

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

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| Committee/Panel: | Corporate Parenting Board |
| Date: | 3 December 2018 |
| Title: | South East DCS Peer Challenge of Care Leaver Service |
| Report From: | Director of Children's Services |

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1. Recommendation

1.1. That the Corporate Parenting Board note the contents of this report.

2. Executive Summary

2.1. The purpose of this paper is to provide the members of the Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the South East Sector Led Improvement Programme (SESLIP) – DCS Peer Challenge of our Care Leaver service, which was undertaken on 8 and 9 November 2018.

2.2. Hampshire County Council are members of the South East Sector Led Improvement Programme (SESLIP). The principle underpinning this work is that councils are responsible and accountable for their own performance and take part in a range of sector led improvement activities including sharing of best practice in the design and delivery of children's services.

2.3. Within this programme, peer challenges are undertaken on a rolling basis with teams of four senior managers and, can include one senior manager acting as an observer. The host authority will agree a service area for the peer challenge team to explore and will provide areas within the service where greater understanding is to be sought in order to explore options to improve service delivery.

2.4. Hampshire Children's Services requested that the peer challenge should focus on the care leaver service.

2.5. The process worked well, with staff and care leavers attending the various focus groups over the 1.5 days of enquiry with the final half day spent providing feedback to a variety of staff.

2.6. Overall the feedback was very positive with the peer challenge team identifying Hampshire Children's Services strengths in a number of areas, especially in terms of investment in technology and increasing the number of

Personal Advisors with staff and care leavers reporting positive impact but also the transition process between Care Leaver and Adult's Services.

- 2.7. The peer challenge team also fed back on some areas where the challenge team had not been able to fully explore or understand within the tight constraints of the challenge timescales and some questions that they suggested Hampshire Children's Service's may wish to reflect on and consider what, if any actions re required.
- 2.8. This was the first peer challenge Hampshire Children's Services had experienced and feedback from staff has been positive regarding the process.
- 2.9. The strategic service lead for the care leaver service will be working with the Team Mangers for Children in Care and Care Leaver Teams to explore the feedback further and consider what steps may be needed to further improve service delivery.
- 2.10. The Senior Leadership Team will be taking the recommendations from the challenge and embedding them into the overall Quality Improvement Plan.

3. The Care Leaver Service and Peer Challenge

- 3.1. In Hampshire, the care leaver service is provided by four care leaver teams consisting of Personal Advisers, admin and a Team Manager. The care leaver teams begin joint working cases with Social Workers from Children's Assessment & Safeguarding teams or more likely from Children in Care Teams, when a child in care reaches 16 years old.
- 3.2. The Personal Adviser's role is to advise, assist and support a care leaver as they transition into adulthood and independence. The Personal Adviser becomes the key worker when the care leaver reaches their 18th birthday. For care leavers under the age of 21, the Personal Adviser undertakes statutory bi-monthly face-to-face visits, as well using other means to keep in touch, as agreed with the care leaver. The Personal Adviser needs to record and monitor a care leaver's progress, as well as offer practical, emotional and financial support to each care leaver they work with.
- 3.3. A care leaver is defined as a person aged 16-25, who was looked after by a local authority for at least 13 weeks in total since the age of 14. It includes young people who were detained (e.g. in a youth offending institution or hospital) when they turned 16, but who were looked after immediately before being detained. 'Care leaver' status applies to such children once they have left care; whether at 16, 17 or 18 years of age.
- 3.4. Those aged 16-17 are defined as either 'eligible (still looked after) or relevant (no longer looked after), whereas those aged 18-25 are defined as 'former relevant' (FR). Young people in care aged 16 and 17 continue to have a social worker who remains their key worker, however they will also have a Personal Adviser who will begin to form a working relationship with the care leaver.
- 3.5. As at 30 November there were 564 care leavers open to children's social care where the care leavers teams recorded as the 'key team' including approximately 117 who arrived as Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers. There

were approximately 50 care leavers receiving support via adult services as a 'key team' and also have an allocated personal advisor.

- 3.6. There are approximately 322 young people in care aged 16 and 17 years old open to the children in care teams of which approximately 106 arrived as Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers. This is the potential cohort for Care Leaver Teams over the next two years.
- 3.7. Approximately 90 care leavers have returned to the service as a result of the extended duties. This will be a fluctuating number as young people can return to the service and request closure as often as they need until their 25th birthday.
- 3.8. Four senior managers from other authorities in the South East assessed HCC care leaver service as a 'critical friend'. It is useful to note that three of the senior managers were from unitary authorities.
- 3.9. The peer challenge focuses both on developing insights which will secure operational improvement, and also on seeking insights to the way leadership and management might change to better support service delivery with improved outcomes. It is for the host authority to determine the service area for the peer challenge.

The programme promotes:

- Mutual respect, openness and honesty
 - Non-judgemental feedback
 - The need to diagnose and understand why things are like they are
 - A practical focus on how outcomes for young people could be improved
- 3.10. Senior managers from Hampshire Children's Services met with the lead of the peer challenge team in September to provide the background regarding the structure of Children's Services and consider the practical arrangements.
 - 3.11. Hampshire Children's Services requested that the peer challenge should focus on the care leaver service with a remit to:
 - Evidence Hampshire's strengths
 - Identify any areas for development
 - Identify any gaps in delivery
 - Identify and gaps in strategies
 - Provide a validation of Hampshire's care leaver service
 - 3.12. The peer challenge was structured to enable the peer challenge team to meet and question senior managers, team managers for Children in Care and Care Leaver services, social workers from Children in Care Teams, personal advisors from Care Leaver Teams and meet with Care Leavers in order to better understand their experiences.

