living in private rented accommodation will find that if they are still claiming Housing Benefit, it will reduce to the level of the Shared Accommodation Rate⁷
- private rented properties can vary hugely in quality.

There are lots of different ways in which you can keep these 'corporate parents' – carers, personal advisers and social workers – informed.

Many local authorities have specialist advice on housing options for young people leaving care. The structure for how this is delivered varies. For example:

In **Stoke-on-Trent**, a full time housing officer works within the leaving care team, allowing good sharing of up to date knowledge about the local housing market, problem solving and offering specialist advice to young people and their carers or personal advisers.

In **Hull**, the Leaving Care service works closely with the Young People's Housing Options Service, which is part of the Targeted Youth Support provision. Any care leaver who needs advice on housing or more in-depth specialist help to prevent housing crisis, including homelessness, can access the service on a daily emergency basis Monday-Friday or request an Housing Options appointment to discuss their housing needs.

The Targeted Youth Support and Leaving Care partnership offers advice and support to help young people develop a tailored housing plan to meet their individual needs and wants. The service jointly offers access to a range of supported and semi-independent accommodation options through to individual tenancies and aims to provide young people with the opportunity to move between varying levels of support to reflect changes in their circumstances and needs. The partnership also delivers an accredited Independent Living Skills programme to help young people develop the necessary skills to make a successful transition to independent living.

7 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-housing-allowance-lha-rates-applicable-from-april-2015-march-2016>

In addition, the Housing Authority ensures care leavers can access social housing if needed through additional priority in their allocations scheme as part of an agreed Move On protocol with the Leaving Care and Targeted Youth Support Service.

In **Gloucestershire**, a two-tier authority, a Youth Housing Advice Service is located within the Youth Support Team which is run on behalf of Gloucestershire County Council by Prospects Services. This offers a wide range of advice to all care leavers, their personal advisers and carers. The Service works with all the district authorities to support care leavers, plan moves and reduce risks of homelessness.

If there is no specialist housing provision for young people leaving care, a local Housing Options Service (sometimes called Homelessness Service) is usually keen to help other professionals to understand the local and national issues relating to housing choices. You could also ask a Housing Options Officer to speak at regular foster or residential carer training sessions.

Leaving care – checklist

Whatever their current situation, all young people will need to be prepared for what life will be like when they leave care. Have you considered how best to prepare young people across the wide range of placements below?

- ☐ In local authority foster care
- ☐ In agency foster care (which could be out of authority)
- ☐ In local authority residential care
- ☐ In agency residential care (which could be out of authority)
- ☐ Those planning to Stay Put
- ☐ In “other arrangements” such as supported lodgings or supported accommodation projects

Young people all have their own unique circumstances – and one size does not fit all. Discussions will vary according to each individual young person because you are working with care leavers who, as well as having their own circumstances and future aspirations, are:

- ☐ In long-term, settled care placements
- ☐ In a series of short-term placements
- ☐ Unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- ☐ Planning to go to university, join the Armed Forces or take up training or FE away from the local area

- ☐ In custody
- ☐ Physically disabled or have learning difficulties
- ☐ Teenagers who are newly looked-after
- ☐ Young parents
- ☐ Experiencing mental health difficulties (e.g. sectioned)
- ☐ In hospital for a long-term period of medical care

In considering these questions, it may be useful to do an audit of your team’s skills and knowledge in providing up-to-date and accurate information to young people about their housing options and discuss with Independent Reviewing Officers the range of options available and sorts of issues they might want to consider covering in Pathway Plan reviews.

Joint working – checklist

Different parts of the local authority will have different information and experience about the needs of care leavers locally. Bringing this together and having a joint approach helps to manage the transition to leaving care better, in terms of accommodation and support. Use this checklist to see how well you are working together in this stage of the framework.

- ☐ Commissioning for leaving care support and housing is based on an evidenced needs analysis.
- ☐ All relevant parts of the local authority, other public sector agencies, voluntary agencies, Housing Associations and other local providers of relevant services feed into the needs analysis. As well as Leaving Care Services, this could include Housing Options Services, Public Health, Youth Offending Services, Probation / Community Rehabilitation Companies and local providers.
- ☐ Leaving care commissioners understand and are consulted about changes to the local housing allocations scheme.
- ☐ Leaving care commissioners understand the supply and affordability of housing locally, including social housing and supply, affordability and access to the private rented sector (PRS).
- ☐ Housing and housing related support commissioners understand the range of needs of care leavers, any projected changes in needs and also any changes in the size of the leaving care population.
- ☐ Access and referral policies for supported accommodation and floating support acknowledge the needs of care leavers.

Top tips

- Think about how you can harness the experiences of other young people to advise and guide care leavers. Often young people learn best from each other, particularly when they are being warned about challenges ahead. Peer training or mentoring, or even a short film they make to show other young people, can be very effective.
- Close working between Housing Options, LAC and leaving care teams can help develop staff knowledge and their ability to offer good, realistic advice to care leavers. Having a member of staff from a Housing Authority or provider located within a leaving care service has proved to be highly effective in a number of authorities.
- Foster and residential carers, social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) need realistic information about what housing options are available locally so that they can pass this information on to young people.
- A good understanding of the LAC and leaving care data at a strategic level can improve long-term planning.
- Where possible, run accredited training courses on pre-tenancy awareness or life skills. This will allow young people to gain additional qualifications or credits towards study courses. Care leavers also need to know where they can go for more tenancy advice after they no longer receive a leaving care service (at 21 or at 25 for those in education or training), so they may need signposting to mainstream housing options and advice services.
- When planning with young people for their individual accommodation options, try to give them choice but be realistic about what is possible and available in the local area.
- When preparing young people for the realities of their housing options, work closely alongside foster carers and residential workers. They are likely to know young people very well, dependent on how long the placement has been, and are often the best person to talk to care leavers about the future – but they need up to date information to be able to do so.

2. Plan young people’s accommodation and support with them

| Supporters | Framework stages and options | | | | Activity and approach |
|---|--|---------------------|--|-------------|--|
| Care/residential worker Personal adviser Housing worker | 2. Plan young people’s accommodation and support options with them | | | | Involve young people in decision making and offer housing and support choice |
| | Training flats | Visit housing types | Family Group Conferencing for returns home and leaving custody | Staying Put | |

‘I’ve been very protected, for a very long time, and now moving out, it makes it even more scary because I’ve been so protected.’ (Young person, Barnardo’s)

Better planning and preparation will support better outcomes for young people, as well as giving them personal assurance about their next steps into adult life. Personal advisers and carers can help young people to understand or even try out different housing options for a short period of time. With a better understanding of the reality of living more independently, young people are empowered to make a well-informed choice.

Pathway Plans set out when a young person will formally leave care and the intended next steps. The Children Act 1989 stipulates that all eligible, relevant and former relevant children should have a Pathway Plan, which should be a live document that is reviewed regularly.⁸ Pathway Plans should be completed within 28 days of a care leaver changing their accommodation. Social workers and personal advisers will have the information to be able to plan those moves well in advance.

As stated in statutory guidance⁹, **contingency plans** – or a ‘back up’ plan – are a good idea for young people generally. For some young people, a more detailed contingency plan is needed, for example young people placed in a foster care or residential care setting in another area, those coming out of custody as a care leaver or those seeking asylum and awaiting the decision. Some young people placed outside the local authority area may choose to stay where they were living as a looked after child and not return to their ‘home’ authority. It is really important for these groups that there is detailed planning about their accommodation needs as it may not be automatic or straightforward that they will get any priority for social housing or that a local authority would recognise their ‘local connection’.

Some local authorities find that having a regular **‘panel’ meeting** between Housing and Children’s Services departments can effectively generate a shared agreement about the accommodation plan for some or all looked after young people who are preparing to leave care. This is in addition to individual pathway

⁸ Department for Education, Children Act 1989: transition to adulthood for care leavers, January 2015, Chapter 3
⁹ Department for Education, Children Act 1989: transition to adulthood for care leavers, January 2015, paragraphs 7.74-7.79

planning meetings. For example, panel meetings can consider the range of available accommodation options to avoid a care leaver being set up to fail in a tenancy which they are not yet ready for. Young people can be involved in any discussion, including panel meetings, if they want to be.

The new right to **Stay Put** in foster care gives young people more time to think about where they want to live when they do leave care. The sector-led guidance¹⁰ sets out how to plan for Staying Put well before a care leaver reaches 18, and guidance¹¹ from NCAS provides information for young people themselves. Staying Put can bring greater stability for care leavers, particularly those who don't yet feel ready to 'move out' or who have a very good relationship with their carer. The carer, who will probably know the young person best of all, should be involved in helping them plan for their next step. However, having a Staying Put arrangement can lead to a change in relationships with a former foster carer, so it is important to have a contingency plan in place in case it doesn't work out. Whatever the plans, the detail needs to be written into their Pathway Plan.

Some care leavers may plan to return to their birth parents: 2013-14 12% of 19-year-old care leavers were living with their parents. Young people can have unrealistic expectations of what returning 'home' will be like, and often these relationships soon start to struggle. Where a return home is the plan, there needs to be substantial pre-move planning and on-going support to help both the young person and their parents or extended family to adjust. This can be a particular issue for care leavers returning home having been in custody.

Family Group Conferencing (FGC) can be a useful way to help the young person and their family make the best choices and to settle. FGC is a process led by family members to plan and make decisions for a child or young person with their involvement. It is a voluntary process and, with an independent facilitator, can work through options that might not have been initially obvious, including the need for on-going support.

Focus on...

Young people leaving custody are particularly at risk of living in unsuitable accommodation or becoming homeless, and have often experienced poor accommodation or placements before their experience in custody. They may have additional challenges in accessing housing and the support to meet their needs, perhaps due to disruptive behaviour. Many supported accommodation projects do not accept young people if they have committed particular offences such as sexual offences or arson.

Planning for young people on short custodial sentences can be challenging, and young people often don't know where they are going to live until the last minute before they leave custody. This can be very worrying for young people as well as leading to additional problems after they are released.

¹⁰ http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/1154341/staying_put.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.catch-22.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Staying-Put-FINAL-WEB.pdf>

To help ease the transition out of custody, it is very important that leaving care services work with the Youth Offending Service, probation or Community Rehabilitation Company staff and case managers to:

- Plan young people's accommodation options as soon as possible on entering custody; and
- Keep the young person informed about progress and their options.

Leaving care personal advisers or social workers will need to:

- Keep in touch with the young person throughout the time they are in custody, even if they are placed a long way from home
- Look for housing options for the young person as their release date approaches
- Keep the young person and the YOT/probation staff or case manager informed of progress
- Have in place a contingency plan if the first option does not work
- Put in place a package of support to assist the young person to settle back into their community.

Commissioners of leaving care and housing services need to take into account how easily young people leaving custody will be able to access existing services, and what additional services or support may need to be put in place specifically for them. This might involve a joint protocol between Housing, Children's Services and Youth Offending Teams so that suitable accommodation is provided locally. It may also require agencies offering post-custody placements to travel to meet the young person in custody, or arrange to do pre-tenancy interviews via Skype (as happens in HMP & YOI Parc).

