

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 5 March 2019

Subject: Leaving Care Service

Report of: Strategic Director of Children and Education Services

Summary

Following the report submitted to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 9th October 2018 which set out a 3 phase approach to driving Continuous improvements in the services we provide to our care leavers. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress; giving specific focus to the development of our workforce and ensuring our young people are afforded suitable accommodation.

Recommendations

Children and Families Scrutiny Committee members are invited to note the progress and successes that has been achieved since 1/10/18 when the Leaving Care Service transferred to Manchester City Council. In addition, whilst there remains much to do in order to meet our aspiration of providing an excellent service for our young people; one that places them at the heart of decision making, Committee members are invited to;

- Consider and comment on the developments planned to improve the service and in turn the experiences and outcomes of our young people.
 - A further update in 6 months and for this to focus on the progress to improve the education, employment and training options of our young people.
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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 Care Leaving Service is developing its options for young people in terms education, employment and training. We are focussing upon our NEET young people with scrutiny and showing 'aspiration' for our young people

	who are EET and have goals to progress further.
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	There has been and continues to be some very effective partnership work completed, across all spectrum requirements of care leavers - health, education, independent living, suitable accommodation.
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 will be 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	The care leaving service is going through a journey, and we are building an effective team that young people that can be proud of accessing. Accessibility is the key word in terms of achieving the voice of young people in a variety of ways and listening to their wishes in terms how they want the service delivered and what they want to achieve individually. We will be evidencing a 'you said, we did' attitude - that promotes relationships and generates growth, connectivity and accessibility.

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1 Update on Care Leaver Service

Manchester's Care Leaver Service is very much one that is in transition and change; with a clear ambition and opportunity to deliver positive outcomes for our children and young people. In addition, over the last 3 months we have established some very effective partnerships, which leave the service positive about the future working arrangements and impact that can be achieved.

In addition, the service will continue to promote across the Council to ensure employees and partner agencies are aware of their responsibilities as Corporate Parents and as the above material, publications and website development will take place, as will the awareness raising of being Corporate Parent be broadcast also.

1.1 Voice and Influence of Our Young People

The work described in 2.3 links to the work around the participation of our young people. We believe they need to be part of shaping the service. A Multi-Agency Drop-In Service is commencing from the 12th February 2019 in which young people - and their allocated worker - can access for support / guidance from a wide range of education, accommodation and financial services. In addition, the young people Voice and Influence Group continues with assurance and drive.

To support this work we are keen to develop our communications with young people through an effective digital platform/social media platforms.

We continue in our recruitment to have young person representation and contribution to Manchester's Care Leaver Board.

1.2 Workforce

The main priorities for the service in the next three months are to establish a stable leadership/management team, recruit permanently to all vacant positions and start reskilling the workforce. In addition, a review of all material and publications that are provided for our young people will be completed, including the Care Leaver 'Offer' and financial entitlements for our young people.

The Personal Adviser is the key professionals working with our Care Leavers and we believe this staff team should be fully trained, developed and skilled to complete their work. There are a number of long-term and short-term targets being set in order to achieve accreditation for Personal Advisers but also bespoke modular courses that provide specific learning and development opportunities to practitioners working with young people who have left care.

Further, supporting our young people to independence is a key part of our work and we are looking to reskill our workforce so they are equipped with the skills to do this. Practice Guidance and handbooks have been provided and there are training and workforce development opportunities upcoming. Staff will be equipped with knowledge of accessing the relevant support services available in the area in order to ensure young people are signposted appropriately, supported to attend and provided with the right service by the right people. Very effective partnership work has been

completed with the Department of Work and Pensions and a working protocol established. Transition is another essential part of this work and a close liaison with our social work teams and forecasting the destinations and outcomes for young people - in order to intervene earlier where necessary - is part of the development plan going forward.

1.3 A Flexible and Responsive Service

Following an extensive programme of staff engagement and consultation, from 4th March 2019 Manchester's Leaving Care Service commences it's 8am - 8pm working pattern arrangements. The purpose of this service is to provide flexibility, availability and wrap around support to our young people. There will be a duty system for young people to access if their allocated worker is not available. The allocated worker should always be the first point of call for young people during office hours. The extension of the Duty provision from 8am to 8pm is available for young people should they need support during these additional hours, in the absence of their allocated worker.

It has been approximately 12 months since the new statutory guidance was issued (Social Work Act 2017) that extended the leaving care offer from 21 years to 25 years. Subsequently, over this next reporting period, it is planned for the service to meet with our young people and staff to consider the effectiveness and improvements to the support we provide to our 21 - 25 year old returning care leavers.

There is a significant amount of development with ensuring our care leavers are accessing Education, Employment and Training. The Prince's Trust are developing a project bespoke for care leavers and young people involved in the youth justice service in Manchester. This will include a range of employability and skills courses, which include personal development sessions. In addition, they will focus their work on NEET and at risk of being NEET young people - through a purpose developed 'One Stop Shop' hub. The 'Mind The Gap' project for eight of our young woman has commenced - a six month programme of work designed for women in order to improve their health and emotional wellbeing, employability and EET opportunities. The service has continued with their 'Aspiration Panel' in which young people are presented to access support from a multi-agency panel for direction and guidance to achieve their desired EET outcome, e.g. a young person discussed at the last panel sought advice around a pathway to becoming a qualified mental health nurse. Funding and appointment has been secured for a practitioner to work closely and link in with the North West Business Leaders - with the key priorities being reducing the number of NEET care leavers and widening the number of employment and training opportunities for our young people. Clearly these initiatives are in development and therefore it is proposed this work and the impact is further expanded in a future report.

