

Manchester City Council Report for Information

Report to: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 9 October 2019

Subject: Leaving Care Service

Report of: Strategic Director of Children's and Education Services

Summary

Following attendance at Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee in March 2019 which followed the decision to transfer the management and leadership of the Leaving Care Service from a third party provider to Manchester City Council, committee members requested a further update. The Leaving Care Service has made great strides, particularly around the workforce, partnership working, providing education opportunities for young people and widening the accommodation options available to our young people.

The purpose of this report is to update Scrutiny Committee Members on progress and positive impact being made by the service. Our ambition is to ensure our Care Leavers experience a safe, happy, healthy and successful life; one in which they are:

- Better prepared and supported to live independently
- Have improved access to education, employment and training
- Experience stability in their lives, feel safe and secure
- Receive improved access to health support
- Achieve financial stability

Recommendations

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee are invited to;

1. Note the progress and success that has been achieved since March 2019 and since October 2018 when the Leaving Care Service transferred to Manchester City Council.
 2. Consider and comment on the developments planned to improve the service and in turn the experiences and outcomes of our young people.
 3. Consider a further update in a specified timescale.
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Wards Affected: All

Alignment to the Our Manchester Strategy Outcomes

Manchester Strategy Outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The progress made in terms of offering education, employment and training opportunities to children and young people has been very good. We are in a very strong position in terms of providing a broad spectrum of opportunities, which in turn we are gradually seeing uptake from young people.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Our Care Leavers will offer us our employees of the present and the future. As Corporate Parents, we are committed to offering each individual young person an opportunity that is suited and matched to their skills, in line with their goals and ambitions. The Care Leaving Service intends to be the driving force behind this - linking in with our own Council services and local employers / partners.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	The Leaving Care Partnership Meetings have continued to go from strength to strength, widening the group and also maintaining established relationships. The sub-groups from these meetings are driving the service delivery plan and making an impact on the key priorities.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Our young people are proud to be from Manchester, and we have to show our dedication to providing a service that stands above that of others. Our partnership work, our young-person focussed, tenacious staff team are key highlights. In addition, we remain the only care leaving service providing a service from 8am to 8pm, setting us apart from the rest.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Now fully embedded in house, and with the endorsement of a Peer Review, we can now evidence that the Leaving Care Service is accessible across the city, to peers, partners and young people. More young people are open to and accessing the service than ever before, including young people over 21 years old returning to the service. We want to listen to young people's experiences and ensure this shapes the design of our delivery going forward.

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

1.0 Update on Care Leaver Service

Since the previous report performance in March 2019, the Leaving Care Service has continued to improve and, in turn, the outcomes for our children and young people have also continued to improve.

The service is confident in its progress towards providing a good service in which all our young people are safe, stable and are given the skills to achieve successfully in their chosen education or employment destination. The next step on this journey is to work towards delivering a consistently high quality service through a delivery model that is shaped by a combination of the whole service directorate plan and by young people's feedback and views on the service they have received.

In June 2019 the service received a Peer Review from another Local Authority, without links to Manchester, that has been graded by Ofsted to be good. The outcome and recommendations from this Review are detailed further in the report.

1.1 Workforce

Following the appointment of a permanent management team in April 2019, the team has remained stable and all staff have been retained. Since that date a further seven members of staff have been successful in achieving appointments to permanent contracts with Manchester City Council. A number of staff are due to return to work from maternity leave in September. The Leaving Care Service is fully staffed at present, with a small number of agency staff being used as necessary. Staff morale is good in the service, which is creating an environment for good practice to flourish. Personal Advisors are committed and passionate to achieve the best possible outcomes for our care leavers.

Ensuring our workforce is skilled and informed, and has qualifications commensurate to the role is a key priority for us. We have worked closely with the Learning and Development Team and Salford University to develop a Level 4 Children, Young People and Families Practitioner Apprenticeship. Having completed a skills audit with the whole team, we are confident that those being put forward for this apprenticeship will qualify with enhanced knowledge, skills and understanding which will positively impact on overall service improvement and the quality of the experience of our young people.

Our staff report that they feel safe and supported at work. We know that when staff receive regular, positive and reflective supervision this improves staff retention and ensures consistency for young people in terms of their allocated worker. Since May 2019 there has been an average supervision compliance rate of 98%.