Example

The Royal Borough of Greenwich provides a range of services to all young people in the borough via a one-stop-shop, The Point. A young people's housing options and homelessness prevention service, called 1st Base is located within The Point and has staff within it from Housing and Children's Services. There is a joint protocol between 1st Base and the Youth Offending Service which sets out how the services will work with young people at different stages of their custodial or community-based sentence and also around the transition to 18. The protocol sets out clearly the different responsibilities of agencies involved. The success of this joint working has been recognised by the Youth Justice Board.¹²

¹² <https://www.justice.gov.uk/youth-justice/effective-practice-library/first-base>

Making well planned moves is in the best interests of young people leaving care. Crisis or emergency moves are much less likely to support good outcomes and may set young people back in other areas of their lives such as education, training or employment. There are different ways in which personal advisers or foster or residential carers can help care leavers make an informed choice about their move from care. Here are some examples:

Training flats

Many care leavers say that they want to leave care so that they can get their ‘own place’. The reality of living alone as the first move after leaving care can, however, be very different from what young people expect. Care leavers often describe feeling lonely, unsure how to manage households problems or worried about finances and bills. Some local authorities are using training flats to help care leavers experience what it is really like to live on their own, without the risk of them losing their own first tenancy.

Example

Bradford Leaving Care service has a contracted scheme for supported tenancies that includes provision for a ‘taster flat’ where young people can experience two weeks of independent living while still in their care placement. This provides a reality check for young people as well as a focus for pre-tenancy work.

Visiting different housing types

It can be hard for care leavers to know where they want to live if they don’t have any experience of different housing types. Language is very powerful: for example, the term “hostel” often has negative connotations, suggesting night-shelters or large buildings in poor condition with little support. However, a locally commissioned supported accommodation scheme, which may locally be called a “hostel”, could in reality be a small, high quality service and a good first move for a young person. Another example is “supported lodgings” which is likely to be an unfamiliar term, but in fact has many similarities with foster care though more suitable for older young people. Advice from other young people can be really helpful about the pros and cons of the various options available to them.

Some local authorities are offering care leavers the chance to visit or even stay in different options for a night or two to experience first-hand before they make their decision about where they want to live next. Giving young people the tools to make an informed decision can make a substantial difference to their commitment to their housing choice.

Leaving care – checklist

Although currently 37%¹³ of young people leave care from a foster placement, other care leavers could have been staying in a variety of other settings. Are you working with young people in all these different settings to plan their accommodation and support?

- ☐ In “other arrangements”
- ☐ In residential care
- ☐ Out of your local authority area in foster or residential care settings
- ☐ At residential special schools
- ☐ In custody or secure units
- ☐ Living with parents or family

Top tips

- Having a Housing Officer in the leaving care team can make a big difference by up-skilling personal advisers in housing knowledge as well as giving young people specialist housing advice and helping them to access various housing options. Many Housing Departments have placed officers in Leaving Care Teams as part of their contribution as a ‘corporate parent’ or made a ‘virtual’ arrangement.
- Consider setting up a ‘panel’ to look at all the cases of young people leaving care. This is also an effective way to promote joint working. Panels usually include staff from Leaving Care and Housing Options, but could also usefully join up with voluntary sector providers of accommodation and support in the local area.
- Provide short-term beds for young people leaving custody. If a longer-term housing and support option is not yet ready for them, they can stay in a supported environment for a few days prior to the move.
- Involve foster and residential carers and other trusted adults to help young people think about their options and make an informed choice about where they want to live.
- Wherever possible, give care leavers the opportunity to try out different types of accommodation before they make their choice, such as supported housing, supported lodgings, a shared flat, their own tenancy etc.

¹³ Department for Education, Children looked after in England including adoption, September 2014



3. Reduce housing crisis

| Supporters | Framework stages and options | | | | Activity and approach |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Care/residential worker | 3. Reduce housing crisis | | | | Plan early and have contingency plans in place to prevent crises from escalating |
| Personal adviser | Respite/ short breaks | Staged exits from care | Short-term placements from custody | Family mediation | |

‘I went from not paying anything, and I mean anything, literally just my clothes and my cigarettes, to having water rates and light rates, TV licence, council tax and having these different cards to pay for different things. Wow, it was a bombardment! The one question I kept asking myself was, ‘how will I cope?’ and the answer is, you don’t.’ (Young person, Barnardo’s)

The experience of homelessness at a young age is not only stigmatising but can, without effective support and accommodation options, result in long-term poor outcomes.¹⁴ Many young people report their experience as traumatic, leading to dropping out of education, training or employment and resulting benefit dependency. Becoming homeless can result in significantly higher risks of developing mental health problems, getting involved in substance misuse, risks of sexual exploitation, involvement in crime and, in some areas, involvement in gangs. This can result in young people disengaging from services which could make them increasingly difficult to support appropriately.

For care leavers, homelessness can feel even more of a damaging experience as they often don’t have family members able to help them and, despite the local authority being their ‘corporate parent’, many young people say they feel on their own. In some areas, without young people’s emergency or short-stay accommodation, homeless care leavers describe staying in all-age hostels with older homeless people, who may be using substances or involved in crime, or living for long periods in inappropriate Bed and Breakfast or hotel accommodation. This sort of accommodation is often unsafe for young people and provides little or no support, so not helping them to deal with what has happened and to move on with their lives.

When a care leaver is facing a potential breakdown in their living situation, it is important that action is taken quickly to prevent them becoming homeless. Homelessness can happen in any form of accommodation. For example, they may have returned home to family, be in Staying Put arrangement, living with a partner, in a supported lodgings placement, or a supported accommodation scheme. Some young people may be in their own tenancy, but be building up rent arrears or be involved in anti-social behaviour locally, which is putting their tenancy at risk.

14 Lankelly Chase, *Hard Edges: Mapping severe and multiple disadvantage*, 2015

The roles of the personal adviser and a housing related support worker are both critical here, as they will know how each young person is managing and should be visiting their accommodation regularly. Foster carers, independent visitors or other trusted adults in the young person's life should also take some responsibility in raising any concerns about how well a young person is managing or if their housing is looking at risk.

A range of homelessness prevention tools can be used to try and prevent the young person from losing their housing. They may need to move on from their accommodation in due course, but prevention can be used to slow down a crisis, alleviate risks and enable a move to be made in a planned and sustainable way.

A major trigger for homelessness for all young people, including those in care and leaving care, is the breakdown of relationships. Losing contact with long-term foster carers or leaving residential care abruptly as a result of an incident is damaging for young people. Unresolved conflict and the emotional impact of fractured relationships can reinforce low self-esteem and an inner belief that no-one cares. For 16/17 year olds who are still looked after and living with foster carers or in residential care, a breakdown in relationship can sometimes result in an unplanned placement move into 'other arrangements'. With appropriate prevention activity – such as a skilled offer of mediation – these unplanned placement moves may be avoided.

For a care leaver who is 18 or over, the breakdown of a relationship could be with a partner or friend they are living with, with their parents or wider family, or with their former foster carer or supported lodgings host. Young people who have returned to family or carers from custody may be at particular risk.

Examples of homelessness prevention tools include:

Mediation

Whilst mediation services are usually targeted at young people who live with their parents, they can also be used with young people at risk of placement breakdown. Sometimes a different person, perhaps from a different agency, is viewed as more independent because they are removed from the dynamics of the placement. Mediation can be structured and delivered in planned sessions or be more immediate and informal.

Mediators usually help young people and their carers or families understand what the underlying tensions are about, what they want to achieve and support them in finding ways to resolve issues. There are several ways of measuring what a successful outcome from mediation might be, one of which may be moving from their current housing situation, but in a planned way.

Family Group Conferencing

Family Group Conferencing may be another option that local authorities might consider. It could be adapted for care leavers and their carers, and still achieve a successful outcome.

At a point of real crisis, there is not much time to arrange more formal mediation nor is it likely to be an easy offer for young people and their carers to accept. But immediate mediation – someone with mediation and negotiation skills who can visit within a few hours – does not require a long 'lead in' period and deals with issues in the here and now.

Example

The London Borough of Barnet has used Youth Mediation as the key prevention tool for youth homelessness. The youth mediator works with young people who live in the parental home or family network and will also work with those in care when requested to do so. The mediation worker is extensively trained and undertakes home visits quickly rather than asking people to come to the office or arrange more formal mediation as the first contact. The approach has a high success rate: usually somewhere between 75-80% of young people who have mediation remain in the family home every year.

Example

Llamau are a Welsh voluntary agency which works with homeless young people and those at high risk of homelessness. Their mediation model offers an immediate response, through a home visit. They work alongside Housing and Children's Services in nine local authorities in South Wales and have a high success rate with young people and families. Llamau have published a mediation toolkit¹⁵ based on their extensive experience in this area of work.

Example

St Basil's provides a mediation service for young people and their families in Birmingham as a homelessness prevention option. Again this is mainly an option for young people and their parents but can also be offered to those living with carers. There is around an 87% success rate of positive outcomes for young people. This may mean the young person does not stay in the family home, but moves out in a more planned way, with the issues resolved and/or communication more open.

Top tips

- If there is no option to use a specialist mediation service, do staff in your service have the skills and confidence to mediate and negotiate? If not, there are agencies that offer accredited training on mediation.
- Some Housing Options Services have invested in this sort of training because it is so valuable in preventing homelessness. You could consider the benefits of commissioning some training and sharing costs between several different organisations or services, because these are generic skills that several services may want to train their staff in (for example, Youth Offending Services, Troubled Families Programme staff, Family Support and Early Help staff, social workers and Housing Options Services).
- In 2011 Depaul UK published a useful outline¹⁶ of the benefits of mediation for young people, based on their experience of providing family mediation in several projects in England. This includes a business case for investment on mediation based on detailed cost-benefit analysis and savings to the public purse.

Respite/short breaks

If relationships are under strain, sometimes young people just need ‘time out’ to think about what is going on and to make a plan for the future. Offering a respite or short break service can help care leavers take their time over decisions and think about their next move. Respite services might just be a safe place for a care leaver to go for a few days or weeks, or it might offer a range of coaching or therapeutic support. Short breaks might be used in conjunction with mediation, to take the young person out of the crisis situation whilst working together to try and resolve the underlying issues.

Short-term moves from custody

Young people leaving custody are at particular risk of homelessness, in part because their initial moves are often insufficiently planned. With release dates often unknown until the last minute, and with the distance between custody and home, young people are often moved somewhere they do not know, do not want or that is not sustainable. Some local authorities are providing short-term accommodation that young people can access direct from custody as part of their resettlement plan. This might be a ring-fenced room in a supported housing project or a specialist supported lodging. The service can be used for a few weeks whilst they look at longer-term options available locally, rebuild relationships with family prior to moving back home, or until their chosen placement becomes available.

¹⁶ http://www.depauluk.org/_uploads/documents/homelessness-prevention-report-reconnect.pdf

Joint working – checklist

To avoid housing crisis and prevent homelessness, what works well is for the Leaving Care Service and local Housing Options Services (sometimes called Homelessness Prevention Unit or Service) to work closely together. In some local authorities, there is a member of the Housing Options Service based within or linked to the Leaving Care Service.

A local authority could, as part of its corporate parenting responsibility, have an agreed set of prevention tools available and a shared understanding across Housing and Children’s Services regarding who would do what in a situation of housing crisis for a young person aged 16 or over who is looked after or a care leaver. This can be outlined in the joint protocol regarding care leavers and accommodation.

How well are departments working together in your local authority? If you are in a two-tier authority, it is even more important that housing departments from each district come together to work closely with Children’s Services at county level.

