

North Somerset Council

Report to the Council

Date of Meeting: 9 November 2021

Subject of Report: Corporate Parenting Responsibilities

Town or Parish: N/A

Officer/Member Presenting: Executive Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning

Key Decision: No

Reason:

Not an Executive Decision

Recommendations

Members are asked to consider

- The work being undertaken in regard to supporting our care leavers into employment, education or training
- If there are any aspects that they would wish to know more about or challenge

1. Summary of Report

1.1 The report provides members with an update on the current position of our care leavers, aged 18 – 21 years in relation to education, employment and training. This report was considered by an informal meeting of the CYPS Scrutiny Panel on 21 October and any relevant feed back will be referenced at Full Council.

2. Policy

2.1 Whilst the concept of members viewing themselves as the parents of all children who are looked after came from the Quality Protects initiative launched in 1998 by Frank Dobson, the then Secretary of State for Health, the Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined for the first time in law the responsibility of corporate parents to ensure, as faster as possible, secure, nurturing and positive experiences for 'our' children. This means that they should:

- act in their best interests, and promote their physical and mental health and wellbeing;
- encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings, and take them into account, while promoting high aspirations and trying to secure the best outcomes for them;
- make sure they have access to services;
- make sure that they are safe, with stable home lives, relationships and education or work;
- prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

3. Details

3.1 In September 2021 North Somerset Council has 109 care leavers aged 18 -21-year-old with 51% (56) of those young adults currently in EET – the National Average for this same cohort is 53% EET, our Statistical Neighbours and regional neighbours are both also 53% - therefore NSC is slightly under the average for this cohort.

Of these 56 young people within the 18- to 21-year-old cohort:

5 are at University

23 are studying within further education and

28 are in training/employment

There are a further 5 young adult care leavers aged 21 to 25 years who are also at University currently.

3.2 Of the remaining 53 young adult care leavers (18 to 21) who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET):

10 are currently deemed unfit for work due to ill health or their disability

14 are pregnant or caring for their children

2 are currently in prison

The service is actively looking at this cohort of 53 young adults who are NEET to determine what are the barriers/challenges to employment, education & training and how we can best help them to enter EET. Our short-term target going forward is that we achieve at least 60% EET (65+ young people in our current cohort of 109) although our aspiration in the medium and long term is to ensure all of our care leavers are in EET.

3.3 Current Support to care leavers in relation to EET

3.3.1 Care Leaver team:

All care leavers aged 18-21 are allocated a Personal Assistant (PA) who assists them prepare for adulthood and independence and supports the young person in developing their pathway plan (care plan to independence). Transition planning for care leavers ensures that the PA works alongside the allocated social worker for the young person from when they reach 16 years. A key part of this PA role is also to ensure that the young people are in suitable Education, Employment and Training (EET) and supporting the young person along with other key professionals and services to achieve EET.

3.3.2 Support services available to our care leavers in achieving EET

a) Reboot West:

This service has been running since 2018 (part of a Social Impact Bond) to deliver support services to care leavers for education, employment, and training across four local authorities -North Somerset, Bristol, South Gloucester and B&NES. This was initially a four-year project – Reboot 1 (due to end Summer 2022). Further grant funding has been obtained for a future three-year project – Reboot 2 (Charity status - for care leavers 16-21). The service provides personal coaching focused on education and work up to 3 years of personal support for individual care leavers.

Reboot 1 performance

- 17 young people were allocated prior to step down to Reboot 2 which began summer 2021.
- 11 young people are still allocated
- 36% are EET, 74% NEET (2 have EET destinations starting soon)

Reboot 2 performance

- 8 referrals- 3 open/assessment completed
- 3 in case planning / assessment stage.
- 2 declined– reasons being explored
- Of the 3 that are allocated to a Reboot Worker - 1 Care Leaver achieved EET, 2 Care Leavers are NEET.

b) £20K funding providing by Elected Members to support care leavers in achieving EET

We are working with our care leaver forum and our care leavers to ensure that these monies are available to them as a 'one off' payment towards equipment/support to enable the young people to be supported in achieving EET. For example, purchase of materials/equipment to attend a course in college.

c) Participation in research to better understand the barriers/challenges for care leavers to achieving EET

Nuffield Research on Care Leavers' Transitions into the Labour Market (University of Oxford & York)

The Project:

The Nuffield Care Leavers' Transition into the Labour Market research, funded by the Nuffield Foundation and approved by ADCS and the University of Oxford Ethics Committee, is being carried out by researchers from the Rees Centre at the University of Oxford and the Department of Social Policy and Social Work at the University of York. The study utilises a mixed methods approach comprising two strands (statistics from datasets and perspectives of key stakeholders) and ran until the end of the summer 2021.

Led by Jo Dixon, University of York, the research team have worked directly with professionals and young people across six local authorities. The main data collection phase took place between September 2020 – May 2021. Interviews with North Somerset staff and care leavers were completed:

- 6 young people (aged 18 – 24) in each local authority (2 in stable EET, 2 in precarious EET and 2 NEET for at least 6 months in previous year)
- 1 Leaving Care Manager • 1 Virtual School Head from each local authority area.

Alongside this an online survey was sent by the research team to:

- Leaving care team professionals
- Foster and residential carers
- Stakeholders from employment sector (JC+, Careers Service Recruitment & employment federation)
- Stakeholders from education and training providers

Findings from this research are due to be published in January 2022 but we may get some headline updates during the autumn.