The recent Peer Review highlighted caseloads in the service. One of the recommendations of the Peer Review was to complete a benchmarking exercise across other Local Authorities, to compare how this figure matches

with others. This work is now completed, with variable numbers across services - some authorities have caseloads upwards of 30 - 35, whereas others are able to offer caseloads of 25 - 30. It is important to note that most authorities have not established a formalised offer for their young people aged 21 - 25 following the recent change in legislation, which is impacting upon their caseloads. Manchester has developed a coherent offer for this cohort of young people, with very good outcomes becoming evident for our 'returning' young people. At the aforementioned benchmarking exercise, Manchester's offer to 21+ young people was highlighted as a piece of good practice that we intend to share with a wider audience. Upon consultation with the DfE's National Adviser on Care Leavers, it was advised that caseloads should average 25, therefore we intend have increased the number of Personal Advisers posts from 32 to 34. We have recruited to these posts - with employees who were previously Student Social Workers on the team having recently started. This will reduce caseloads to approximately 27 in the first instance, with projections indicating that this will reduce further by Summer 2020.

1.2 Performance, Assurance and Quality of Practice

The following table provides statistical information on the performance of the team. These figures are a significant improvement on performance from before the service came back in-house in October 2018. Figures are accurate as at July 2019, prior to the transfer to the Liquid Logic computer system.

Key Performance Indicators	MCC (June 19)	Core Cities (17/18)	SN (17/18)	NW (17/18)	England (17/18)
In Touch	84%	89%	91%	92%	88%
Suitable Accommodation	78%* (95%)	84%	86%	87%	84%
EET	53%* (70%)	48%	50%	50%	51%
With a Pathway Plan Reviewed 6 monthly	96% 77%				
Awareness of Entitlements	87%				

*NB * These figures are for 18,19 & 20 yr olds currently in touch to enable direct comparison. Figures in brackets below are for all young people currently in touch with the service.*

To provide further information, the DfE expect that Local Authorities make the assumption that those young people 'not in touch' are both not in suitable accommodation and not in education, employment or training. This changes the statistics somewhat, as is evident in the figures in brackets. This data

indicates that when we are in touch with our young people, we are excellent at ensuring they are in suitable accommodation (95%) and better than any statistical neighbour at ensuring they are in education, employment or training (70%). The challenge is to improve our ‘in touch’ performance, which in turn improves performance in the other areas.

The team has improved significantly in terms of their quality assurance compliance, and we are starting to see more audits being graded ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’. Although we are still taking learning from those cases graded ‘Requires Improvement’, we can evidence an improvement in the consistent quality of service being provided. We can evidence this through our newly developed ‘Success Tracker’ which provides details of successes, progress and achievements our young people have made. However, it is accepted that there is more work to be done in this area of improving the quality of our service delivery, and evidencing this on young people’s case records.

2.0 Update - Key Priorities of Service Delivery Plan

2.1 Voice and Influence of Our Young People

We have continued to hold sessions with young people in which we have sought their views and experiences, for example the recent Peer Review and the last Corporate Parenting Panel was very well attended by young people. We have also completed a survey to young people to which 20 responses have been received, all positive about the service received. The further motivation for this survey was to canvas interest in the upcoming young person-led Participation Board (name to be decided by the young people), as previously referred to in the report. The inaugural meeting of this Board has taken place and young people have fed back to us that they would like more engagement events and more access via technological options. Therefore, the plan is to hold Engagement Events for young people at least once per month and to expand our technology options, through a website and social media platforms. An Engagement Event was held in August 2019; details of which are available later in the report.

2.2 Education, Employment and Training

This area of work has been very successful and we are consistently offering opportunities to young people to enhance their Education, Employment and Training (EET) outcomes. We have developed and introduced a model built on the experience of the work of the Virtual School and the continuing working relationship with North West Business Leaders. This model works on the principle of providing EET opportunities for our young people on the basis of three crucial elements for each offer:

Element 1. World of Work Tour - young people are invited to meet employer(s) / businesses to gather full understanding of the sector or in cases where a specific job / apprenticeship is on offer, they will have the opportunity to find out about the job roles and the general working environment.