Use the checklist below to assess how well your departments are working together:

- ☐ Homelessness prevention services are accessible to care leavers and take account of the range of housing situations they may be in.
- ☐ Leaving care teams are aware of the homelessness prevention support available locally.
- ☐ Housing and homelessness officers are familiar with the needs of care leavers in their area and can offer accurate and tailored advice.
- ☐ Youth Offending Teams are involved in commissioning short-term accommodation options that are suitable for young people immediately on release from custody.
- ☐ A joint protocol is in place which outlines how you will all work together to avoid homelessness and housing crisis amongst care leavers.

Top tips

- Contingency plans are really helpful as they can help reduce crisis points by offering an alternative option. They can be light-touch for those young people who are more settled, or go into greater detail for those assessed as being at more risk of losing their accommodation.

- Having a designated place or person where young people and their carers can go for early advice and support can help avoid crisis and reduce worry if things start to go wrong. This could be a Leaving Care Service or a local young people’s “one-stop-shop” with access to a range of services such as mediation.
- Some YOIs are allowing young people who are preparing to leave custody to use Skype to take part in assessment interviews with potential housing services. This can help ease the transition out of custody but also give the housing service assurances about how the young person will cope with living in a specific setting.
- It is important to plan vacation accommodation for care leavers who are at university or a residential FE college, so that they do not face housing problems outside of term-time.

4. Access housing and support as needed

| Supporters | | Framework stages and options | | | | Activity and approach |
|-------------------------|------------------|---|--|---|--|--|
| Care/residential worker | Personal adviser | 4. Access housing and support as needed | | | | Commission a range of housing and support options with access for care leavers |
| | | Short stay/ Emergency Shared houses Nightstop Short breaks Short-term supported lodgings Emergency assessment bed | High support Small units 24/7 Small group houses Specialist supported lodgings Housing first | Medium support Floating support Specific accommodation leased by local authorities | Low support Shared houses with floating support Peer landlords On-call concierge | |

‘It [supported lodgings] has prepared me a lot better, you get a family around you that can help wonders, it really can, and it helps you develop a lot better.’
(Young person, Barnardo’s)

Care leavers will need access to different types of accommodation and support at different times in their journey out of care. This may depend on diverse factors such as the age at which they leave care, their emotional health or resilience, life skills and experience, mental and physical health, disability, any experience of substance use or offending, and a range of other factors.

Although this framework is presented as a structured model, there is no linear relationship between the types of accommodation and support that care leavers will need. Some care leavers will only need one type of accommodation and support, whereas others will have several moves before they progress to independence. They may move between different types of provision sequentially or more randomly, depending on how their needs change. For example, if a previously unidentified mental health need became apparent, a young person may jump from a low support to a high support setting quickly.

Whilst it is helpful to have a guideline for how long a young person might stay in a supported accommodation option (e.g. supported lodgings, a foyer or a ‘step down’ shared house with floating support), there does need to be some degree of flexibility built in to contracts to enable commissioners and providers to extend a young person’s stay if they are not ready to move on and run the risk of failure if they do move.

The personal adviser, and anyone who is supporting the young person day to day, will have a good idea of how a young person is getting on. By working together, staying in touch, and involving the young person directly in planning what the next move might be, a more positive outcome is likely. The accommodation decision – and contingency plan – should be agreed and written into a care leaver’s Pathway Plan.

It is helpful if Personal Advisers are familiar with the range of accommodation options available to care leavers locally, including how to refer young people into the various sorts of accommodation and support. This can be much simpler when there is a single integrated gateway to all supported accommodation options.

Effective provision of a range of accommodation options locally will meet requirements on local authorities for both sufficiency and suitability of accommodation. Local authorities report annually to the Department for Education on their ability to find 'suitable' accommodation for care leavers at age 19, 20 and 21.¹⁷ Ofsted also looks at the suitability of accommodation for care leavers. Defined in the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010¹⁸, suitable accommodation is accommodation:

- which, so far as reasonably practicable, is suitable for the child in light of his needs, including his health needs
- in respect of which the responsible authority has satisfied itself as to the character and suitability of the landlord or other provider
- complies with health and safety requirements related to rented accommodation
- in respect of which the responsible authority has, so far as reasonably practicable, taken into account the child's wishes and feelings, education, training or employment needs.

Although they need access to a range of provision, in reality care leavers will make up a relatively small proportion of the young people who need wider housing support. It therefore makes sense that the housing options set out in this stage are jointly or co-commissioned by Housing Related Support commissioners (sometimes called Supporting People commissioners) and Children's Services. This might mean drawing up specifications together, agreeing to pool some budgets, allocating specific beds in a scheme to care leavers, or having a shared protocol that sets out agreed access routes.

Example

Brighton and Hove City Council chose to take a joint commissioning approach because of a shared recognition that there were lots of barriers to accessing housing for young people, including care leavers. A thorough needs assessment was undertaken in 2011. Amongst many issues, it showed that Children's Services and Housing were holding different contracts for the same services/bed spaces and there was little 'join-up' in thinking, planning or delivery. Based on the national 'Positive Pathway' model and addressing the issues raised in the needs assessment, a joint commissioning strategy was drawn up in 2013 to develop a Young People's Accommodation and Support Pathway.

There are agreed joint performance measures and outcomes in place, which tie into the Corporate Parenting strategy and changes with Early Help. There

¹⁷ To include 18 year olds from 2015 and 16 and 17 year olds from 2016; https://www.gov.uk/government/.../Care_Leavers_Strategy_update.pdf

¹⁸ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/2571/regulation/9/made>

is also a single point of access into provision through the Housing Advice Service, a Supported Accommodation Panel and a revised Care Leavers' Protocol.

Newly commissioned services include priority for care leavers and a clear route for care leavers leaving foster placements or other Children's Services accommodation through the Care Leavers' Protocol which ensures moves to accommodation are planned.

Joint Commissioning will ensure provision of support for care leavers in independent tenancies as well as in accommodation projects or supported lodgings. A challenge is designing the future shape of services with a decreasing budget but evidencing the impact through the Outcomes Framework, which includes specific care leaver indicators, ensures there is a good corporate understanding of the impact of the new approach.

In some local authorities, depending on the local context, the element of the budget for housing related support (what was "Supporting People") which relates to young people 16-25 has been moved to Children's Services. In effect, this means that there is a single budget for all accommodation and support for young people who need additional housing support or are at risk of homelessness, including care leavers. It could be useful to undertake an options appraisal to understand the pros and cons of this approach.

Example

Camden has commissioned an accommodation framework that provides a range of supported accommodation for homeless young people, as a partnership between Housing Related Support (Supporting People); Housing Options; Children, Schools and Families; health; and third sector providers. Before the Young People's Pathway was implemented, housing services were commissioned by Housing Related Support alone and the grant conditions were a barrier to housing care leavers, meaning that the majority of care leavers were placed out of Camden.

In 2007, a joint funding arrangement was made to commission supported accommodation services for young people aged 16 to 21. It includes three assessment centres, progress and specialist services (including mental health; sexual exploitation; and teenage parents) and move through services so young people can demonstrate they are ready for independent living. Key to delivering a successful range of supported accommodation has been flexibility and responsiveness from providers; a referral co-ordinator into the Pathway; a Team Around the Child approach; and effective partnership working across the borough.

Joint working

Many local authorities that use an accommodation pathway have put in place a **single integrated gateway** to all supported accommodation in the local area. A gateway enables:

- a more consistent approach to needs assessment and understanding of provision, resulting in better matching of needs with services
- more choice of accommodation options for young people, including care leavers
- better use of limited resources, ensuring those with the highest needs access the services they need
- improved safeguarding, with a shared knowledge of potential risk, agreed approaches to managing risk and knowledge of who is placed where
- improved ability to continue with crisis prevention work, where relevant and appropriate
- improved ability to plan moves with care leavers themselves
- an overview of planned and unplanned move-on
- prompt and appropriate filling of voids

Ultimately using a gateway approach, as opposed to young people self-referring, ensures that priority is given to those who most need supported accommodation.

There are a wide range of different housing and support types that may be appropriate for care leavers. These are arranged in the framework into emergency/short-stay, longer-stay and step-down provision.

Emergency/short-stay provision

Nightstop is an accredited scheme run by Depaul UK. It provides safe accommodation for young people for a few nights in the homes of approval local host families. Young people who experience a sudden housing crisis are given a room for the night and a meal, in a family setting. It is a more supportive and positive alternative to using other forms of emergency accommodation, such as an all age, mixed hostel or Bed and Breakfast. It can be a particularly good option in more rural areas, where suitable emergency provision in a young people's accommodation project could be a long way away. Longer – but not long term – stays with hosts can be possible through 'Nightstop Plus'.

Short-term supported lodgings provide safe accommodation for young people in the family home of approval local hosts. These are similar to Nightstop in many ways but not part of the accredited scheme. The option is likely to be

part of a local supported lodgings scheme, where most hosts are recruited for longer stays, but a few are willing or want to provide shorter stay options. Depending on the scheme, young people may be able to stay for a few nights or up to several weeks. With their own room and access to cooking and washing facilities, young people are given a supportive environment and opportunities to build up their lifeskills.

Ring-fenced beds are provided in some larger supported accommodation schemes. These may be quite basic single rooms, offering emergency access for young people at immediate risk of homelessness. Support workers may assess the young person whilst alternative accommodation is sought.

Assessment centres tend to be commissioned as part of a broader young people's accommodation pathway, usually in large urban areas. They provide a first stage point to the pathway, where young people can stay for a short period whilst they are assessed and their next accommodation decided. Whilst planned, non-emergency moves for care leavers would not usually require the use of an assessment centre, for those in an emergency, this is a useful option.

Local Housing Authorities have to provide interim **Temporary Accommodation** (TA) for single people and families under Section 188 of the Housing Act 1996, whilst a homelessness investigation is carried out, if they are deemed to be eligible, homeless, likely to be in 'priority need' and have no other place to stay. Care leavers are automatically 'priority need' up to the age of 21 so should be given access to TA. This option will vary between local authorities in terms of the types of accommodation available. This may be a self-contained unit in a block of housing which is all designated as TA, and may or may not include housing management and support. Often temporary accommodation is in isolated self-contained units with no on-site support or additional housing management. This is likely to be a difficult and scary experience for a young person and is best avoided.

Longer-stay provision

Supported accommodation is a generic term for accommodation where there is some sort of support provided on-site. There are many different models of supported accommodation, which are split here into (1) family-type support and (2) other types:

(1) Family-type supported accommodation

Staying Put arrangements are a statutory right for care leavers in foster care in England. They allow a young person to stay with their former foster carer from 18 to 21 if they and the carer want the arrangement to continue. The foster placement is usually converted into a tenancy-type arrangement, and the young person will carry on living in the household in the same way. They will be given support from their former foster carer to help develop life skills.

Supported lodgings are placements within a family home in the local community. The host provides a room and cooking and washing facilities, as well as offering support and advice to the young person. Supported lodgings can be used as emergency placements but are usually a longer-term option. They can help care leavers to improve their life skills, such as managing money, cooking, shopping, cleaning, etc., and give them a family-based setting. Some supported lodgings are specifically for care leavers with high support needs, such as young parents, those coming out of custody, or those at risk of sexual exploitation.

