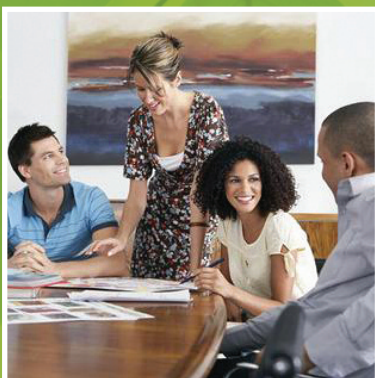
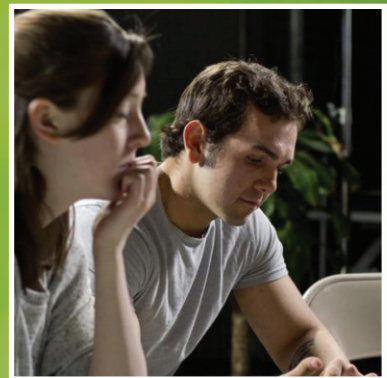
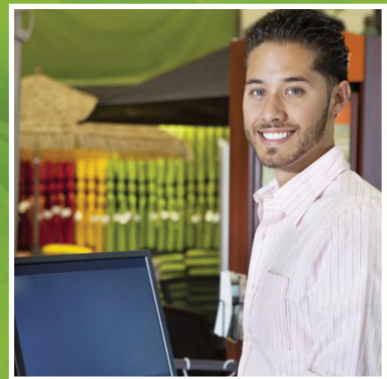
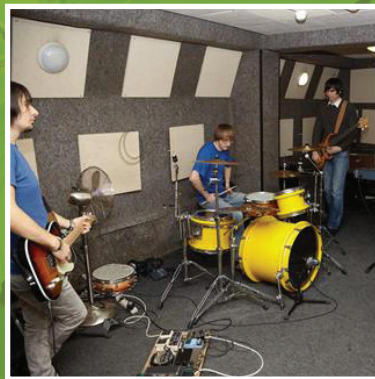


New Belongings

The Companion Appendix to the Independent Evaluation Report



“A better deal for care leavers”



NEW BELONGINGS PROJECT
THE COMPANION APPENDIX
TO THE INDEPENDENT EVALUATION REPORT
“A better deal for care leavers”

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APPENDIX 1: The 'Difference' Model

We invited all nine participating authorities to complete, as part of the evaluation process, a set of questions entitled: "The 'Difference' Model". These were intended to elicit from them some indication as to what they had been doing differently, under New Belongings, and how this was making things better for care leavers.

Three participating authorities, **Cheshire East**, **Portsmouth** and **Staffordshire**, accepted the invitation; and below is a summary of some of the helpful responses that they gave.

Cheshire East

The above progress report describes the activity that has taken place to date since New Belongings commenced.

New belongings has raised the profile of care leavers and ensured that there is a political driver for change both within councils and across wider partnerships. The project has ensured that there is a forum both nationally and locally for ideas to be generated and to demonstrate what good practice looks like.

In Cheshire east the project has led to more partnership arrangements for example, professionals brought together to discuss promoting apprenticeships for cared for children. This has strengthened the understanding on how the 16 plus health nurse can contribute to ensure the young people have their health needs met so that they are fit to work, how local businesses can contribute to provide opportunities for vulnerable groups and how by working together outcomes can be improved for young people. Not only have we increased the opportunities, but we also have a package of support thereafter through the involvement of the care ambassador, young advisers, Our Voice, the Virtual School and Children's Social Care. Generally there is a more holistic approach that recognises that young people (in order to access employment/training) require suitable accommodation, good social support, financial means, and good emotional and physical health. Essentially that means effective corporate parenting is required to enable young people to achieve their potential.

What is better now for care leavers?

There is a wider level of support and evidence that young people are being listened to and contributing to the future of service development in Cheshire East. Our young people have been able to contribute in national forums and as result can take some credit that they are able to influence improvements and better outcomes across other LAs.



- *There is evidence that more young people are going to university increasing their long term prospects.*
- *We are increasing the range of suitable accommodation across the region. Young people are involved with commissioning and can influence this.*
- *We have increased the diversity and numbers of apprenticeships on offer.*
- *There is a vast amount of activity promoting children's rights. November is children's Rights Month and it is dedicated to championing the rights of young people.*

What else do you need to change?

See section on ongoing development. We are on a journey of continuous improvement so new ideas will constantly evolve, be progressed and implemented to achieve positive outcomes for care leavers.

The previous section gives some timescales for actions. The business plans will identify relevant timescales.

What have you enjoyed most about New Belongings?

Feedback from young people and professionals suggests that New Belongings has ensured that they have had a focus. It provided a direction of travel, with support and permission from the Elected members and Directors and Chief Executives to concentrate on a group that is often perceived to be marginalised by more high profile groups.

It has provided excellent role modelling with the DCS and lead member having personal involvement with some of the projects. This has invigorated staff.

It has also promoted regional learning and fostered positive working relationships with peers across LAs, enabling pooling of ideas and at times resources.

What advice and learning would you give other LAs about how they can use the New Belongings model to improve their leaving care services?

- *Read the evaluation document first and take the learning from next week's conference*
- *Know your LA its strengths and areas for development; involve your young people in this.*
- *Make sure the action plan you develop is SMART- ensure there is wide ranging involvement from partners (know who your partners are) Make sure all are engaged*
- *Have plenty people involved give regular updates to frontline practitioners ,*



make sure they are on message- who knows, who cares, who is going to make this happen, who will feel the impact?