- 3.13. In addition to these focus groups, two peer challenge team members met with managers of the Virtual College to understand how they support education and training for 16 and 17 year olds and the Head of Commercial procurement (particularly regarding accommodation) and the District Manager with the operational lead for care leavers to explore our performance management systems and processes.
- 3.14. Two of the peer challenge team met with the Service Manager for Independent Futures (this is the team that assess young people in care to determine if their needs meet the criteria for Adult's Services intervention and support when they turn 18 years).

4. Finance

- 4.1. There has been no direct financial impact on Hampshire County Council for providing overnight accommodation and meals for the peer inspection team as each host local authority is provided with a budget through SESLIP.

5. Performance

- 5.1. The Peer Challenge team provided initial feedback to the Director of Children's Services (DCS) prior to a general feedback session with staff.
- 5.2. The feedback identified many positive aspects from their discussion with staff and the care leavers in relation to the quality of work undertaken, the processes the department have in place, the virtual college and transition.
- 5.3. In particular, investment in front line staff and the hybrid devices had clearly made a difference to staff and young people.
- 5.4. The hybrid device was described as 'life changing' in the way in which staff were able to work remotely and improved the means by which Personal Advisors were able to communicate with and undertake work with young people.
- 5.5. Care Leavers recognise that with the investment in the Care Leaver service and in particular the increase in the number of Personal Advisors ensures that Personal Advisors have increased capacity to support young people. The impact of this for the care leavers is that they felt better supported.
- 5.6. Self evaluation and auditing systems were identified as strengths and, staff commented that auditing facilitated reflection by both managers and workers. Secondary auditing of the audits by senior managers ensures a robust evaluation of the work undertaken and the service provided and that the data gained is reliable.
- 5.7. The Peer Challenge team identified effective and cohesive relationships, particularly between care leaver managers and the transition to adult's services with an agreed strategy in place.
- 5.8. The Local Offer was identified as strong whilst also challenging the department to consider further promoting this. The Local Offer was already with the publishing team to enable this to be sent to care leavers by e-mail or a hard copy to be sent where this is the preferred option of the care leaver.

Additionally the department were asked to consider whether the Local Offer can be further developed to be more specific regarding services for unaccompanied asylum seekers.

- 5.9. The draft Care Leaver Strategy will be further developed to enable greater consideration for care leavers placed outside of Hampshire and in particular to ensure there is direction regarding services to unaccompanied asylum seekers who, in the main, are also placed outside of Hampshire in order to access the placements and community which is best able to meet their needs.
- 5.10. Whilst partnership working was identified as a strength there is always room for improvement, such as developing the link between the Virtual College and operational teams and with adult mental health provision.
- 5.11. The peer challenge team challenged Hampshire Children's Services to look into whether there was scope to be more innovative although did not qualify this within the verbal feedback.

6. Consultation and Equalities

- 6.1. The peer challenge team met and consulted with Senior Managers, Team Managers, Social Workers, Personal Advisors and Care Leavers in a number of focus groups to enable the peer challenge team to ask questions explore and understand responses.
- 6.2. The Care Leavers were able to raise questions and explain their progress through and experiences of, the care system. Whilst Personal Advisors were requested to support some care leavers within attending the session the agenda was not pre-determined by managers and care leavers were therefore able to explore their own agenda with the peer challenge team.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. This is the first peer challenge that Hampshire Children's Services have hosted and will be an annual event with the host authority determining which service they wish to present for the challenge.
- 7.2. The peer challenge team suggested a few areas that Hampshire Children's Service may wish to explore developing further, such as services to unaccompanied asylum seekers. This is already in progress as the Strategic Service Managers has been working in conjunction with other local authorities, the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration and Triangle to develop an Outcomes Star assessment tool for unaccompanied asylum seekers that will assist authorities to understand their needs. A group of Social Workers and Personal Advisors from Hampshire Children's Services, children in care and care leavers services will receive training during December 2018 and January 2019 with an immediate roll out of a pilot assessment tool. This will be evaluated by Triangle (who own the Outcomes Star tool) and will potentially lead to on going use of this assessment tool in the future.

- 7.3. Overall the outcome was very positive, strengths were identified around the investments made in the service such as an increase in the number of Personal advisors and this was supported through discussion with care leavers who clearly experience increased support and talked positively about Personal Advisors. In addition, staff and care leavers recognised the benefits of the hybrid devices as this enables staff to work remotely to record information such as their visits without the necessity to attend an office. Alongside this the tools available within the device supports direct work and communication with care leavers in keeping with their daily understanding and use of technology.
- 7.4. The SNAP case file auditing process was also presented as a strength, with Social Workers and Personal Advisors recognising the value of this being undertaken by a Team Manager in conjunction with the case holder enabling reflection on practice. This process is doubly strengthened by the audits then being audited by senior managers who quality assures the consistency of the audit and ensuring that the data provided through the audit process is robust and reliable.

8. Useful link

<http://adcs.org.uk/inspection/subject-results/sector-led-improvement>

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Strategic Plan**

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| Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity: | Yes |
| People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives: | Yes |
| People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment: | Yes |
| People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities: | Yes |
| OR | |
| This proposal does not link to the Strategic Plan but, nevertheless, requires a decision because: | |

Other Significant Links

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| Links to previous Member decisions: | |
| <u>Title</u> | <u>Date</u> |
| Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives | |
| <u>Title</u> | <u>Date</u> |

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1 The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;

Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;

Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;

Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;

Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.2. **Equalities Impact Assessment:** Not relevant to this item.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder: No impact.

3. Climate Change:

How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption? No impact.

How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts? No impact.