(2) Other types of supported accommodation

Most local authorities have some supported accommodation schemes, which are often commissioned by Housing Related Support (Supporting People) commissioners, and sometimes jointly with Children's Services. For some 16/17 year olds who are looked after or care leavers, these may be commissioned via a framework agreement across several local authorities. Schemes may be run by a charity, a Registered Provider (a social landlord) or a private provider.

Supported accommodation schemes can vary substantially in size. The accommodation can be bedrooms with shared facilities, bedsits or self-contained flats. Support may be available 24/7 on-site, in the daytime only or on-call support at night. Schemes can also include dispersed housing and may have step-down units attached to help young people prepare for a less intensively supported environment. Support workers (sometimes called 'key workers') work individually with young people on their own support plan towards agreed goals, such as around education, training, employment, life skills, independent living skills, improving emotional well-being, confidence and physical health.

Foyers are supported accommodation projects for young people that focus on education, training and employment, and many are accredited by the Foyer Federation. The growing challenge of affordability of housing for young people means that preparing for economic activity is an important part of any stay in supported accommodation. Many local supported accommodation schemes do not call themselves foyers, but are commissioned to provide a similar sort of service, with a proactive focus on education, training and employment.

Small group homes models tend to be commissioned for young people with physical or learning disabilities who will need on-going support from adult social services. Group homes might be commissioned jointly by Children's Services, Adult Social Care and Housing Related Support commissioners. Housing Benefit and elements of other benefits that the young person may be able to claim due to their disability should also be factored into the whole package. There are specialist providers who are able to provide young people with focused, small group living arrangements. This could be an option for very small numbers (maybe 2 or 3) of young people to live together, who have

previously been living in specialist foster or residential care. A long lead-in time is needed in considering this option, in terms of the financial modelling, commissioning and matching of young people.

Housing First tends to be most appropriate for people with multiple and complex needs. It provides an independent tenancy, sometimes through a housing association or a private rental, at the same time as very intensive, bespoke wrap-around support. Whilst it tends to be a model that is used for older, long-term homeless people, it is an option to consider for young people who are likely to struggle in larger schemes such as foyers or in supported lodgings. Having your own front door can be a positive option for some young people who have higher needs, as long as there is commissioning of support through a dedicated, specialist floating support services, with some 24-hour call-out if needed. It is important to remember that, if the housing is in the private rented sector, and if the young person is claiming Housing Benefit, then their exemption from the Shared Accommodation Rate will end on their 22nd birthday. The difference between the rent and the Housing Benefit payable will need to be bridged or the young person would need to move to shared accommodation or into social housing, which could be disruptive.

'Step-down' provision

Shared or self-contained provision with floating support gives young people some support whilst they are living in their own or shared accommodation. Floating support could be provided via housing related support or, if the young person is under 18, funded by Children's Services, as an additional support on top of the personal adviser from Children's Services. Floating support assists care leavers to settle into their accommodation and the local community, including accessing local services and dealing with bills and budgeting.

'Step-down' provision can be attached to more intensively supported accommodation schemes, and gives young people a next step towards independence whilst maintaining their link to the higher support scheme. Where this is the case, the young person may live in a shared house or their own small self-contained flat or bedsit near to the supported accommodation scheme, may have the same 'key worker' that they had previously, and still be part of the higher support scheme. Other 'step-down' provision can be commissioned separately, but with good day to day links with the local supported accommodation schemes.

Some young people leaving care will be ready for the more independent 'step-down' accommodation as their first move out of care, and do not need to go through the higher support accommodation first. Assessment and pathway planning are key to making decisions with young people about their readiness for such a move.

On-call or concierge schemes are relatively new, but provide very light-touch housing management support as needed. Young people are interviewed before being invited to apply for a house-share, and must pass a pre-tenancy course before they can take up their place.

Sharing as a housing option for care leavers

Some care leavers will want or need to live in a shared house with other young people, perhaps with floating support attached. It is important for personal advisers to discuss sharing with care leavers who are not likely to have their own social tenancy as an option as, on their 22nd birthday, their Housing Benefit entitlement in the private sector will drop to the Shared Accommodation Rate. Given the demands on social housing, and the limited supply, the reality is that many will need to share at some point later in their lives.

Shared social housing can also be an option, although it is not widespread.

Example

SnugBug Houseshare¹⁹ is run by St Vincent's Housing Association in Manchester. It is open to any young person aged 18-25 who has a local connection, access to public funding if needed and is able to live independently. The scheme does not provide support to young people – if young people need support they need to bring it with them, e.g. floating support or a personal adviser. SnugBug Houseshare offers decent shared housing on six-month assured shorthold tenancies, with all young people needing to fill in an application form, attend a pre-tenancy course and then have an interview prior to being accepted. The scheme is run using 'intensive housing management', which means the rent is slightly higher than the usual Local Housing Allowance rate because it covers things like a 24-hour call-out 'ranger' service and a weekly health and safety check. This Scheme has over 18 properties in a range of areas and houses 60 young people at any one time.

Peer or 'lead' landlord schemes tend to be for young people with low support needs, who are nearly ready to manage a tenancy on their own. Housing providers can either rent a private house or use their own housing stock to run these schemes, and sub-let to young people. One young person is identified as the lead tenant, who takes on some agreed responsibility, which could include offering advice in an informal way, collecting rent from others in the shared house, whilst helping them budget and role-modelling good tenant behaviour.

¹⁹ <http://www.snugbughouseshare.co.uk>

Example

Commonweal Housing has been running Peer Landlord London²⁰ since 2013 in association with Catch22 and Thames Reach. Peer landlords, who have often used homeless services in the past, are trained in basic housing management and maintenance awareness, as well as financial literacy. They act as a positive role model and provide informal support to other tenants to help the household run smoothly.

Top tips

- Supported accommodation projects tend to be most effective when they are small and can offer more bespoke support to young people individually. Larger-scale schemes for young people with medium to high needs, or schemes for a mix of ages, are usually not as effective in supporting care leavers. Accommodation that is available to both care leavers and other young people are often good as they allow young people to mix; this can be another benefit of joint commissioning of services.
- Having effective joint working and ideally joint or co-commissioning is critical to delivering a seamless accommodation pathway. Children's Services and Housing Related Support commissioners need to work together with colleagues in Housing Options when planning the provision they want to commission. This can help to create a 'menu' of options and also avoid the 'cliff edge' of the 18th birthday, when funding changes.
- In planning to commission a range of supported accommodation options, it is really helpful to have a full understanding of both the needs of care leavers locally and the outcomes that commissioners want to achieve. This will make it easier to plan accommodation and support around local needs and ambitions.
- Local authorities that have developed effective accommodation and support pathways for young people tend to work closely together, agreeing relevant budgets across the local authority (and other public sector agencies) and either pooling the budgets or managing them seamlessly across directorates or service areas.
- When placing care leavers in accommodation or moving them on, try to think creatively about what the young person needs. Try to avoid 'cliff edges' based on age, e.g. young people having to make a placement move around their 18th birthday, or when their Housing Benefit entitlement reduces at age 22 to the Shared Accommodation Rate. Try also to take into

²⁰ <http://www.commonwealhousing.org.uk/our-projects/peer-landlord-london>

account young people’s education and employment activity and ambitions when working with them to choose the best supported accommodation option for them.

- Effective use of this framework could involve a group led by Children’s Services and housing related support commissioners which meets regularly to review, monitor and agree changes to commissioning of accommodation and support options.
- Commissioners should encourage providers to partner strategically with the local authority and recognise the added value brought through innovation, additional programmes and flexibility of working.
- Young people often say that it is the quality of relationships with significant people in their lives that makes a difference, including housing related support workers and personal advisers. The balance of weighting between quality and costs in any tendering process is a matter for commissioners, but lower hourly rates can equate to a higher staff turnover or less skilled or experienced staff.

5. Access and successfully manage longer-term move-on and support options

| Supporters | Framework stages and options | | | | Activity and approach |
|---|---|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| Career/residential worker Personal adviser Housing worker | 5. Access and successfully manage longer-term move-on and support options | | | | Develop a range of move-on options |
| | Suitable shared and self-contained options | Mixture of tenancy types available | Affordability checks and preparation | Support as needed to set up and sustain tenancy | Work with landlords to reduce evictions Work with partners to develop a range of housing options |

“I found it easier to move myself in independently because of the skills that I had brushed up on. It was upstairs, I felt safer, I felt really safe and secure.”
(Young person, Barnardo’s)

As corporate parents, our ambition for care leavers is that they are eventually able to live as independently as possible, develop positive social relationships and have successful, happy and healthy lives as adults, with the resilience to cope with the inevitable ups and downs. The final stage of the framework sets out the support needed to help care leavers move towards greater independence. For some young people, this transition will happen earlier, whilst others may need specific support from a personal adviser or housing worker beyond 21 or even after 25.

A young person’s long-term housing ambitions should be discussed and documented in their pathway plan. This will need to be kept up to date as circumstances and wishes change, and remain realistic given the local housing situation. Personal advisers will need to get advice from housing officers about the long-term housing options locally.

There are a number of factors which impact on the availability of housing for young people. The supply of accommodation that is affordable for people on low incomes varies, with significant local and regional differences in the housing market. But the amount of affordable accommodation available to young people under 25 in most areas is already limited and this is projected to become more challenging in the future, in part due to reduced availability but also due to affordability. There is reported to be low landlord confidence in young people as tenants, in part due to general concerns on affordability and also due to the changes in Universal Credit, whereby rent is paid direct to the claimant unless a specific exemption is granted on the basis of vulnerability. Whilst care leavers are a named group that are likely to be vulnerable and granted an exemption, this is not automatic and is done on a case-by-case basis.²¹

²¹ See https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/418485/personal-budgeting-support-guidance.pdf

Living in social housing

Social housing landlords might be called 'Registered Providers' and are regulated through the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

There are several recent changes and trends in social housing:

- Local Housing Allowance rates for both social and private rented accommodation are now uprated by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rather than with reference to local rents, thus severing the link between housing support and actual housing costs. In addition, new legislation has allowed Registered Providers to charge higher rents in social housing, which can be up to 80% of the local market rent.
- availability of social housing is already severely limited in many areas and this looks likely to contract further for those on low incomes due to the 'right to buy', the introduction of affordable rents, and limited investment in building new social housing. In terms of one-bed social housing, a combination of factors are limiting access:
 - a general shortage of one-bed properties. This is a national issue: many units of one-bed accommodation are in sheltered housing, are designated for older people, or are specifically restricted to lettings to, for example, under 30s or under 40s through local lettings policies.
 - demand for this size of accommodation is increasing from tenants subject to the under-occupation penalty ('bedroom tax'). Local authorities and Registered Providers need to reduce the risk of arrears and homelessness amongst existing tenants, and prioritise these households in allocation schemes, which further reduces access for most young people.

A tenancy in social housing could be in any of the following:

- housing that the local authority still owns and manages
- housing managed through an ALMO – stock is still owned by the local authority but run by an Arm's Length Management Organisation
- housing which is part of a 'large-scale voluntary transfer' (LVST) – what was council-owned stock has been transferred to a housing association
- housing which is owned or managed by a housing association, which they have built, bought or leased.