- *Do not limit this to one or two people as there is potential to lose the corporate memory*
- *Bench mark data – so you can demonstrate progress (before and after)*
- *Keep listening and learning*

Portsmouth

What have you done differently as a result of New Belongings?

Portsmouth referred us to the evidence they provided in their Programme Evaluation Report (September 2014), which is set out in APPENDIX 1 of this report.

What is better now for care leavers?

Portsmouth referred us to the evidence they provided in their Programme Evaluation Report (September 2014), which is set out in APPENDIX 1 of this report.

What else do you need to change?

In addition to completing many of the actions we have started within New Belongings, we see key priorities as being:

- *Making sure we continue to get effective ongoing participation from our care leavers to review and improve services and the information available to them. We have made a promising start but there is still much more to do. For example, we do not have an established care leaver group or council covering the full diversity of our care leavers*
- *Make a major improvement in the advocacy services available to care leavers*
- *Putting more help and support in place for care leavers on budgeting and money management skills*
- *Working with care leavers, and lobbying at a national or local level if needed, to help ensure that care leavers are not financially disadvantaged when they enter work, for example, through reductions/losses in benefits*
- *Make sure our Pathway Plans are both much more accessible to care leavers in terms of their language and layout and that they are more aspirational and ambitious for care leavers*
- *Moving many of the activities we have done under the New Belongings banner so that these are part of the day-to-day work of services*

When, and how, are you planning to do this?



One of the things which has worked well with New Belongings to date is that we have had a project group with representatives from care leavers' services, education, youth support, housing, Virtual School, participation, disabilities services and a care leaver. Moreover, each group member has taken the lead for tasks in their respective areas, which has helped to ensure that actions get carried out and progress is monitored. We plan to continue this approach beyond the life of the programme to ensure momentum is sustained, until the point where all actions can be carried forward in individual services.

Using some examples above, the lead service areas will be:

- *Strengthening participation and advocacy services (Lead: Participation Service including Participation Apprentice)*
- *Budgeting/money management, pathway plans (Young Person's Support Team - care leavers service)*

How will this make things better for care leavers?

The areas and themes we set out in our New Belongings will continue to be our aims for the activities we will carry forward, i.e.

- *Improving housing options and support for care leavers*
- *Providing more and better opportunities for care leavers to participate and achieve in learning and employment*
- *Improving how care leavers can participate in the decisions which shape their lives and the services open to them*
- *Making sure care leavers have access to specialist services such as mental health when and where they need them*
- *Providing practical support to care leavers in their day-to-day lives in areas such as rights, entitlements and money management*

However, critically we want the next stage of our action plan to be shaped much more by care leavers themselves.

What have you enjoyed most about New Belongings?

The energy and enthusiasm we have seen from those involved in New Belongings across so many services has been fantastic; so positive at a time when much of what is happening in public and children's services can, at times, feel very downbeat and deflating.

The work has covered many services across the local authority but also encompassed health, our local colleges, our local University, and the voluntary and private sectors.



Doors have been open to engage people, and we have had a lot more "can dos" than "can't dos".

Overwhelmingly, there has been a real commitment to improving the lives of care leavers, and the project seems to have strengthened people's understanding and wish to be good corporate parents.

What advice and learning would you want to pass on to other local authorities about how they can use the New Belongings model to improve their leaving care services?

The main lessons we have learned have been:

From what has gone well

- *Having strong commitment to New Belongings from senior management such as the Strategic Director for Children's Services and Head of Social Care and Safeguarding*
- *It has helped having enthused senior level project resource to support and monitor the delivery of the action plan, but this mustn't be at the expense of service deliverers being fully involved in the work*

From what we would do differently

- *Focus on a manageable number of areas. We originally started with about 15 action areas. It was too much and we made more progress once we had filtered some out and were focusing on 8-10 areas*
- *Involve care leavers more intensively at an early stage. We started well at the initial planning stage. We then lost momentum in involving care leavers as we did a lot of work at officer level to get services on board and have been playing catch-up with the involvement of national and local care leavers in the last 4-6 months*

Conclusions/Next Steps

New Belongings has been a very positive experience in Portsmouth. There has been real progress in the support being provided to care leavers in many areas. Whilst the measurable impact of that is only recently starting to be evidenced it is clear that the benefits of being part of New Belongings will extend way beyond the life of the project. In addition, Ofsted commented favourably on New Belongings on their recent inspection of services for children in need and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

Other than the actions we have identified above, a further key action we will carry forward is a New Belongings Communication Event which we intend to schedule for



later this year. This event will enable us to feedback and publicise New Belongings experience both to stakeholders in Portsmouth and other linked local authorities. We will also use the event to showcase the video presentation we are currently developing to highlight our New Belongings journey.

Staffordshire

What have you done differently as a result of New Belongings?

- *Developed Staffordshire's care leaver Charter*
- *It has enabled us to refocus on what we are currently delivering in Staffordshire and review priorities based on care leaver's views. As a result Staffordshire has changed how it consults with care leavers and has developed tools (online information/good practice guides) in order to support care leavers and also professionals.*
- *The development of Staying Put*
- *Raised the profile of care leavers by having the backing and status of New Belongings, the DfE and the Chief Executive.*
- *Gained Councillor interest and engagement as a result of the New Belongings launch this has developed into effective political backing*
- *We have also identified Access all Areas as an area of weakness within the council and work is going to take place to promote and embed this, due to New Belongings we now have a platform to build on*

What is better now for care leavers?