Element 2. Work Experience - following Element 1 - young people are invited to attend an agreed period of work experience. This gives the young person the opportunity to see, feel and experience all aspects of the job. During this period, they are supported by an employer mentor and the service's Career Coach (contracted from Career Connect with a specific remit for supporting our young people who are not in education, employment or training). This period provides the employer with an opportunity to observe the young people in an informal / less pressured manner. In turn, this ultimately benefits young people who may be low in confidence or have issues that may have previously been a barrier for them applying for EET opportunities.

Element 3. Apprenticeship or Job Offer - following Element 2 - all young people are automatically invited to an informal interview. In all cases, the young people are encouraged to attend interview preparation support sessions with the aforementioned Career Coach or in specific instances with one of our partners such as The Prince's Trust. Young people who are successful are offered continued support and mentoring; those who are not successful are given feedback and supported towards other EET opportunities.

Wider from this model, we have recognised that this does not serve all our young people, especially those NEET young people who - for various reasons - are struggling to step up to the world of work. Therefore, we have developed a partnership with Greater Manchester Youth Network and intend to recruit two members of support staff to work explicitly with this cohort of young people to develop their self-confidence, stability and mental preparation, readying them for entering the aforementioned 'world of work' model. The ambition is to ensure that there is an EET option for all our young people, regardless of their qualifications, level of engagement and readiness for work.

The service is starting to see the real outcomes of this work coming to fruition, with specific examples available of young people progressing via a route made available from these partnership opportunities. An example of the model:

Manchester City Council's Disability Supported Accommodation Service (DSAS) and Day Care Service, agreed to ring-fence seven Apprenticeship positions for our young people. A total of 13 young people expressed an interest. All 13 attended the world of work element where they met the employers, staff and residents. A total of 12 young people expressed an interest to attend the two-week work experience. At present, the young people are mid-way through their first week and doing very well. We are all confident that all seven positions will be filled, and those unsuccessful will benefit greatly from the experience supporting them to move towards other education, employment and training opportunities.

Additional areas to report:

Mentoring

We are continuing to work with One Million Mentors, the North West Business Leaders and Key Partners in order to secure mentors for our young people.

The first matching panel was held in July. Thirteen young people were matched to industry mentors. The next matching panel will be held in October where a further 15 young people will be matched as the pool of mentors grows. All mentors are registered with the One Million Mentors service and complete mandatory training before being matched.

We Mind the Gap

This is a project that supports young women not in employment, education and training to improve their confidence and achieve EET status. The first cohort of young people have now completed the project and a graduation took place at Gorton Monastery on the 1st August. It was an amazing evening which celebrated the success of all five young people who started and completed the programme. These young women are great examples of the positive impact of the work we have been doing, and have taken every opportunity that was presented to them. They are now looking forward to moving into the world with real opportunities, real choices and longer term employment. The second cohort of young people will commence in the very near future. Based on the success of the first cohort, the project will be expanded to include ten young people, in collaboration with our partnership with the DWP.

2.3 Improving the Independence Skills of Our Young People

The Peer Review helped us to focus on some of the areas in this priority that required attention, e.g. equipping PA's with skills / tools and ensuring risk assessment / risk management tools were available. As previously discussed, these are now in place and will be embedded into the new systems. In addition, short training sessions will be held with staff in order to develop assessment skills and provide tools for supporting young people to become equipped for independent living.

In June we held a Joint Service Event with the Permanence Service. This was very positively received, as it was the first occasion both services had been brought together for a training day, with feedback reporting the relationships between the service will improve following this event. A key topic for discussion was transitions and ensuring young people are ready and prepared for adult life. It was positive to share thoughts and ideas and assist practitioners to understand differing roles and responsibilities. In addition, it was an opportunity to share good practice examples that can be taken forward by staff in the future.

2.4 Improving the Suitable Accommodation Options for Our Young People

We are working hard to improve the accommodation options for children and young people as they progress to adulthood. We have seen 39 young people now have clear plans to progress to their own tenancy from supported accommodation. This not only reduces the costs, but is also an indication of some of the effective planning being completed by the staff. In addition, we have managed to secure tenancies for 30 young people since the last report

through the 'Band One' prioritisation system - a process that is working very well currently.