Allocation schemes

The Localism Act 2011 gave local authorities the power to determine at a local level some of the groups of people who will or will not qualify to be allocated social housing in their areas. Waiting lists can be rationalised based on local policy. For example, those who are working, or actively seeking work or making a 'contribution to the community' could be qualifying groups, whereas

those with anti-social behaviour convictions or previous rent arrears could be excluded. Reasonable preference must still be given to those in housing need, including statutorily homeless households.

It is usual for care leavers to get some sort of additional priority (banding or points) but there is no statutory duty to give care leavers any priority over other groups.

It is no longer the case that a social housing tenancy is for life. Registered Providers can now issue 'flexible tenancies', which are usually for five years or sometimes three years. After that, a tenancy can be renewed but, again, may be for a fixed period of time.

Living in the private rented sector

The 2011 change in calculation of the Local Housing Allowance (which sets the level of Housing Benefit payable in any area) from the 50th to the 30th percentile has restricted the pool of private rented accommodation that is affordable in any area to the lower end of the market. These changes will make all but the cheapest properties out of reach for young people, and this is most acute in more expensive parts of the country where there is already a shortage of accommodation, particularly London and the South East.

Shared Accommodation Rate

The Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) limits the amount payable to most young people living in the private rented sector to the cost of a room in a shared house. From April 2012, the SAR was extended from the age of 25 up to 35, which means that more people are competing for accommodation in shared housing. This is reported by both Crisis²² and Homeless Link²³ to be having a significant impact on the availability of private rented accommodation, and in particular the under 25s age group, who are reportedly to be being displaced out of the market by the 26-35 age group.

There are some exemptions to the SAR, including for care leavers up to age 22. There is also an exemption for those who have lived in resettlement accommodation for three months or more, but this only applies once they reach the age of 25. Care leavers could also be considered within this exemption group if they have lived in supported accommodation after leaving care.

Some options for providing support to care leavers as they become ready for more independence include:

- Landlord accreditation – identifying private sector landlords who are prepared to work with a personal adviser to support care leavers as they take on their own tenancies. This might include assisting with budgeting,

²² Crisis, *No Room Available, a study of the availability of shared accommodation*, 2012

²³ Homeless Link, *Nowhere to Move; Is renting on the Shared Accommodation Rate affordable in London?* May 2013

having some flexibility in the tenancy agreement, working with the local authority and young person to avoid eviction, and having lower rent deposit requirements. Accreditation could be a local authority-led scheme, or might be run by a housing support provider.

- Working with Housing Authorities to ensure care leavers are able to access the private rented sector – most local Housing Authorities will have a PRS access scheme (sometimes called a Social Lettings Agency) which is either run in-house or they will commission a provider to run this. Rather than establish a separate ‘leaving care’ scheme, a Housing Authority could – in its corporate parenting role – ensure that care leavers are helped to access suitable, affordable and appropriate accommodation in the PRS via the general scheme. The scheme should offer landlords a range of incentives such as:
 - bond and rent deposit schemes
 - rent in advance
 - rent paid direct to the landlord
 - a named contact person and a 24-hour helpline
 - floating support if needed
 - giving landlords a choice of young people
 - putting forward young people who have done some life skills or tenancy training
 - providing assistance or advice with tenancy matters (e.g. HMO registering).
- Dispersed/step-down housing – helping care leavers move gradually into independent living. Some supported housing providers have dispersed housing attached to their projects, usually as shared tenancies, that allow young people with higher support needs to try out managing their own tenancy within the safety of a housing project they already know. Tenancies can be available for several months or longer until the young person is ready to move out. In these arrangements, it may be that the local authority or the provider organisation has agreed a lease or license with a private landlord and is then sub-letting to young people. This can be a good way to establish longer term arrangements that can be closely managed by the local authority.
- Support to use ‘setting up home’ allowance – care leavers are entitled to a one-off grant when they leave care, usually worth around £2,000. Depending on their living situation when they leave care, young people may need some of the money immediately but others are more likely to need it only when they are ready to furnish their own independent housing.

Example

Crisis’s training toolkit²⁴ gives useful information about accessing the private rented sector.

Top tips

- Consider the option of shared social housing for care leavers or other young people.
- Housing teams are the experts in working with private landlords and are likely to have a private rented access scheme. Rather than develop a different scheme, try to work with what is already there. This could include taking properties on lease or license and sub-letting to young people as part of their progression to independence.
- When assisting care leavers to find suitable accommodation, personal advisers are required to make sure that the choice is affordable within the young person’s income. It is important that personal advisers help young people to work out how they will continue to pay for their accommodation if they are living in the private rented sector after their Housing Benefit reduces at age 22 to the level of the Shared Accommodation Rate. Otherwise, there is a real risk that care leavers could lose their housing. Many care leavers will no longer have a personal adviser when they are 22, so advanced planning is critical.
- Some young people can lose items bought using their setting up home allowance if they lose the tenancy where they kept them. For care leavers who experience multiple moves, it may be necessary to provide some facility to store their belongings when they are not needed.

²⁴ <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/move-on-to-private-renting-.html>



Annex 1: The legal framework

Leaving care legislation

Care leavers in England have a range of entitlements set out in legislation to ensure that they are properly housed. In addition, care leavers receive some additional support through the general homelessness legislation. This section sets out the key legislation and its interpretation through case law.

The **Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000**²⁵ sets out various duties that local authorities have towards young people in and leaving care, including those relating to accommodation. The duties differ depending on care leaver status (i.e. eligible, qualifying, relevant or former relevant child) but the general requirements are that local authorities should:

- plan with young people and involve them in decisions
- avoid moving young people who are settled
- assess young people's needs and prepare them for any move
- ensure that the accommodation meets any needs relating to impairment
- consider education, training and employment needs
- where practicable, offer a choice of accommodation
- set up a package of support to go with the accommodation
- have a clear financial plan for the accommodation and a contingency plan.

The **regulations and guidance** also detail how the local authority strategy for care leavers should take into account:

- the diverse accommodation and support needs of care leavers
- the capacity to offer young people a degree of choice in accommodation
- existing and planned provision of safe affordable accommodation
- gaps in provision
- priority setting
- the need for contingency arrangements.

The guidance²⁶ states that it is “good practice for local authorities to commission a range of semi-independent and independent living options with appropriate support, for example supported accommodation schemes, foyers, supported lodgings and access to independent tenancies in the social and private rented sectors with flexible support” (paragraph 7.2). It also advises that “provision and partnerships should be developed in such a way as to permit young people to move to other accommodation in a crisis, including returning to more supportive accommodation if appropriate” (paragraph 7.77).

²⁵ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/35/contents>

²⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-transition-to-adulthood-for-care-leavers>

It also states that “Children’s Services will need to work with housing strategy, housing options, housing related support functions and other partners to secure a range of suitable housing and support options for young people leaving care” (paragraph 7.4) and that “Housing Services and Children’s Services should adopt a shared strategic approach to the provision of emergency accommodation and housing and support pathways for young people in order to avoid the use of B&B accommodation” (paragraph 7.79).

In January 2015, the Department for Education revised guidance to clarify that B&Bs were unsuitable accommodation for care leavers, and should be used for no more than two working days in an emergency (paragraph 7.12).

Statutory guidance following the Children Act 1989, **Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children**,²⁷ sets out additional requirements on local authorities regarding looked after children’s accommodation. Section 22G of the 1989 Act requires local authorities to:

Take steps that secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority’s area which meets the needs of children that the local authority are looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority’s area (‘the sufficiency duty’).

A 2010 judgement from the Court of Appeal clarified the duty on Children’s Services authorities to provide accommodation for care leavers aged over 18 (“former relevant children”) in certain circumstances. **R (on the application of SO) v Barking and Dagenham**²⁸ concluded that:

...if the former relevant child is unable to access appropriate accommodation through some other means (such as through a combination of a council tenancy and housing benefit), and the provision of accommodation is necessary for that young person’s welfare, then social services will be under a duty to provide or arrange suitable accommodation.

Since 2013, **Ofsted’s single inspection framework**²⁹ has included a sub-judgement for leaving care services. In terms of accommodation, the inspection framework sets out that a ‘good’ authority would have the following characteristics:

- care leavers are safe and feel safe, particularly where they are living, and are helped to understand how their life choices will affect their safety and well-being.
- care leavers succeed in their transition to greater independence and adulthood at a time that is right for them. Young people aged 16 and 17 are encouraged to remain looked after until their 18th birthday where (and this will usually be the case) this is in their best interest. They can remain in

²⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/securing-sufficient-accommodation-for-looked-after-children>
²⁸ <http://www.maxwellgillott.com/pdf/accommodation-former-relevant-children.pdf>
²⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services-framework>

placements beyond their 18th birthday or, where more appropriate, live in permanent and affordable accommodation that meets their needs and those of their children, where relevant.

- care leavers are helped to find housing solutions that best meet their needs. Risks of tenancy breakdown are identified and alternative plans are in place.
- accommodation for care leavers is appropriate for each young person to safely develop their independence skills. Houses of multiple occupancy are only used when it is a young person’s preferred option and it can demonstrably be shown to be in their best interests.

Housing and homelessness legislation

The **Housing Act 1996**³⁰ sets out requirements on local authorities to assist people who are homeless. Part 7 requires that local authorities secure suitable accommodation for a person who meets all of the four statutory tests:

- is eligible for assistance (broadly, their immigration status is not restricted);
- is homeless (or threatened with homelessness within 28 days);
- has a priority need for accommodation (specified categories of people); and
- is not intentionally homeless.

In addition, local authorities use their discretion regarding whether a household has a local connection.

The **Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002**³¹ extended the priority need categories. Among others, they now include:

- homeless 18-20 year-olds who were in care at 16 or 17 except for those in higher residential or further education requiring vacation accommodation
- homeless people over the age of 21 who are assessed as vulnerable as a result of having been in care in the past.

The **Homelessness Act 2002**³² places a duty on housing authorities to have a strategy for preventing homelessness and ensuring that accommodation and support will be available for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness – and places a duty on social services departments to assist in the development of the strategy. Both authorities must take the strategy into account in discharging their functions.

In 2006 the **Statutory Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities**³³ set out requirements on local housing authorities when discharging their homelessness functions. Aspects of this guidance also apply to social services authorities when exercising their functions relating to homelessness. The

³⁰ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/contents>

³¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/2051/article/5/made>

³² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/7/contents>

³³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-councils-july-2006>

Code states that care leavers are among the groups likely to be more at risk of homelessness than others and:

- social services departments' information about numbers of care leavers may assist housing departments in conducting homelessness reviews
- it is important that wherever possible the housing needs of care leavers are addressed before they leave care
- making arrangements for accommodation and ensuring that care leavers are provided with suitable housing support will be an essential aspect of a young person's Pathway Plan
- where necessary, arrangements should be made for joint assessment by social services and housing authorities as a part of a multi-agency assessment to inform the Pathway Plan.

Whether young people leaving care are accommodated by the social services authority or the housing authority is for individual authorities to determine in each case. Ideally, there should be jointly agreed protocols in place regarding the assessment of needs.

In 2008, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) published non-statutory guidance on **Joint working between housing and children's services**.³⁴ The guidance sets out good practice in working within local authorities to commission and provide appropriate accommodation for young people including care leavers and homeless 16/17 year olds. Additional guidance³⁵ was published in 2010 in relation to the G v Southwark Judgement.

G v Southwark

In May 2009, the House of Lords made a landmark judgement in the case of R (G) v London Borough of Southwark which affects how local authorities provide accommodation and support for homeless 16- and 17-year-olds.