- *More opportunities for care leavers to stay put in foster care placements*
- *Better access to information via Youth Box, AOB*
- *Specific support for preparation into independence (CD ROM)*
- *Consistent messages been given to care leavers from professionals due to Service Development Days and also Good Practice Guides*
- *Ring fenced bespoke in house apprenticeship opportunities are available for care leavers this includes a higher rate of pay*
- *The voice of young people is evidenced within the tools developed for practitioners e.g. good practice guides, online information etc. the feedback received from young people is echoed throughout these tools*
- *More opportunities to access a forums with two new forums in the county*
- *Updated foster carer training, it is now tailor made to address the areas care leavers felt they needed further support in e.g. preparation for independence. It also now includes a social pedagogy approach re: ways of effectively caring for young people*

What else do you need to change?



- *Time to embed the changes to standardise and improve the quality of the service being delivered by practitioners*
- *The proportion of work placements available in Staffordshire County Council is proportionally lower (79 in house) compared to the private sector/external (109 external) therefore we would like to increase the amount of in house work experience placements*
- *Access to mental health services for care leavers*
- *Commissioning contracts so that all contracts include an agreement re: offering work placement opportunities to care leavers within their organisation*
- *Establish a buddy system to support care leavers as they enter independence, this may be incorporated in the commissioning of a new mental health service for care leavers*
- *To provide further opportunities for LAC to develop independence skills (mobile provision, 2 new training flats)*

When, and how, are you planning to do this?

- *Increase the number of in house work placements – case studies will be used to promote work placements along with statistics via the council's communication channels in order to raise the profile. It is also included in the Corporate Parent team training package and a programme of direct contact with SCC employees will be commencing in Sept 2014*
- *Health services for care leavers are currently going through the commissioning process and a new contract will be in place April 2015. New Belongings has reinforced the focus on care leavers and the need for specialist mental health provision and post 18 support. Therefore the new contract now includes extra criteria as a result of New Belongings. Those companies that have expressed an interest have all included drop in's and buddying within their contracts therefore the intention is to extend this buddying support into wider buddying support for care leavers (including those without a general mental health need)*
- *Meetings are taking place with regard to commissioning contracts*
- *The Throughcare County Manager has arranged to meet with Strategic Leads to discuss Access All Areas re: development and embedding*
- *Ongoing quality assurance of practice via monthly audits of pathway plans. It has also been proposed that care leavers will contribute to this process and complete themed audits of pathway plans themselves, this will commence later this year*



- *Due to the loss of the original training flat it has been proposed that two further training flats are developed to support preparation for independence along with the mobile provision which also supports the development of practical skills required for independence*

How will this make things better for care leavers?

- *More opportunities for care leavers to access in house work placements within the council as corporate parents*
- *Access to specialist support*
- *Effective buddy support when needed the most e.g. when entering into independence etc.*
- *Wider opportunities for care leavers re: work placements and apprenticeships with commissioned providers resulting in more choice of career options*
- *Consistent level of care, support and guidance*
- *Standardising practice by having tools and processes available for practitioners, this should result in an improved Throughcare Service*
- *Raised awareness within SCC of Access All Areas via the strategic leads*

What have you enjoyed most about New Belongings?

- *Implementing and embedding positive changes based on care leavers views*
- *Refocusing on what is delivered and shaping the service around care leavers needs*
- *Having the project team in place to focus particularly on care leavers and having the dedicated time to drive forward the New Belongings agenda*
- *Sharing practice and experiences with the other nine Authorities (event in March)*
- *Being part of the launch of New Belongings and having the CEO to promote and commit to the ethos of New Belongings*
- *Comparing the experiences of care leavers with other local authorities*

What advice and learning would you want to pass on to other local authorities about how they can use the New Belongings model to improve their leaving care services?

- *It is beneficial to use New Belongings as a starting point and to gain care leavers views however we feel that all authorities are different and all care leaver's views/experiences are different. Therefore, it is difficult to replicate what one Authority does in another as there may be completely different issues, resources, numbers of care leavers, geographical mapping, etc.*



- *The advice that Staffordshire would like to pass on is to listen to your care leavers first and then build and develop the services/support around them*
- *Ensure mechanisms are in place to monitor, review and update practice/services/policies regularly as care leavers and local authorities are constantly changing*
- *Continue the work of New Belongings keep it on the agenda and treat it as a high profile priority*





APPENDIX 2: Summary of Participating Authorities Final Updates

All nine participating authorities have been in a position to supply their final reports to the independent evaluation team. Two authorities, Portsmouth and Staffordshire, used the agreed reporting format, whilst the other seven have opted to use their own structure for reporting back on their progress under New Belongings.

Only Staffordshire was able to complete its final report to agreed timescales, with others getting theirs in typically six to eight weeks after the deadline. However, it has to be recognised, that the original dates that were agreed for New Belongings Project work to be completed by proved to be more ambitious than had been

planned, for various good reasons (*such as long-term absences of key personnel, the disruption that re-organisation inevitably causes, having to get widespread sign-off on reports that are going external or needing to prepare for and focus on an Ofsted inspection that was taken place*).

Cheshire East

Introduction

Prior to the launch of New Belongings Cheshire East Council had increased the Leaving Care grant to £3,000. The Council had also approved a Staying Put policy to enable young people 18 years if age and beyond to remain with their foster carers. The Council also had an award winning Apprenticeship scheme in existence that could be accessed by Care Leavers. Cheshire East has signed up to the Children's Charter.

Since the launch of New Belongings in Sept 2013, Cheshire East has focussed on the theme of Employment, Education and Training within the collaboration of four local authorities. Within the survey of our care leavers, this was identified as something which has posed difficulties for them and anomalies within the benefit system have resulted in them not being able to access education or work placements when they are ready and willing to do so.

We have a number of achievements to celebrate to date and several ongoing projects that will make a difference to our Care Leavers Employment, and Education.