In terms of service development around meeting the health and emotional health needs of our care leavers, there continues to be positive partnership work and relevant plans being implemented. Ensuring our Care Leavers have a Health Passport when they leave care is a key priority. Equally so is supporting the referral and transition processes for moving into adult services.

Barclays Bank Plc have continued with their effective partnership with Manchester Leaving Care Service; this has been maintained with the appointment of the permanent Service Manager. A meeting has been scheduled for the 19th February 2019 to progress this further. A 'welcome event' meeting was held in December 2018 which was well attended by our young people and considered a great success. Barclays have signed up to the Care Leaver Covenant to assist our young people access education, employment and training suited to their needs, through the Life Skills programme. Life Skills is a programme of work designed to inspire young people to prepare for the skills needed to manage in a modern-day workplace. We are already seeing some impact in terms of our young people being ready to successfully transition to the world of work. Next steps are to start expanding the Life Skills programme to 'Life Skills Money' and using this resource to support our young people to gain financial independence.

2 Update on work to ensure suitable accommodation for our young people

2.1 There has been a data exercise completed to review the types of accommodation our care leavers are living in. 89% of our care leavers are in suitable accommodation. Of those young people not in suitable accommodation, a proportion of this are currently in custody arrangements or are working closely with their Personal Adviser to improve their circumstances and transition into suitable accommodation. In addition, the service now has a key link with Youth Justice Services and Social Worker aligned with the Leaving Care Team, with a key focus to support our young people through the justice system. We have maintained our excellent performance of having no young people living in bed and breakfast accommodation.

2.2 Other highlights in this area indicate an increasing number of our young people Staying Put with their foster carers (90 young people at the end of 2017/18 compared to 87 in 2016/17 and 67 in 2015/16). At present, 23.6% young people are living independently compared with 21.7% in 2017/18, it is a good news and the service will continue to work in the area with our young people and partners. Key areas of focus will be to drive down the young people in externally commissioning supported accommodation and look at improving some of the data recording in this area.

2.3 Accommodation is a key service development area. Close liaison with providers of supported accommodation has started and we are looking to establish a joint meeting with all registered supported landlords, accommodation providers and step-down providers. There have been some very productive meetings with providers who will support young people into 'Trainer Flats' which are more suitable for our young people, more financially viable and provide good support in terms of managing that next step to independent living. Our relationship with Manchester Move, especially in terms of accessing Band 1 properties, is established and will be developed further.

2.4 The Strategic Homelessness Board continues to have Care Leavers as a priority on the agenda; and it is making a real difference. The Programme Plan being delivered by this Board now has key targets for Care Leavers which include:

1. Eliminate intentional homelessness for Care Leavers;
2. Identify specific tenancies that can be ring-fenced for Care Leavers;
3. Develop and implement a Young Person's Accommodation Pathway; providing a range of options for young people;
4. Ensure all young people are established in stable accommodation at least one month prior to their 18th birthday.
5. Develop effective working relationships with Registered Supported Landlords;
6. Develop and build on initiatives that are being offered to Care Leavers across the City, including the House Project.

Finally, an exciting proposal is being developed which may lead to a new base for the Leaving Care Service. The proposal will include a ground floor office and contact space for our young people, with a residence offer on the first floor. The residence offer will consist of six 'Trainer Flats' for our young people, that they can utilise as temporary accommodation if required or as a 'step-down' accommodation from supported living to semi-independence, as part of the overall goal of living independently. This residence offer will reduce the costs of supported accommodation and has the ambition to set us apart from other Authorities in terms of accommodation options available for our young people. The developments of this project will be subject to Manchester City Council's scheme of delegation and governance arrangements; this will include being presented to Scrutiny Committee in due course.

3 Summary / Next Steps

3.1 In summary, there have been great steps made with the Leaving Care service and there remains a significant amount of work to do to maintain and improve. The council has completed a 'safe' transfer back to an in-house provision and is looking at working through the next stages of staff development, culture and expectations before moving into performance and impact.

3.2 Key priorities for the forthcoming future include stabilising and reskilling our workforce, the development of a Service Delivery Plan and developing and publicising updates of the Care Leaver Offer, policies and procedures. The contribution of young people to each of these priorities is essential and we will ensure our young people are part of the development and shaping of this service.

Manchester continues to work the other 9 Greater Manchester Local Authorities and GMCA to deliver a vision of providing a consistently high quality Care Leaver Offer across the conurbation. Terms of Reference have been completed and there has been excellent participation and engagement. This initiative will see the 10 Local Authorities sharing best practice, supporting and learning from each other and maximising the positive relationships with the private and public sector bodies.