The judgement ruled that:

- the primary duty to a homeless 16- or 17-year old is under the **Children Act 1989** and the ongoing duty to accommodate and support that young person will fall to Children's Services. This will include the range of support available as a looked after child and a care leaver.
- Children's Services cannot avoid their duty to accommodate a homeless 16- or 17-year-old under section 20 of the **Children Act 1989** by claiming they were providing assistance under section 17 or by helping the young person to get accommodation through the homelessness legislation.
- a homeless 16- or 17-year-old who applies to a housing authority should be provided with interim accommodation under the homelessness legislation. They should then be referred to Children's Services for an assessment of their needs under section 17 of the **Children Act 1989**.

³⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-working-between-housing-and-children-services-preventing-homelessness>

³⁵ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/8260/Provision_20of_20accommodation.pdf

Local connection and homelessness

Under Part 7 of the **Housing Act 1996**, which covers homelessness, local connection provisions allow one authority to pass the homelessness duty on to another. Local connection is a discretionary test in homelessness investigations but in reality all local authorities will apply the test in most cases, though not all (such as cases in which someone is fleeing violence).

Under section 199(1) of the **Housing Act 1996**, a person has a local connection with the district of a local housing authority if she or he has a connection with it:

- a. because s/he is, or in the past was, normally resident there, and that residence was of his own choice
- b. because s/he is employed there
- c. because of family associations
- d. because of special circumstances.

The Housing Act does not define what is meant in law by having a local connection due to normal residence, family associations or employment. The Homelessness Code of Guidance³⁶ sets out some detail on local connection. Local authorities use an agreement brokered by the local government associations in England which outlines how they might interpret local connection as follows:

- "normal residence" as six months out of the last 12 or three years out of five;
- "employment" as full, part time non casual; and
- "family associations" as mother, father, brother, sister, adult sons and daughters who have been living in the area for 5 years.

However, this is an agreement between local authorities and is not the law. Local authorities must consider local connection within the parameters of the legislation and Code of Guidance.

Local connection and allocation of social housing

The allocation of social housing is covered in Part 6 of the **Housing Act 1996**. Section 167 (2A) requires a local authority through their Allocation Scheme to give applicants who fall within a "reasonable preference" category a head-start in the queue for social housing. Reasonable preference categories include those owed any homeless duty under the Housing Act, people living in unfit or overcrowded housing, or who have a medical or disability issue that is affected by their housing, and those applicants who would face hardship if they did not obtain social housing. Many local authorities include care leavers as a group that fall into a reasonable preference category but there is not necessarily a statutory requirement to do so as it depends on the local authority criteria set in their allocation policy as to whether hardship qualifies for an award of reasonable preference.

³⁶ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7841/152056.pdf

The **Localism Act 2011** has given local authorities additional powers to determine for themselves which groups of people will or will not qualify to be allocated social housing in their areas. A local Allocation Scheme or policy will set this out. For example, those who qualify for reasonable preference may include those who are working, actively seeking work or making a contribution to the community, or applicants who have lived in the local area for more than a specified period of time. People who often do not qualify might include those with anti-social behaviour convictions, no local connection or previous rent arrears. If someone qualifies to go on the housing register, local connection is then a factor that may be taken into account in an allocation scheme for determining who on the register gets more preference for social housing.

Young people who have been living in out of authority placements and wish to stay in that local area when they leave care (rather than return to the local authority area where they are looked after) may need to evidence that they have a local connection. However, unless the Allocation Scheme specifies how local connection is being interpreted beyond the four areas of residence, employment, family association and special reasons, then each case should be considered on its own merits. For example, a housing authority might consider that a family association could include being placed with foster carers in that local authority area, or that being in care and placed in that local authority area could be considered as ‘special circumstances’.

Questions to ask your teams

- The legislation and case law relating to care leavers and their housing can be complicated and affect young people in different ways and at different times. How well do staff in your leaving care and housing teams know the legal context?
- In thinking about what housing young people can access, what access do they have to finances? Young people may be entitled to different funding sources, depending on their past experiences and their current situation. Are your teams up to date on the funding sources available? They might include:
 - Housing Benefit
 - Low income benefits
 - Entitlements to tax credits
 - Universal Credit
 - Local welfare assistance
 - Council tax support schemes
 - Child benefits
 - Disability benefits
 - Junior ISA
 - Setting up home allowance (leaving care grant)
 - Funds from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Annex 2: Joint commissioning to improve outcomes for young people

What are the drivers for change towards a joint commissioning model?

Recent and on-going pressures on local authorities are making joint or co-commissioning an increasingly attractive proposition to support young people, including:

- reduced public sector spending generally requires a radical re-think in terms of how services are delivered to vulnerable groups
- increased looked after numbers has resulted in more young people becoming care leavers, with an estimated 50% rise in numbers since 2003/04³⁷ and anecdotal reporting of higher proportions of young people with multiple and complex needs
- the removal of the ring-fence around Supporting People funding in 2011 has meant reduced budgets for housing related support in the majority of local authorities
- the duty on local authorities since 2011 to provide sufficient suitable accommodation for looked after children in their area
- localism and moves towards more combined authority working are both enablers for more flexible commissioning across public service areas and local authority boundaries
- reduce the costs of tenancy failure, which fall on landlord revenues and increase burdens on services which help young people when tenancies have gone wrong.

Why consider a joint approach?

We know from practice and research that young people do best with:

- practical and emotional preparation for independence
- gradual, supported transitions with choice, control and flexibility about where they live, how they are supported and how quickly things change
- follow up support as needed.

Services commissioned by different parts of an authority, where there is no join up strategically or operationally, are more likely to result in:

- ‘compressed’ transitions, such as a cliff-edge of support at 18th birthday
- minimal choice of options for young people tenancy breakdowns as young people move to their own tenancies before they are ready, poor contingency planning and ‘burned bridges’ resulting in a ‘revolving door’ scenario for the most vulnerable

³⁷ National Audit Office 2015 , <http://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Care-leavers-transition-to-adulthood.pdf>

- costs associated with duplication and gaps, with common pressure points often not addressed (e.g. emergencies, high risk)
- poor value for money through spot purchasing of high cost housing and support options when all else fails.

Experience shows that, by joining up more, local authorities can achieve efficiencies and better outcomes for care leavers by Children’s Services and Supporting People/Housing Related Support commissioners undertaking joint or co-commissioning. This has several clear advantages:

- development of more options generally, based on the range of needs and progression
- creating options for young people that avoid the ‘cliff edge’ at 18 - moves are based on readiness not age
- sharing of procurement expertise including approaches to quality and standards
- reduced costs in undertaking procurement
- improved value for money.

This is an approach which could be considered across local authorities, in areas where a more devolved, combined authority structure is being developed. Building on the experience of framework agreements which many Children’s Services have developed on a sub-regional basis, these could involve Housing Related Support commissioners as well. This could be for all supported accommodation provision where the local market and context indicates advantages to this – or it could be for smaller schemes of more specialist provision.

Approaches to joint commissioning

Partners will need to agree a commissioning strategy focused on:

- delivering agreed outcomes for young people, including education, training and employment. Future housing options and sustainability are increasingly predicated on young people being economic active
- contributing to local or combined authority strategic objectives
- enabling partners to meet their statutory duties.

This is all within a context of known and/or anticipated resource constraints.

It is critical that the right people are involved from the outset, so that any decision to go ahead has been informed by young people, families and other key stakeholders and has the support and understanding of those who will make its

implementation possible. Top level backing and explicit links to key local and, where appropriate, combined authority strategies and plans will be needed to get the process moving and help unblock any barriers to change further down the line.

| Which young people are we talking about? | Most common main funding streams |
|--|--|
| Looked after children and care leavers aged 16 or 17 | Children’s services |
| Children who become looked after at age 16 or 17 | Children’s services |
| 16 and 17 year olds who have experienced homelessness but do not become looked after | Supporting People/Housing Related Support (plus Housing Benefit) |
| Care leavers aged 18 plus | Supporting People/Housing Related Support, children’s services (plus HB) |
| Other young people aged 18-25 who have experienced or been at risk of homelessness | Supporting People/Housing Related Support (plus HB) |
| Young people provided with temporary accommodation under the homelessness legislation | Housing authority temporary accommodation (TA) Budgets from General Funds (plus HB*) |
| Young people who experience tenancy failure | Social and private landlords and a wide range of agencies supporting young people |
| * A Housing Benefit Subsidy system is in place whereby DWP reimburses Housing Authorities for the rental costs of temporary accommodation up to set levels for different types of TA | |

What risks need managing to ensure effective joint commissioning?

| Risk | Mitigation |
|--|--|
| Ensuring the suitability of accommodation for care leavers | <p>Clear contract management focused on outcomes for young people, including engagement in education, training and employment</p> <p>Joint working to agree service specifications</p> |
| Loss of flexibility (e.g. spot purchase) for those with particular needs which will not easily be met with the core set of options | Consider use of procurement tools like framework agreements for some more specialist provision |
| ‘Protectionism’ of services | <p>Commission a range of types of accommodation to meet young people’s varying needs</p> <p>Manage access through a single gateway</p> <p>Agree mechanisms for prioritising certain groups if necessary</p> |
| Logistical problems with different commissioning timeframes | <p>Short-term – negotiate contract variations with partners</p> <p>Long-term – map commissioning timeframes in your strategy then plan in stages to bring them in line</p> |
| Budget cuts | <p>Secure corporate, strategic buy-in through making long-term business case of continued investment based on outcomes and cost benefits</p> <p>Be transparent with core partners, ensuring financial pressures are clear and acknowledged</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| Providers bring other resources or funding solutions into tenders to win on price but these may not be sustainable in the longer term | <p>Adopt realistic pricing expectations for the services required</p> <p>Test funding models and solutions at the commissioning stage against known or possible changes (for example, the future changes/direction of Housing Benefit costs for supported accommodation)</p> |
| Failure to link accommodation and support requirements | Involve strategic housing, social landlord and Housing Options Services from the outset |

Annex 3: Self-assessment: How joined up is your commissioning?

On a scale of 0 – 5 and using the suggested set of statements to guide you, rank where you think your local authority is on joint commissioning for support to young people as they learn to live more independently.

- 0 No progress at all and it's not looking possible currently
- 1 No progress and we haven't made a start yet
- 2 Yes – some early progress, we have agreed in principle but taken no practical steps as yet
- 3 Yes – we are beginning to work on this now with a clear aim of joint commissioning
- 4 Yes – it's well underway now
- 5 Yes – it's well embedded and it's positive

Statements relating to joint commissioning that may help your judgment

- There are agreed and shared corporate outcomes for young people who leave care that are used for commissioning of accommodation and support.
- All relevant services and stakeholders have contributed to a detailed needs analysis, which informs the commissioning process.
- Children's services, Housing and Housing Related Support commissioners (and any others) work together on service/pathway modelling, drawing up specifications for services and involvement in the commissioning process.
- Relevant budgets are agreed across the local authority (and other public sector agencies) and either pooled or managed seamlessly across directorates/service areas.
- The local authority consciously avoids 'cliff edges' based on age, e.g. young people having to make a placement move around their 18th birthday.
- Access into the provision available is managed through a single point/gateway so we know who is in what provision and can better manage risk and meet needs.
- There's a body/group led by Children's Services and Housing Related Support commissioners which meets regularly to review, monitor and agree changes to commissioning of accommodation and support options.
- There is a process for agreeing move on/progression into more independent accommodation (e.g. a panel, an assessment, an accreditation achieved by the young person).
- There is a high expectation of providers of accommodation and support services (for example, having a theory of change, their ability to be flexible, to partner strategically with the local authority, a 'can do' attitude, innovation and bringing added value).