Establishment of a care leaver apprentice post (Care Leaver Ambassador) within Children's Social Care

We have a one year business administration apprenticeship working within the YOT service but who supports young people with housing benefits, work placement and training. This young person acts as an overall ambassador for the 16 plus service at events and has spoken to Members of Parliament at the House of Lords.

Development of a range of apprenticeship/work experience opportunities across the Council for Care leavers

There was a Business Breakfast event hosted by David Rutley MP (4th April 2014) which encouraged businesses to think about how they might assist – offers of apprenticeships in the community from local businesses such as Ansa Environmental Services and Ringway Jacobs(Highway Maintenance) , mentoring and free access to community events received as a result of this. A number of new opportunities are currently being offered by Ansa Environmental Services and there was an open day on 7th October when care leavers attended so potentially more apprenticeships will result from this.

Ringway Jacobs created a high level apprenticeship opportunity that would enable the post holder to achieve a degree in Civil Engineering. This was made available to care leavers. There are 7 care leavers involved in apprenticeships across Cheshire East Council. Two apprenticeships have led to permanent appointments being secured .A further 14 apprenticeships are in place across a range of providers. These posts are varied offering opportunities to develop different skills from business administration and industry to caring skills. In total there are 21 young people in employment via apprenticeship 2 more young people are involved in the business enterprise scheme (Our Voice mentioned below). Thus 23 young people overall have gained employment opportunities.

Apprenticeships are discussed at the Corporate Parenting operational Group and a sub group was encouraged to develop avenues to access apprenticeships. This is now going to be incorporated as a standing item within the agenda of the CPOG. Progress of young people will be monitored via this group and reported to the Corporate parenting Board at regular intervals to demonstrate appropriate scrutiny of the activity and to promote elected member involvement with regard to this issue.

Voice For Children

An innovative development as an alternative to apprenticeships has been the creation of a business enterprise 'Voice for Children'. To strengthen the voice of children in Children's Social Care, particularly safeguarding the Council in partnership with The Children's Society have supported two young care leavers to be the Directors



of this venture. VFC have successfully presented to the Princes Trust and have been allocated a two year business Mentor.

VFC have a business plan and have many achievements to date those most relevant to the New Belongings cohort include; mentoring care leavers, supporting the commissioning team in securing new accommodation suitable for 16 plus and care leavers, providing challenge to services' self-assessments against the Leading Improvements for Looked After Children (LILAC) standards.

Establishment of a Care Leavers Council separate from the CiCC already established.

This group is fully operational and meets weekly. It has 9 members. The group have been instrumental in developing projects for Care leaver's week for example a Ready, Steady Cook style challenge during Care Leaver's week 23rd to 31st October. This will incorporate the challenges young people face in trying to eat healthily on a budget. Another activity is the £21 challenge wherein the group will challenge staff to live off £21.

In addition the group has been;

- represented at Passport to Parliament*
- influenced the progress of New Belongings and attended a regional event*
- influenced the content and monitoring and evaluation of the young people's health guide, the Health Passport and the NICE Quality Standard 31*
- regularly are involved in recruitment of social workers*

Establishment of a Team of Young advisers

Young Advisers are a national programme where a team of young people aged 16-21(24/25 if care leavers or SEND). A large team of young advisers is now operational. (official launch November 2014). Amongst these are two young people who have former care experience. Four young advisers have physical and learning Disabilities and are advising on the Lifecourse Programme, SEND work stream and on improving service user participation. These advisers are recruited, trained and supported to work with decision makers on;

- Understanding what it is like for a young person to live, work learn and play and access services within their locality*
- Ensure that all young people are accurately represented both geographically and through lived in experiences across all sectors*

The range of supported accommodation required to support young people



Cheshire East Council is developing a model of accommodation and support that supports an effective pathway to independence, enabling our young people to become a valued part of society and achieve their life ambitions. Listening to our cared for children has instilled a clear sense that they feel happy and confident in their ability to play a full role in their communities when the choice of accommodation includes locations they feel are their communities.

A business case for capital investment of £500,000 to support improvements in the choice of 16+ accommodation has been agreed by the Council. The Council will work with young people and key partners, including registered social landlords and private providers of care leavers accommodation and support, to apply this investment effectively. This investment will run parallel to the implementation of Cheshire East Council's Vulnerable Persons Housing Strategy which was endorsed in May 2014 following extensive consultation.

67% of our cared for population originate from Cheshire East's two major conurbations in Crewe and Macclesfield. The choice of 16+ accommodation in Crewe is good however due to high property prices in Macclesfield choice is very limited with no semi-independent provision. Cheshire East believe that semi-independent group living is an important step towards independence for young people. Through effective market shaping Cheshire East has worked with a good quality provider to establish semi-independent group living in Macclesfield. This provision opens in October 2014.

In order to facilitate good planning and decision making for those young people experiencing accommodation difficulties a service has been developed in partnership with Crewe YMCA to establish two emergency beds. This will allow the time to enable good long term accommodation and support solutions to be planned for young people. The service will be available from 29th September 2014.

The creation of a 16 plus nurse

A dedicated nurse practitioner post has been in operation since October 2013. This post has led to improvement in the numbers of review health assessments that are completed, improved multi-agency care planning .The nurse has a professional background in mental, sexual and school health so is able to offer a holistic approach to promote young people being successful in employment and training.

The nurse has acknowledged the need for young people to develop social skills which enable success in education and training. A new belongings representative will be encouraged to develop an initiative around this through the Healthy Care Partnership.



There is also increased awareness around the Care Leavers entitlements for help with health costs in special circumstances (exemption for prescription, dental and optician charges) all of which help maintain good health.