Children's Social Care Covid-19 Regional Recovery Fund – DfE

We have been awarded funding from the DfE regional recovery fund working alongside Bristol City Council (lead authority) on a project to develop a regional response to supporting care leavers across the South West.

Bright Spots - Your Life beyond Care Survey 2021.

Completed by 96 Care Leavers ages 18-25. Report published summer 2021.

Headlines NSC has a higher self-reporting by care leavers of disability / long term illness. 39% in NSC reported this compare with 24% national average.

20% of NSC care leavers reported they are finding it difficult to get by financially compared with 7% of their peers who are not care leavers.

Asked about feeling positive about their future 25% of NSC care leavers reported low positivity, this is lower than care leavers nationally where it was 13%.

We are currently working with our participation workers, care leaver service and with partner agencies to address these areas of challenge for our care leavers so that we can better support them and support them achieving EET.

3.3.4 Development of our staff and services to better support improved outcomes for care leavers, including EET performance

a) Staff training

Life in Transition: Promoting Good Health in Care Leavers delivered by Bristol University as a pilot to Leaving Care Personal Advisers in NSC started in September and has been attended by 7 out of the 10 staff in the team.

Content is delivered by online teaching of 6 modules about care leavers and health, including self-directed learning and webinars. A face-to-face workshop took place on 7 October which focused on practice and skills development. Evaluation of the pilot is scheduled for 4 November. This training is particularly relevant as our current care leaver population have self-reported higher levels of disability / long term illness than national averages for care leavers.

Confidence for Work Training

This was delivered to the care leavers team and 2 Reboot workers on the 15th October to upskill them in their work with care leavers in relation to EET. Again, 7 out of the 10 team members attended. This training module includes CV writing, how to register on employment websites, what employers are looking for in recruiting staff, how to complete application forms, taking part in online interviews and the local jobs market / who's recruiting and how to apply for these jobs in North Somerset.

b) Tall Ships – Sailing trip with Care leavers - 25 October – 29 October 2021

We joined up with Tall Ships Youth Trust to provide ten care leavers the opportunity and experience of sailing on a Tall Ships trip this October half term. The young people and two staff members will be accompanied by expert sailing staff / crew from the Tall Ships Youth Trust on the trip travelling from Weston-Super-Mare to Southampton.

The Tall Ships Youth Trust are a youth development charity that helps young people redefine their horizons through adventure learning at sea. They take young people aged 12-25 on residential youth sailing voyages on board iconic yachts. Out on the water, under sail, they learn lessons that set them up for life and help them realise their own potential.

c) Other support for Care Leavers

Ongoing support either through one-to-one sessions or through a drop-in activity is being offered through the Youth Opportunity Fund in the Town Hall in the Library on a weekly basis and is available through other NSC libraries. Our Youth Opportunity lead meets with any care leaver if they want EET Support regarding Job Vacancies Locally and support to apply for jobs. PA's support young people in attending these sessions.

d) Job vacancies and Apprenticeship updates

Fortnightly updates are posted on the care leavers 'Facebook Page' in relation to community learning opportunities, which have recently included short courses such as woodwork for women, jewellery making and how to pass your driving test. We also post regular updates on

this Facebook page on apprenticeships available and what is happening at Weston College when we receive flyers advertising open days and how to apply for the latest apprenticeships locally. PA's also share this information with care leavers they are working with.

e) Apprenticeships and work experience opportunities for care leavers across the Council & the partnership

Children & Young People's Partnership Board has challenged both within the Council and with partner agencies to support apprenticeships and work experience opportunities for care leavers. All partners in principle have agreed to this and are working with the DCS and AD to provide information on what they might be able to offer.

NSC is currently recruiting to a newly created Young Director post which is 'ring fenced to a NSC care leaver or older child in their care' and this young person will work within the Participation services to support the voice of our children across children's services.

3.3.5. Activities and actions to further improve performance within EET for our care leavers over the next six to twelve months

- The Children & Young People's Partnership Board has established a task & finish group to review our performance across North Somerset with EET, including care leavers and work will continue to develop strategies and actions that this group identify as opportunities to improve EET for North Somerset.
- Continue to work closely with the Virtual Head and Virtual school team to identify, closely monitor and support the educational needs of all our 14+ children in care.
- Work closely with Weston college and other local / regional colleges and training providers regarding training and education opportunities for care leavers including discussions around developing local access to ESOL courses for our UASC young people.
- Implement recommendations from research project findings.
- Work closely with regional LAs to develop consistent approach to working with carer leavers including the project from the DfE recovery fund referred to above.
- Review the Higher Education Funding for Care Leavers policy.
- Work closely with health partners to further develop our emotional health and well-being response to care leavers.
- Develop mentoring schemes – peer mentors (previous/current care leavers); and explore potential of the use of senior leaders and elected members and partners as mentors for our care leavers.
- Explore apprenticeship schemes / commitments within the local authority and partner agencies specifically for care leavers.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 This report gives members an update on the progress of our care leavers and the work being undertaken to improve the services for them in relation to support for them accessing employment, education or training.

5. Financial Implications

None.

Costs

None.

Funding

None.

6. Legal Powers and Implications

None.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

None.

8. Risk Management

None.

9. Equality Implications

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment? No.

10. Corporate Implications

None.

11. Options Considered

None.

Author:

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Background Papers:

None.