Annex 4: Summary for Lead Members and Directors of Children's Services

The Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework was developed in 2015 by two charities that work with care leavers and homeless young people, Barnardo's and St Basil's. It has been developed collaboratively with a wide range of partners from local authorities and charities who together have pooled their knowledge and ideas about what works well in helping care leavers transition to adulthood.

The Framework is not prescriptive but gives a model – based on a wide range of expertise – for how young people can be supported as they leave care. It has been developed for commissioners and managers of leaving care and housing services, but can also be useful for elected members and senior officials to review existing or plan future provision in their local area. The Framework is flexible, reflecting current innovation and knowledge, and can be adapted to suit local needs and circumstances.

The Framework identifies five stages that young people may experience as they leave care. Although the stages are not always sequential, they have been identified to help local authorities and service providers think through the range of areas in which young people will need housing support as they leave care.

Whilst the five stages give practical ideas for delivering good services, the Framework is based on some underlying principles to give young people the best start possible as they leave care, and the attitude of the corporate parent is key to making the Framework work well. These include helping care leavers to succeed, allowing 'mistakes' without harsh penalties, offering flexible support and providing unconditional relationships.

The Framework also relies on different parts of a local authority working well together. Experience from all those using an accommodation pathway model demonstrates that effective joint working between Housing and Children's Services, as well as with health, education, training and employment agencies, criminal justice partners, the voluntary sector and the private sector, is an essential driver of a successful pathway approach. This is "corporate parenting" in action.

Annex 5: Engaging children and young people in using the framework locally

Information to share with children's and young people's groups

The Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework has been produced by a group of charities that work with young people, including with care leavers. Although it's aimed at people who work in the local authority, young people have been involved in helping decide what should go in the Framework.

The Framework brings together lots of good ideas from across the country about what can help young people with their housing as they move out of care. It doesn't tell your local authority what to do, but it does give them a lot of suggestions about what works in other areas – and so what might be good for young people where you live.

For example, it gives ideas about what young people need whilst they are still in care and are starting to think about the next step for them. It also looks at what different sorts of housing choices might be available for young people leaving care, and it gives ideas for what support is most helpful if a care leaver finds themselves having a problem with their housing.

We want to know what you think about the Framework and how it could be changed for our area. We need to be upfront and honest with you because, like everywhere in England, there are some limits of the housing choices we have to offer young people. But based on what options are available, we would like to know more about what would work best for you, what we can do to improve things and also any ideas you have for changing things.

Ideas for engaging children and young people in use of the Framework locally

- Share the one-page Framework diagram with existing participation groups, such as the Children in Care Council or care leavers' participation group. Ask children currently in care and those leaving care about:
 - In which areas does our local authority do well for care leavers?
 - Where are there gaps in what our local authority provides for care leavers?
 - Which groups of care leavers in our area do you think would need particular support around housing?
 - What do you think about some of the suggested services in the Framework and whether they would work locally? (Examples could include: training flats; mediation; peer landlord or shared housing schemes; Housing First).

- Review care leavers' pathway plans to assess what is working well and where there are gaps in existing provision. This will assist with engaging those young people who are not involved in participation groups. Ask personal advisers as part of their regular catch-ups to find out what care leavers think about current provision and what could change.
- Invite a group of children in care and care leavers to meet with the Lead Member and/or Director of Children's Services. With the Framework in mind, facilitate a guided discussion about what currently works and where there could be improvements in the local housing services for care leavers.
- Carry out informal focus groups or discussions with young people about to leave care who are in different placement settings in your area. Do young people leaving foster care, Staying Put, in residential care or living in 'other arrangements' have different views about what housing support they need? What about those who are or have been in custody, or with physical disabilities or mental health issues?



Annex 6: Demonstrating the costs and benefits of housing options for care leavers

In making the case for funding, it is often very useful to be able to demonstrate the implications of not taking action to support care leavers to have a good housing pathway. This could be done through a formal cost-benefit or Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis, or more informally using existing tools that are available.

The Department for Communities and Local Government has produced an Evidence Review of the Costs of Homelessness (2012)³⁸ which explores the costs to central government of homelessness in adults. This can be used to evidence some of the wider costs of homelessness to the welfare system, criminal justice system and health providers, amongst others.

Homeless Link's guide What's It Worth? (2013)³⁹ explains how to carry out simple financial savings analysis on services, including providing links to unit costs and sources of further assistance.

Annex 7: Blank copy of the framework

This blank version of the framework (opposite) can be copied and used to map and develop your Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework locally.

38 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7596/2200485.pdf
39 <http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/What's%20it%20worth.pdf>

Care leavers accommodation and support framework

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Schools, Children and Families O&S Committee: Work Programme 2016/17

Chair: Cllr Susan Barnett

Committee Members: Cllrs: Sue Anderson; Matt Bennett; Kate Booth; Barry Bowles; Debbie Clancy; Shabrana Hussain; Julie Johnson; Chauhdry Rashid; Valerie Seabright; Martin Straker-Welds and Alex Yip

Representatives: Samera Ali, Parent Governor; Evette Clarke, Parent Governor, Richard Potter, Roman Catholic Diocese; and Sarah Smith, Church of England Diocese

Officer Support: Link Officer: Seamus Gaynor

Scrutiny Team: Benita Wishart (464 6871) & Amanda Simcox (675 8444)

Committee Manager: Louisa Nisbett (303 9844)

1 Priority Issues

1.1 The following were highlighted in June as the priority issues for the committee's 2016/17 municipal year:

- Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP) / School improvement [Sept 2016 & Mar 2017]
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Children Missing from Home and Care [Oct 2016 & April 2017]
- Corporate Parenting & Children in Care [January 2017]
- School exclusions [not programmed]
- Social Care Improvement Journey [Dec 2016 with Cabinet Member]
- Special Educational Needs [Inclusion Commission Sep 2016 & March 2017]
- Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) [not programmed]
- Voluntary Children's Trust [Sep 2016, Jan 2017 & additional session(s) to be confirmed]

1.2 Annual reports/updates on:

- School places sufficiency
- School attainment
- Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB)
- Portfolio Budget
- Youth Justice Strategic Plan



2 Meeting Schedule

| All at 2 pm in Committee Rooms 3 & 4 | Session / Outcome | Officers / Attendees |
|--|---|---|
| 15 June 2016 Committee Room 2 | Informal Meeting to discuss the Work Programme | |
| 20 July 2016 Send out: 12 Jul 2016 | <p>The Education and Children's Social Care Improvement Journey.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Andrew Christie, Children's Commissioner for Birmingham to provide a SWOT analysis (robustness & risks). Will be available from 3.30pm. Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families (discussion to include: Children's Services Voluntary Trust & SEN Commission) Peter Hay, SD for People Alastair Gibbons, Executive Director for Children Services <p>Outcome: <i>These discussions have informed the work programme.</i></p> | |
| 21 September 2016 Send out: 13 Sep 16 | <p>Voluntary Children's Trust (2pm – 2.30pm)</p> <p>Outcome: <i>Sessions will be built for Overview and Scrutiny and the wider political consultations/discussions.</i></p> | Councillor Brigid Jones and Peter Hay, Strategic Director for People |
| | <p>Inclusion Commission (2.30pm - 3pm)</p> <p>Outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Information on the six work streams provided.</i> <i>The process for appointing the young person and other representatives on the Inclusion Commission provided.</i> <i>An update on the Inclusion Commission to be made at either the December 2016 or January 2017 committee meeting.</i> | Councillor Brigid Jones and Colin Diamond, Executive Director for Education |



| All at 2 pm in Committee Rooms 3 & 4 | Session / Outcome | Officers / Attendees |
|--|--|---|
| | <p>Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP) to discuss school improvement. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of the work BEP do for BEP Members and then the work they are contracted to do under the BCC contract to set the context. • First year contract review. • Whether BEP is making a difference? • Whether BEP/BCC undertakes a survey? • How BEP broker relationships. <p>Outcome: <i>School attainment to be discussed more fully at the 22nd March 2017 committee meeting and Tim Boyes, Chief Executive and Tracy Ruddle, Director of Continuous School Improvement, BEP to be invited.</i></p> | <p>Tim Boyes, Chief Executive and Tracy Ruddle, Director of Continuous School Improvement, BEP</p> <p>Colin Diamond as the Council's Commissioner</p> |
| <p>12 October 2016</p> <p>Send out: 4 Oct 2016</p> | <p>Tracking: Children Missing from Home and Care Inquiry (previous progress report received April 2016)</p> <p>Outcome: <i>Progress noted and there will be a report back on 26th April 2017. To include the key measures of success that will be used and the WMP to come back with case studies.</i></p> | <p>Claire Bell, West Midlands Police and Tony Stanley, Chief Social Worker</p> |
| | <p>Update on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). To include a tracking report on Rec 6: awareness raising and licencing</p> <p>Outcome: <i>Rec 6 was agreed as achieved – late. To report back on 26th April 2017. To include further analysis around trends.</i></p> <p><i>Licensing redrafted the letter to taxi drivers and Members were asked for comments.</i></p> | <p>Claire Bell, West Midlands Police, Alastair Gibbons, Executive Director for Children Services, Debbie Currie, AD Child Protection, Performance & Partnership, Cathryn Greenway, Senior Commissioning Officer and Emma Rohomon, Licensing Manager</p> |
| | <p>Missing from Education</p> <p>Outcome: <i>An updated Appendix 3 – weekly CNES report was forwarded.</i></p> <p><i>Cllr Valerie Seabright to set up a working group to look at wider issues, e.g. exclusions and transport.</i></p> | <p>David Bishop, Head Of Service - Alternative Provision & Independent Education and Julie Young, AD - Education & Skills</p> |



| All at 2 pm in Committee Rooms 3 & 4 | Session / Outcome | Officers / Attendees |
|---|--|---|
| 23 November 2016 Send out: 15 Nov 2016 | Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) Annual report. Discussion to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on listening to children voices • Lessons learned from serious case reviews • Children trafficked into the UK • Issues arising from Section 11 and 175 audits (including how many schools haven't completed) • The strength of the partnership and capacity to prioritise safeguarding • Listening to Social Workers voices <p>Outcome: <i>Report noted and information on young people who self-harm to be provided.</i></p> | Penny Thompson, Chair of BSCB and Simon Cross, Business Manager |
| | Citywide School Attainment Statistics – Headline data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether the different styles of moderation in schools have impacted on results of key stage 2. • Is there information about trends in the schools 'requiring improvement' and in the 'outstanding' schools? <p>Outcome: <i>Members updated and trends with our statistical neighbours to be included in the detailed school attainment statistics to be presented on 22nd March 2017.</i></p> | Richard Browne, Intelligence Manager, Tim Boyes, Chief Executive and Tracy Ruddle, Director of Continuous School Improvement, BEP |
| | School Places Sufficiency Update <p>Outcome: <i>Members updated and Officers to investigate Member consultation for a school expansion in Weoley Ward.</i></p> | Emma Leaman, AD - Education & Infrastructure; Lucy Dumbleton and Julie Newbold |
| 7 December 2016 Send out: 29 Nov 2016 | Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families Six Month Update. To include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement and challenges following Ofsted's full inspection • Budget position • Inclusion Commission (either Dec or Jan) <p>Outcome: Members to be provided with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The current and proposed funding formula for early years to the three different sectors for each child per hour, including the percentage that is passed on.</i> • <i>The ongoing funding for school improvement when the figures have been released by Government and the future role of Birmingham Education Partnership.</i> | Councillor Brigid Jones, Alastair Gibbons and Colin Diamond |