The Everybody leisure pass enabling young people to have access to free leisure services is well established and there are discussions commencing with other LAs with similar schemes to develop reciprocal arrangements when young people move across borders.

Development of 16 plus educational policy and practice development

A post-16 Education policy has been developed and launched. Young people are now more aware of their entitlements. All staff are aware of their duties to promote education.

To improve the monitoring and tracking of young people a pilot scheme has been set up to monitor attendance of post 16 in education, a system has been implemented to track progress during post 16 education and there are regular checks on destinations of 2013 school leavers

19 students in school/college were monitored in pilot. Only one student had poor attendance and progress. Significant support was provided and the student has since moved successfully onto an apprenticeship and was not NEET. The tracking will continue for all Y12 and 13 in education – data provides baseline for future monitoring.

Currently there are 15 young people at university. These young people are now being offered ongoing support by the Virtual School.

PEPs have been carried out by VS staff on 61 young people. This includes those age 16-17 whether NEET or EET. A new rating system has been introduced to identify the level of support needs – Red highest, Amber less and Green least. Additional funding from VSSF has been given to 17 young people. Additional tuition was granted for 7 young people in order to raise aspiration and increase opportunities.

SPEED (Sixteen plus education and employment destinations) group established to co-ordinate all staff working with 16+ and improve support. The members include Social Care, Youth support, Virtual School, Council Apprentice co-ordinator. The aim of the group is to review progress of apprentices on council scheme, share data and student lists between teams to ensure co-ordinated support and increase opportunities for apprenticeships.

This has led to a University taster event – Nov 2013 and an Apprentice taster event in Crewe and Macclesfield – Feb 2014. There is ongoing dialogue with local universities regarding engagement with young people in care.

Discussions with the credit union re financial advice and support to Care Leavers.



Universal credit has been rolled out in Crewe, Congleton, Wilmslow and more recently to Macclesfield. Care leavers can claim this so long as they are not living in temporary or supported accommodation.

Pathway plans strengthened to ensure EET destinations are recorded with clear contingency planning

Pathway plans are much improved to evidence this but work will continue to develop plans a further work stream with involvement from Our Voice and the young advisors will ensure young people's views inform any future developments.

The creation of a Care Leaver's entitlement leaflet made available to all Care Leavers in hard copy and on the Council Website.

The Care leavers leaflet is widely distributed and is informative advising young people of their entitlements. This includes finances as set out in the Care Leavers Financial policy, and the range of local services and support that is available.

Ongoing developments

Development of a 16+ Service, Facebook page for Care Leavers.

There have been some technical difficulties and this needs progressing. The page will be designed in conjunction with the Care Leavers group and our Voice representatives.

Development of a protocol with DWP re early awards of Housing benefit and establishing the Care Leaver Marker to encourage additional support from DWP for Care Leavers and reduce number of imposed sanctions

Further work is required to develop this. Meetings are scheduled to take this forward

Further engagement/ training of foster carers to ensure they understand their role in assisting young people in their transition to adulthood

During Q3/ Q4 of 2014-15 we will plan how young people can be involved in developing training for carers that puts renewed emphasis on preparation for adulthood, promoting independent living skills etc. This will be done in conjunction with young care leavers. Our voice will be involved in recruiting foster carers so that there is an understanding of the fostering journey from new recruits taking children into care for the first time to supporting young people to move to independent living.



Development of the LILAC (Leading Improvements for Looked After Children) assessments in team plans to ensure that children and young people are involved in improving service delivery.

We will do this with support from young people and will incorporate this into one team during Q3/Q4 as a pilot.

Merging of the 16 plus team and Cared for teams

The present model of a separate 16 plus team will be disbanded in the next few weeks and instead there will be 5 units merging the PAs and social workers. The concept is to encourage less social work/ manager changes and foster meaningful relationships with young people. PAs will co-work cases with young people from the age of 15 so that they will have established relationships by the time the young person is 18 years old.

The mantra for the service is;

We will work with the;

‘Right children, right care plan, right placement and support, right preparation for adulthood’

Herefordshire

Last year overview

The service has been positive in moving forward, and a number of progressive changes have been embedded and committed to in the future. However 2013/14 has been a difficult year for the team. In May 2013 17 year old male sadly died whilst in the care of the local authority. This led to a SILP (SCR) and Middleton inquest and been a difficult and emotional journey for the 16+ service and young people who knew him. The focus for the service rightly had to be learning from the incident and making sure that the likelihood of any future incidents are reduced. This has had some real benefits for the future for our care leavers but the change in priorities has often met that commitments made in New Belongings have been delayed.

After being accepted for the New Belongings Project a number of changes to our participation services was implemented that meant that for a period the focus and changes that we wanted to implement as a local authority was delayed. One of the positives to come out of this restructure was that. 16 + and Participation were given a shared home at No 4, that was designed by the young people from the colours to the room function meeting with the designers builders and architects. The new building is a building which allows children to ‘drop in’ for a number of differing reasons, including group work, social contact and formal meetings in an informal setting in



addition to being a staff office. It has been a very positive move for the young people, and we have seen a significant improvement with day to day engagement with young people seeing it as a reflection of them starting to being more valued "everyone smiles and asks how your are, we're no longer being asked personal questions in a waiting room".



Herefordshire has also been inspected by Ofsted under the new Framework and is now requires improvement which shows we are learning and moving in the right direction but the inspection also highlighted how much we have to do to achieve Good for our Care Leavers as a local authority.