We are committed to widening the accommodation options for young people and have a number of innovations going forward. The first is our project at the former children's home in Seymour Road. We plan to relocate the team to this unit, who will be based on the ground floor. On the first floor we will have three trainer flats and three taster flats which young people can access as part of their step-down from care to supported living and eventually to independent living. We are looking to have the building work completed by January 2020. Secondly, we are working with our partners in The House Project to develop a scheme in which ten young people at a time, on a rolling programme, access the project to firstly prepare themselves for independent living and then move into a tenancy that will eventually become their own. We have worked closely with our Registered Providers to ensure the availability of the tenancies, and are looking to recruit a Project Lead in the next three months with a view to recruiting the first group of young people towards the end of the year.

2.5 Improving the Health Outcomes of Our Young People

The aforementioned availability of CAMHS consultations for over-18 young people, has been a key advancement in this area.

We are continuing to raise the awareness of the Care Leaving Service and accessing relevant groups and panels in this area, with partners in Transitions and Probation / Youth Justice.

Going forward the sub-group is working on ensuring all young people have access to their Health Summaries and working with partners to improve mental health support (using emotional health services such as YASP and the Big Life Project). In addition, we have linked in with a local GP service who are offering free access to surgery for Care Leavers.

2.6 Peer Review

In June 2019 another Local Authority, from a London borough, came to visit the Leaving Care service for three days as part of a Peer Review. This was a welcome scrutiny for us, and we were grateful for the experience and feedback. The inspectors met with Personal Advisers individually, a focus group of professionals, partners and managers and two focus groups with young people.

The Review had three main focus areas:

- Voice of the child and engagement
- Leadership and culture
- Entitlements and Partnership Working

The key positive findings were as follows:

- Available data showed significant improvement in performance which is bringing Manchester in line with statistical neighbours and the region in relation to in-touch and suitable accommodation. Performance in relation to EET is particularly strong, exceeding statistical neighbours and the England average.
- Managers have an improved understanding and grasp of progress and areas requiring further work.
- All staff and partners reported that there is a visible leadership team. However, young adults do not necessarily know who the senior leaders are or how they could escalate concerns.
- There is a strong commitment to Corporate Parenting from Elected Members. The Lead Member for Children's Services has a comprehensive understanding of promoting positive outcomes for children.
- The Strategic Plan and regional vision is a strength and is well understood across services and wider partnership.
- Staff spoke positively about the culture of the organisation and their collaborative relationships with partners. Staff described a shared ownership of the work and practice having moved away from a commissioned and target orientated approach to service delivery. The transition of the Leaving Care Service from Barnardos to the Local Authority has resulted in a move from a commissioned focused approach to a whole service ownership of the Leaving Care Service.
- There is a positive narrative from staff at strategic and operational levels regarding the partnerships which they have with statutory agencies and the third sector. For example, Achieving Change Together model; We Mind The Gap; Manchester Settlement project; Citizen's Advice and the National Youth Advocacy Service. There is evidence of strong collaborative working, especially strong between the Permanence and Leaving Care Service.
- There is evidence of strong partnership working to address education, employment and training outcomes for Care Leavers. For example, as highlighted by the work of the education, employment and training sub-group to the Leaving Care Partnership Group.
- There is good evidence of young people feeling valued and supported by their Personal Advisers, particularly in relation to celebrating key achievements.
- Young people felt valued being included in recruitment campaigns for staff.

The recommendations, and our subsequent reflective responses are detailed below:

Recommendation	Response / Activity
Detailed review against regional and national benchmarking in relation to caseloads.	See above comments in paragraph 3.1
Improve consistency and recording of supervision. Purposeful and focussed approach, which support planning throughout.	Now embedded into Children's Services, the Leaving Care management team can adopt the Supervision Policy which promotes reflective supervision and addresses the six golden threads in the

