

Report to:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Jeanette Richards, Interim Director of Children's Services
Date of Meeting:	22 April 2021

SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT PLAN – CARE LEAVERS

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the progress of the improvement journey in respect of services for Blackpool's 'care experienced' young adults.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 For the Scrutiny Committee to have oversight of progress made on the strategic and coordinated approach to providing support for care leavers to improve their outcomes in order to provide scrutiny, challenge and support.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No
- 3.2 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

- 4.1 No other alternative options to be considered.

5.0 Council priority:

- 5.1 The relevant Council priority is: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

6.0 Background information

- 6.1 During the Ofsted inspection of Children's Service in December 2018 the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers were judged as 'Requires Improvement to be good'. The inspectorate stated a strategic and coordinated approach to providing support for care leavers to improve their outcomes, including in education, employment and training was required. This has been a key priority within our Improvement Plan and outcomes for our care experienced young people have improved as a result.
- 6.2 Outcomes for Our Care Experienced Young Adults:
- Each of our young people is supported by a Personal Adviser before they leave care and into

their adulthood. Our Personal Advisers maintain very good contact with our care leavers and nurture relationships to support our young people with their independence. During the pandemic, at least weekly contact for our young people was introduced to support emotional wellbeing, reduce isolation and ensure essentials in place including food, gas, electric, phones and digital access in addition to direct work to support our young people's development.

- The vast majority (95 per cent) of our young people live in suitable accommodation. The Positive transitions model provides young people with appropriate housing and additional tenancy support through Blackpool Coastal Housing. The Council works alongside housing partners to facilitate creative approaches to support young people, with traditionally limited options, find a home.
- Our young people have their say on shaping their service, this includes the Care Leavers Forum led by the Council's participation officer. Our young people coproduced their Care Leaver Offer in 2018 and recently refreshed that offer and will continue to hold us to account to ensure the offer remains aspirational.
- The proportion of our care leavers in education, employment and training has improved over the last six months. This remains a priority area for improvement as half of our young people do not currently have a positive outcome in this area and this is compounded by the impact of the pandemic on employment opportunities. Key leads across the authority are developing a strategy to create opportunities and address barriers earlier for all of our children. As an authority, Blackpool continues to create opportunities for our young people via apprenticeships, ring fenced opportunities, work placements and the new KickStart scheme. In addition to Personal Adviser support, through Opportunity Areas and Positive Steps, our young people are supported by three Young People's Employment Advisers to support their career journey.
- Over the last two years there has also been an increase in financial oversight to ensure Personal Advisers are supporting young people to budget and plan ahead, along with the Council's corporate parent contribution towards council tax, as a result, our young people are developing skills to manage their money.

6.3 Within the Adolescent Service, learning and development continues to be supported in a variety of ways including a suite of virtual training such a Blackpool Families Rock, Neglect, Contextual Safeguarding, Exploitation Domestic Abuse, preventing unplanned pregnancy and themed National Leaving Care Bench Marking Forum events. As a result Personal Advisers and their Managers are better prepared to support our young people transition into adulthood.

6.4 During the recent Ofsted Focused Visit, in February 2021, inspectors found care leavers were overwhelmingly positive about the support provided by their personal advisers during the pandemic. The inspectorate observed that the Adolescent Service responded quickly and adapted its offer in recognition of the vulnerability of those care leavers who were at risk of isolation during the first lockdown. This ensured that a minimum level of weekly contact was offered, although contact was often more frequent depending on need. The inspectorate also acknowledged that the monthly clinic attended by various partners, including mental health services, also ensured that care leavers were prioritised for mental health support promptly. Please refer to Appendix 5(a) for the full Focused Visit findings.

6.5 Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 Appendix 5(a) – Focused Visit Findings.

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 There are no financial implications to consider

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 There are no legal implications to consider.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 Care leavers priorities within the Improvement Plan are currently on track.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 There are no legal implications to consider.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 There are no sustainability, climate change or environmental factors to consider.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 Our young people coproduced their Care Leaver Offer in 2018 and recently refreshed that offer and will continue to hold us to account to ensure the offer remains aspirational. Regular updates regarding the Offer and Care Leaver Opportunities are heard at Corporate Parent Panel.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.