A service where young people are heard

Last October every care leaver was approached with the New Belongings questionnaire that would focus are action plan in the future. Not every care leaver was happy to participate but the themes that were highlighted were

- *Access to appropriate Housing.*
- *Feelings of isolation.*
- *Not feeling prepared and equipped for independence*
- *Limited/ too much contact with PA's*
- *Financial difficulties and getting caught in the poverty trap.*
- *Longer term relationships with Carer's once leaving care was highlighted in a number of cases as positive.*
- *Low aspirations and prospects.*
- *Difficulties accessing appropriate services.*

We are planning to re-run a service wide questionnaire in the autumn as well as looking a documents to get more regular service feedback in order to make sure that we are always representing and learning from our care leavers.

Learning from the national New Belongings model we advertised, interviewed and set up two Care Leavers Champions to represent the voice of the care leaver. Our Champions have been involved in developing their own job description, person specification. After 6 months 1 of our original Champions had to step down from the role and it was a number of months before another Care Leaver put themselves



forward. They have represented care leavers meeting with Council members and local businesses and held a participation event and supported the wider service alongside CIC in future planning of Voice of the child this role is integral to future service developments. This Role was initially supported by 16+ Team managers; from March 2014 this role has been supported and supervised by the participation and mentoring officer. There has been slow progress in developing the status that this role deserves and to turn the planning on what the champions want to do with the role into actions that other care leavers are involved with but this role is heading in the right direction with other young people showing an interest in being put forward in the future. Our Champions are starting to offer Peer Mentoring for 16+ young people, and as part of the participation role the plan is to develop to include peer advocacy. PEEP's training for our Looked After Children and Care Leavers has taken place and will be embedded within the Local Authorities training schedules. Our care leavers have also been included in staff training that has been recognised to also benefit them for example basic first aid.

We held a number of participation events last year with our looked after children and care leavers and as a consequence we have developed a website for children and young people, designed by young people. We are also in the process of reviewing our documentation on how we engage young people in making sure they are central to everything we do and know the rights and entitlements. After a period of transition The Children in Care Council has been re-launched and meets every month. The Children in Care Council is working towards becoming a constituted group which will enable them to draw down funding in their own right. Children in Care Council representative sits on Voice of the Child meeting.

Young People's Interview Panels are being used within the Local Authority and have been involved in recruiting staff including an Assistant Director, Head of Service and Newly Qualified Social Workers and 16+ Social Workers.

As a result of the questionnaire and listening to our Care Leavers as a service we have made a commitment to be more proactive and see all care leavers face to face every 6 weeks in addition to other forms of communication more frequently even if they are out of area unless otherwise stated in there Pathway plan.

Future Aims

- *Children in Care Council to sit in on Corporate Parenting Panel.*
- *Care Leavers to welcome newly Looked After Children into the Local Authority.*

Links to be made between the Children in Care Council (CICC) and the Virtual Shadow Board – in partnership with Hvoss – to promote ecological and ongoing participation with Looked After Children and Care Leavers on a wider community scale.



Corporate family so much more than a single parent approach

We have completed a lot of engagement work over the last 12 month engaging our local councillors and sending out the message that if we are a good corporate parent this means that we have an extended network where our young people feel they belong and cared for we aspire to offer our looked after children a care leavers a corporate family which is wider than the local authority but encompasses the community and local businesses.

Historically a number of our counsellors would only come into contact for reasons that are not always positive such as anti-social behaviour. We have increased awareness of care leavers over the last year with presentations and events being given to local counsellors and local businesses and within the voluntary sector promoting their achievements and potential. We have gained meaningful commitment from a number of our councillors who have kept care leavers at the fore front of their role over the last year. Councillors have taken up issues and concerns on behalf of young people with local charities and business with commitment to supporting the development of CIC and access to support such as offer of driving lessons to care leavers.

Access All Areas and partnership working

Over the last year our partner agencies have been in process of restructure this has added to delays commitments being able to be implemented with a frustrating for all stop start effect. There have also been a number of changes to the welfare system that has meant plans are in constant review.

As a rural Local authority there is a risk of us being Hereford centric and leaving our care leavers who are in more rural areas or in different towns isolated, as a service we need to be constantly questioning ourselves about the impact of location on the service we provide, for example will a young person in Leominster benefit from drop ins at no4 how do we encourage this or do we need to look at alternatives?

As a result of New Belongings Herefordshire signed up to the Care 2 Work Scheme through NCAS which has increased our joint working with Commissioning, DWP, Education & services providing youth contracts.

- *Care leavers have been supported in accessing work experience opportunities via external contracts for the council since signing up to New Belonging new contracts have included a care leaver responsibility element.*
- *We have an agreed mentoring scheme to be piloted starting from September 2014 with two of our local business that will offer early support for our looked after children and stepped support for care leavers this includes mentoring, activity events, mock interviews, work experience, apprenticeships and guaranteed interviews if a care leaver has been involved with the scheme.*



- *We plan to introduce Apprenticeships for Care Leavers in the local authority in 2015.*
- *We have been able to put a business case forward for the development of the LAC education service which currently goes up to 16 years so they can continue as long as a young person is open to our team*
- *We have agreed outcomes for Care Leavers Pathway with the support of DWP that identifies the different options available to our looked after children and care leavers*
- *DWP and their work with care leavers for more involvement prior 18 to including early sign on for JSA before 18th birthday in relation to offering a monthly preparation drop in, agreement for shared assessment following 1st interview and a named DWP care leavers worker who can build a relationship with our young people. Plan for joint training in the next year to look at working together practice and pathway for care leavers.*

As a local authority we have introduced the "more than just a room" guidance to our internal Supported Lodging Provisions which will lead to better matching of needs and young people feeling supported in the long term with Host's that are supported and trained to meet the needs of the young people placed with them.