	<p>sessions held individually with staff. We know that the previous management team did not provide consistent supervision evident on young people's files, however our audits evidence that this is improving and utilising the Supervision Policy this action will be carried forward.</p>
Ongoing training, briefings and quality assurance mechanisms to support improved consistency in quality of case recording.	<p>We have continued with our Signs of Safety Reflective Practice weekly sessions with staff, and intend to widen these to more focussed areas of the role. The embedded quality assurance framework addresses quality of case recording, and we can evidence gradual improvement with this.</p>
Staff could benefit from training in relation to effective techniques for engagement and direct work with young people including particular groups such as UASC and young people within the youth justice system.	<p>The aforementioned weekly sessions with staff will be widened to include these recommendations. In addition, we have made excellent partnerships with Youth Justice, with a Youth Justice practitioner based in the team directly. In addition, we have established a partnership with Greater Manchester Immigration and Asylum Unit who are offering bespoke services to our staff and training to staff on the issues faced with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.</p>
Consider implementing independent / peer reviewing of post-18 complex cases.	<p>We are establishing a system in which the management team operate a 'dovetail' system in which they quality assure and approve review reports from alternating team members, providing a level of independent oversight. In addition, we are working with the IRO service to establish a working agreement in which they will remain involved in certain cases for the first review post-18.</p>
Strengthen accessibility to the mental health and emotional wellbeing offer to Care Leavers.	<p>As part of our effective partnership work in the Health sub-group, we have established a consultation service for Personal Advisers to speak with a Clinical Psychologist in CAMHS on an appointment basis to discuss young people's access to mental health services or other interventions that could be effective.</p>
Further work required to establish a	<p>This is now fully integrated into the new</p>

consistent approach to risk assessment.	Liquid Logic assessment and planning processes in which staff have to assess risk for all young people as part of the overall pathway planning process. This provides a clear space for providing information on risk and risk management plans for young people, strengthening what was in place previously.
Further work is required to improve the quality of pathway planning focussed on SMART working, co-production and accessibility to young people.	<p>This is part of our ongoing service improvement / delivery. We have three key actions to improve the quality of practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A minimum of one direct observation per month by managers with the findings from the observation being discussed with the staff member in a reflective feedback session. ● Improve the skills of our practitioners to assess the needs of young people by providing them with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assessment tools used by the wide social work workforce. ○ Specific training on understanding and responding effectively to the information gathered through assessment conversations with young people. ● Improving the quality of our in-touch records with young people - focussing on our relationships and ensuring the in-touches are completed through direct work and not via email/ telephone.
Specific work in relation to proactive planning for children and young people returning home.	We have worked closely with the Permanence team on their drive with supporting young people to return home, and engaging young people's families is a key part of our six golden threads. We intend to develop this further, by engaging staff on specific learning sessions on the rehabilitation of young people to their families, providing tools on how to assess and plan for this more substantially.

Review of communication opportunities with young people, including local offer, entitlements, group provision, opportunities to access events.	This is a key improvement priority for the service, and we want young people to shape and design what this looks like. We will establish a young person-led Participation Board by September where we will seek their views on how best to deliver this recommendation. Also in August, we have our inaugural Clothing Event for young people where we have teamed up with private clothing companies to provide free clothing for young people in which we can deliver in a wide-scaling engagement event. Also, the updated Financial Entitlements offer has been completed and is going through the relevant approval mechanisms. We want to use the Care Leavers Board to tell us how to share this information when it is completed.
Promote the brand and identity of the Leaving Care service across stakeholder groups.	This recommendation was very positive for us. It informed us that the service can now move away from the previous legacy and start to 'label' Manchester Leaving Care service in a manner and style that is individual to our newly established culture of a professional, committed and young person-led provision. All our events and awareness raising sessions going forward will promote the 'brand' and state positively the pride we have in our work and service to the young people of Manchester.

2.7 Greater Manchester Wider Work

Manchester continues to be a lead in the work being completed with the other Leaving Care services across Greater Manchester. As part of the subgroup looking to establish financial stability for Care Leavers across GM, we are developing a cross-boundary agreement on the financial entitlements for Care Leavers, ensuring there is some consistency for young people living in different authorities. We are also part of the Education, Employment and Training subgroup which is looking to expand opportunities being made available across the region instead of there only being individual local arrangements. In addition, we are working with the other authorities to promote events such as the launch of the Care Leaver Covenant in November 2019 and the upcoming Greater Manchester Care Leaver Awards in October 2019.

3.0 Summary

In summary, the Leaving Care Service is making great strides, with real outcomes and a positive difference for children and young people. We will continue with the implementation of our service delivery plan, focussing on providing a consistently good quality of service with a strong management team providing robust grip and oversight. We have the ambition of young people shaping and designing our service, and we believe we have the plans in place to ensure this happens resulting in a service that everyone can be proud of.