| All at 2 pm in Committee Rooms 3 & 4 | Session / Outcome | Officers / Attendees |
|---|--|---|
| | <p>Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) / Children's Advice and Support Service (CASS). To include how the Social Worker teams are working together (ASTI etc) and the number of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referrals • Re-referrals • School referrals and the number of school referrals followed up / not followed up • Referrals and re-referrals dealt with within/outside targets <p>Outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The improvement plan to be forwarded to the committee.</i> • <i>A briefing note that set out the communication plan was circulated 17.1.17.</i> • <i>An update will be provided following Ofsted's return.</i> | Kay Child, AD, Integrated Services East and Liz Elgar, Head of Service |
| | <p>Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2016 – 17. To include the number of re-offending rates over time.</p> <p>Outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The 2017/18 Youth Justice Strategic Plan to be programmed into the Committee's work programme.</i> • <i>Members who wish to visit the youth offending teams to let the scrutiny office know their availability for the visits.</i> | Dawn Roberts, AD, Early Help and Trevor Brown, Head Of Youth Offending Services |
| <p>25 January 2017</p> <p>Starts at 1pm</p> <p>Send out: 17 Jan 2017</p> | Evidence gathering for the Corporate Parenting Inquiry | Andy Pepper, AD, Children in Care Provider Services |
| <p>8 February 2017</p> <p>Send out: 31 Jan 2017</p> | Progress on the Child Poverty Commission's recommendations – not discussed at committee before. | Cllr Waseem Zaffar, Cabinet Member for Transparency, Openness and Equality, Marcia Wynter, Peter Hay, Jacqui Kennedy, Acting Strategic Director for Place |
| | Early Years Update. Includes the work of the working group (TBC) | Lindsey Trivett, Acting Head of Early Years |
| <p>22 March 2017</p> <p>Send out: 14 Mar 2017</p> | Christine Quinn, West Midlands Regional Schools Commissioner | Rachael McNaney, PA to Christine Quinn |



| All at 2 pm in Committee Rooms 3 & 4 | Session / Outcome | Officers / Attendees |
|---|---|---|
| | <p>School Attainment Statistics for Secondary and Primary Schools (detail building on headline statistics reported on 15 November 2016).</p> <p>Update to include trends with our statistical neighbours.</p> <p>Secondary detailed statistics for previous year discussed at 16 March 2016 committee meeting Primary detailed statistics for previous year discussed at 10 February 2016 committee meeting</p> | <p>Colin Diamond / Richard Browne</p> <p>Tim Boyes, Chief Executive and Tracy Ruddle, Director of Continuous School Improvement, BEP</p> |
| | Inclusion Commission | Councillor Brigid Jones, Suman McCarthy, Alastair Gibbons and Colin Diamond (tbc) |
| | Disability Service for Children | Alastair Gibbons, Yvette Waide / Chris Bush |
| <p>26 April 2017</p> <p>Send out: 18 Apr 2017</p> | <p>Update on Children Missing from Home and Care</p> <p>Last discussed at 12 Oct 2016 committee meeting.</p> | <p>Claire Bell, West Midlands Police, Tony Stanley, Chief Social Worker and Debbie Currie, AD Child Protection, Performance & Partnership</p> |
| | <p>Update on CSE.</p> <p>To include the role of schools.</p> <p>Last discussed at 12 Oct 2016 committee meeting.</p> | <p>Claire Bell, West Midlands Police, Alastair Gibbons, Executive Director for Children Services, Debbie Currie, AD Child Protection, Performance & Partnership, Cathryn Greenway, Senior Commissioning Officer and Emma Rohomon, Licensing Manager</p> <p>Colin Diamond, Julie Young and Jon Needham TBC</p> |
| | Radicalisation Agenda | Tony Stanley, Chief Social Worker |
| | Schools, Children and Families O&S Committee's 2017/18 Work Programme | Scrutiny Office |



3 Outstanding Tracking

| Inquiry | Outstanding Recommendations | Date of Tracking |
|---|--|----------------------------------|
| We need to get it right: A health check into the Council's role in tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) | R6 - Awareness raising and licencing. | Tracking Completed |
| Children Missing from Home and Care | R2 – Develop an overarching strategy for missing children so responsibilities are clear and understood, risk is managed well, especially for looked after children and persistent runaways, information is shared effectively and appropriate support is in place for children and families. | Update received: 12 October 2016 |

4 Visits

- 4.1 A visit to Leeds City Council on the 2nd August 2016: Education Awards Appeals (Home to School Transport), Special Educational Needs (SEN), Leeds Safeguarding Childrens Board & Leeds' Scrutiny.
- 4.2 Further visits to be arranged to social work teams to talk to front line staff (South Area – Lifford House visited on 22nd July 2016).
- 4.3 Children in Care Council (CiCC) and work experience visit on 12th August 2016.
- 4.4 Visits to the Youth Offending Service to be arranged.

5 Inquiry

- 5.1 The committee to agree the topic for their inquiry. Corporate Parenting may be appropriate.

Inquiry – Corporate Parenting (TBC)

| Date | Item |
|--------------|--|
| TBC | TOR Agreed |
| January 2017 | Evidence gathering & Committee agree the draft report |
| TBC | Draft report to the Executive & Committee agree final report |
| TBC | City Council |

6 Working Groups

- 6.1 The committee have discussed 'children missing from school' and Cllr Valerie Seabright to set up a working group to look at the wider issues of children 'missing education', e.g. permanent exclusions.
- 6.2 A Working Group to assist with the Council's Early Years Review: Early Education and Childcare



Offer has been set up:

| Early Years Review: Early Education and Childcare Offer | |
|--|--|
| Working Group Members: Cllr Susan Barnett, Cllr Sue Anderson, Samera Ali, Evette Clarke & Cllr Shabrana Hussain | |
| Key Officer(s): Emma Leaman, AD, Education and Infrastructure, Lindsey Trivett, Acting Head of Early Years and Gill King, Inclusion Support Manager | |
| Terms of Reference | <p>The City Council is undertaking a programme of work for the Early Years Review into Early Education and Childcare Offer. The Working group will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute and add value to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) report and roll out. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to the draft report and recommendations from the Focus Group meetings (this will also be shared with all Committee Members). Assistance with the promotion of the launch. Contribute to improving the insufficient take up of nursery places for 2 year olds. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefing sessions (the Q&A could lead to a short report from the Working Group). The voice of the parents and the impact. Visits. |

7 To be Programmed

7.1 Lorna Fitzjohn, Regional Director, West Midlands, Ofsted to attend after the full Ofsted inspection.

8 Useful Acronyms

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|---|--|---|
| ASTI = Assessment and Short Term Intervention BEP = Birmingham Education Partnership BESD =Behavioural, Emotional, Social Difficulties BSCB = Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board CAF = Common Assessment Framework CAFCASS = Child & Family Court Advisory Support Service CAMHS = Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services CASS = Children's Advice and Support Service CEOP = Child Exploitation and Online Protection CHIPS = Challenging Homophobia in Primary Schools CIC = Children in Care CICC = Children in Care Council COBS = City of Birmingham School CPD =Continuing Professional | DFE =Department for Education DCSC = Disabled Children's Social Care DV = Domestic Violence EDT = Emergency Duty Team EFA = Education Funding Agency EHC = Education, Health and Care plan (to replace SEN statements from Sept 2014) EHE = Elective Home Education EWS = Education Welfare Service EYFS = Early Years Foundation stage FCAF = Family Common Assessment Framework FGM = Female Genital Mutilation FSM = Free School Meals FSW = Family Support Worker IA = Initial Assessment IAT = Integrated Access Team IRO = Independent Reviewing Officer Key Stage 1(Ages 5-7) Years 1 and 2 Key Stage 2 (Ages 7-11) Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 Key Stage 3 (Ages 11-14) Years 7, 8 and 9 | MASH = Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub NASS = National Asylum Support Service NEET = Not in Education, Employment or Training NQSW = Newly Qualified Social Worker NQT= Newly Qualified Teacher NRPF = No Recourse to Public Funds Ofsted = Office for Standards in Education PCT = Primary Care Trust PEP = Pupil Education Plan PEx = Permanent Exclusions PGCE = Post Graduate Certificate of Education PIE = Pride in Education PPS = Parent Partnership Services PRU = Pupil Referral Unit RAG = Red, Amber, Green SCR = Serious Case Review SEN = Special Educational Needs SENAR= SEN Assessment and Review SENDIASS = SEND Information, Advice and Support Service SENCO = Special Educational Needs Coordinator SEND = Special Educational Needs and |
|---|--|---|



| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Development CPR = Child Protection Register CRB = Criminal Records Bureau CSE = Child Sexual Exploitation CTB = Children's Trust Board | Key Stage 4 (Ages 14-16) Years 10 & 11 Key Stage 5 (ages 16 – 18) LAC = Looked After Children LACES = Looked After Children Education Service LADO=Local Authority Designated Officer LSCB = Local Safeguarding Children Board | Disability SEDP = Special Education Development Plan SGOs = Special Guardianship Orders TA=Teaching Assistant TAF = Team Around the Family UASC = Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children YDC = Young Disabled Champions YOS = Youth Offenders Service YOT = Youth Offending Team |
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9 Forward Plan for Cabinet Decisions

The following decisions, extracted from the Cabinet Office Forward Plan of Decisions, are likely to be relevant to the Schools, Children and Families remit.

| ID Number | Title | Proposed Date of Decision |
|-------------|---|---------------------------|
| 000232/2015 | School Organisation Issues which may include Closures, Amalgamations, Opening of a new school – Standing Item | 20 Sep 16 |
| 000732/2015 | Provision of Additional Places at Harborne Primary School (Lordswood Academy Annexe) to meet Immediate Need and Demographic Growth for September 2016 Onwards – FBC | 17 Feb 17 |
| 001955/2016 | Harper Bell Seventh Day Adventist School conversion to Academy status | 30 Jan 17 |
| 002307/2016 | Council run Day Care Services – Review of delivery and future options for sustainability | 17 Feb 17 |
| 002600/2016 | Unattached School Playing Fields – Disposal for Development | 17 Feb 17 |
| 002873/2017 | Early Years Capital Funding – Outcome of Bid - PUBLIC | 17 Feb 17 |
| 002890/2017 | Voluntary Children's Trust | 30 Jan 17 |
| 002981/2017 | Elms Farm Primary School – Full Business Case & Contract Award - Public | 30 Jan 17 |
| 002982/2017 | Pension Arrangements for staff transferred out of Cityserve following outsourcing by a City Council School | 30 Jan 17 |
| 002997/2017 | Primary and Secondary School Coordinated Scheme, Admission Arrangements and Admission Numbers – September 2018/2019 | 20 Feb 17 |