We have agreed the need for a housing provision for a number of our complex care leavers so they receive more support and are placed together to address isolation we have completed the needs assessment and comparative study completed and met with two potential housing associations to work with us on this project and we are currently looking at best practice models nationally.

We have worked closely with out commissioning and placements service to look at the quality and value of the placement we use and in the process of completing a needs analysis to better understand our young people's experiences when placed in unregulated supported provisions.

We have increased our working relationships with adult services within the learning disability service and have able to work more flexibly with thresholds in some cases with plans to develop a more formal joint up protocol. As a service this has led to our service having a named worker for young people with Disabilities and we are currently in the process of increasing the skills and knowledge of this worker. We need to replicate a number of the positive steps we have made in this area with the mental health and safeguarding services.

A large proportion of offending behaviour that we have observed with our care leavers has been linked to drug and alcohol use we have therefore focused on this element of need. Trying to work with our young people sooner and more openly, we



are working closer with our young people's substance misuse service zig zag who now offer weekly drop ins at no4 and better placed to have more informal conversations with our young people, with plans to run joint training and provide group . We would like to duplicate this with our Adult substance misuse service and have fed this into their service review with initial discussions with adult commissioning being very positive.

Welfare Rights has attended regular team meetings to update the team on changes to welfare provisions and process of challenging decisions when felt to be not in our care leaver's best interest. They have also offered fortnightly drop ins at No 4 and shown themselves to be accessible and supportive of our care leavers.

We have had a number of local projects present to the team and access No 4 to support our care leavers in the community in projects such as Princess Trust, Housing officers, DWP officers, Talent Match and Projects who come under the European funding, in order to increase the knowledge of our Personal Advisors of local provisions.

A presentation and meetings have taken place with Voluntary organisations across Herefordshire to access and make the most of this sector in the future.

Barriers



There has been lots of positive moves following the sign up to new belongings and it has led to a better understanding of our services and their impact on young people, but it has been a long slow process that has been more about getting the needs and responsibilities of our care leavers heard and understood in

order to have a longer term impact on strategic planning strategic planning in the future, this has meant that the planned impact has not been filtered down to our care leavers and this is likely to take at least another year in some areas for Care leavers to see change in our approach as a corporate family, on the positive side of this they will now be more involved and represented in this process than ever before in Hereford and they are better placed to voice their views as we go along changing the culture of doing to rather than with.

There has been a reduction in spend across the local authority and we have not been able to have a direct impact on being able to provide and support our care leavers above our statutory duties to the extent we would want such as regular events and



trips. We are trying to address this by developing a constituted group for looked after children and our care leavers so they can fund raise and bid for the things they feel is important independent of the local authority.

There has been a number of changes in staffing both within 16+ and with other agencies since our original bid and launch of new Belongings which has created a constant re-launch, stop, start culture and impacted in progressing at the speed we would like with regular changing priorities impacting on a shared ownership of the of New Belongings Project with ALL staff and the project having real meaning to frontline staff who have at times seen it as another pressure and more changes

- Access to Housing following the bedroom tax and a limited number becoming available to care leavers who are remaining in temporary accommodation for longer. Although we are working closely with our Housing department to address this impact will not be felt until further provisions are made.*
- The rates of benefits the lower rate of JSA makes the assumption that a young person is living with family, for care leavers living independently the £57 is a stretch with increasing financial pressure such as introduction that a proportion of council tax is now made is another pressure.*
- Benefit sanctions has been a real issue with some of our care leavers over the last year who are not emotionally able to manage this process. What has been difficult is to get any real figures in relation to care leavers.*
- Changes to public transport provisions has been raised as a concern by our care leavers who live in rural areas where a bus may only run on a couple of occasions a day impacting the work and appointments they can attend.*
- Changes to education raising the education age to 18 has meant that there has been more demand for our limited provisions so services are not as easily accessible to our 19+ care leavers who may not have been previously been ready.*

What's worked

Although we may not have achieved what we set out to achieve last year at the start of the project and the last year has at times felt very frustrating for those involved. What New Belongings has done feels very powerful for the long term future of our care leavers. New Belongings has given us an additional tool to make sure Care Leavers are seen, heard and understood across the local authority they have been given a voice and permission to use it to change the services we provide. The project has increased communication across agencies in order to provide a more joint up approach in the future with commitment to changes and ownership of our care leavers. We are now in the process of developing an integrated service for youth that will take a more multi-agency approach the extent of the change proposed would not have happened if not for new belonging and really challenging us to change. We have a long way to go but the passion and enthusiasm the core aims of the project triggered has not faltered and with a louder voice of our care leavers it is going to be impossible to lose them in the future.



Portsmouth

This report summarises the outcomes from the national New Belongings programme which has been implemented in Portsmouth from October 2013 to October 2014. The report is formatted to cover the methodology used by the Department for Education at a national level to evaluate the programme.

Evidence of the impact of our input and actions on giving explicit recognition in local policies to the vulnerability and needs of care leavers

Evidence of the impact of our input and actions on local policies giving explicit recognition of care leavers vulnerability and needs

A new supported accommodation offer is being put in place starting from November 2014 to provide a new supported living service and support to care leavers recognising their needs and vulnerabilities, providing specialised, tailored support (under the BOOST) programme to help young people take on their own tenancies both individually and in small groups.

Portsmouth's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) has agreed to support any care leaver 18-25, who has a mental health issue, initially by offering an assessment, and signposting to a source of support or treatment, and if the young person meets the criteria for a service from Adult Mental Health services, they will support the referral to them.

Evidence of the impact of our input and actions on how services are being responsive and personal in meeting the needs of care leavers

The University of Portsmouth is Buttle Trust accredited and provides tailored support for its students who are care leavers.

We now have a dedicated post 16 Education Support worker in our Virtual School whose role is to support Looked After Children through to their leaving care years in helping them access and succeed in post-16 learning.

Evidence of the impact of our input and actions on joint working and protocols in place specifically aimed at improving services to care leavers

Portsmouth City Council (PCC) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department for Work and Pensions at a local level, on information sharing underpinned by Access All Areas, to better support our most vulnerable care leavers to enter and remain in employment.

Evidence of the impact of our input and actions on current information and data sharing practices



Significant progress is being made in care leaver data sharing within PCC. For example, there is now more effective data sharing between the Young Person's Support (social work) Team and Integrated Targeted Youth Support Service, to identify care leavers who are not in education, employment or training and provide them with tailored support in job applications, interview support and CV writing.

Evidence of the impact of our input and actions on how care leavers are being prioritised in discretionary provision

Care leavers are prioritised for more intensive advice, support and guidance from advisers within PCC's Integrated Targeted Youth Support Service.

Evidence of the impact of our input and actions on systems to ensure care leavers know about and receive their entitlements

We have completely overhauled and improved the Entitlements pack for care leavers. An interim update was finalised and circulated in August and the full version of the new Enhanced information pack is going to print in September for a formal launch in November. We are also looking at the development of an app. to support this

Evidence of the impact of our input and actions on how the Charter for Care Leavers is informing local practice

We are applying the 7 key principles underpinning the Charter for Care Leavers as the basis for strengthening how we work with and support care leavers. In particular, the New Belongings programme has acted as a stimulus to engage and communicate more with care leavers both in small group settings, for example, consultation around accommodation for care leavers in Portsmouth and wider events, for example, a Learning and Employment Opportunities event we ran in July; all of which is over and above the one-to-one communication with social workers which had historically been the main method of communication and engagement.

Evidence of the impact of our input and actions to bring in the community to support care leavers access to the same opportunities as their peers

PCC has made significant progress in working with the 6 largest local FE colleges for all of those colleges to work towards Buttle Trust accreditation (and more latterly the standards within the accreditation quality mark now that the formal quality mark is discontinuing). Portsmouth College made such significant progress that they were able to apply for accreditation just prior to the cut-off date for the formal quality mark.

In addition, we have proactively targeted care leavers for apprenticeship opportunities within the Council and we have now recruited care leavers to 3 apprenticeship positions in Human Resources, Museums and Children's Social Care.



The third of those positions is a new Participation Apprenticeship role whose primary activity will be to develop the ways in which we keep in touch with our care leavers and help them continue to shape and get the services and support they need.

As part of our city-wide "City of Service" programme, PCC is also guaranteeing interviews for care leavers for Apprenticeship roles within the Council.

Sheffield

Since June 2013 there have been some significant changes in the delivery of the service at P&TC. Both in where the service is delivered from and it is managed.

The service moved to a new City centre base in June 2013 and is now co-located with the Youth Justice Service, CAMHS, Sheffield Futures, the CSE team and other smaller services; such as the young inspectors, Pet-Xi (training providers), a counselling service and the children's involvement team. The move into this hub has been very positive for young people and staff across all the services.

The delivery of the service from a generic team base was separated into specific functions. We had, until October 2013, two LAC teams, two leaving care (16+) teams and a dedicated Duty service. We now, September 2014, have three LAC teams and two 16+ teams. CSE, youth justice and Duty are managed from within the LAC teams. This enables managers to have more in depth specialist knowledge of their service area whilst still being able to manage across both if required. The staff teams have reflected back that this way of working is enabling and supportive.

Staying Put has been implemented. And while there are still teething problems we have 21 young people Staying Put.

The E-pep continues to be a success.

The Children in Care Council (SICC – Sheffield in Care Council) continue to be a positive entity having produced the Sheffield pledge and having contributed again to the success of the Star Awards, in June 2014, making it a fantastic event for children up to the age of 14 and their carers/families.

The Care Leavers Charter was signed up to by Sheffield and our Care Leavers Group have this as a target for completion into a Sheffield version by December 2014.

Our objectives at June 13

The close working with the DWP and Job Centre plus has ensured Sheffield young people are able to establish their benefits claim early so there is little or no delay post their 18th birthday. This has resulted in a substantial saving for the service as we no longer have to financially support our young people for weeks before they receive their money from the DWP. Additionally having a named worker for the staff to liaise



with has been invaluable. It has also resulted in young people working in a more positive way with colleagues in JC+ in terms of accessing opportunities.

Housing: we are about to establish a tenancy ready course which is a direct result of the paper submitted in June 2103. Our housing colleagues are working in partnership with us to ensure that young people are matched to the right accommodation in the right place at the right time: in that the young people who access the course will not have to bid on tenancies in the areas where they have lived whilst LAC and where their ongoing support is. It also means, much more importantly that is these tenancies don't success as the young person is still under 18 and can be moved back into supported accommodation. They will then not be intentionally homeless. The tenancies are furnished so no young person will lose out on their setting up home allowance. Whilst we are a little delayed with the onset of this project we are hoping to have 6 young people placed by December 2014.

Embedding New Belongings

The gaps:

- *Involving young people in service delivery:*

We have three young people who attend the national leaving care benchmarking forum bi monthly. They then meet with the service manager to consider what they have been addressing at the forum and how this might impact on service delivery. We have yet to develop a young person's steering group mainly as it has been difficult to establish a care leavers group. That does not mean we are not keen to move forward with this.

Training across services has not been rolled out as we had hoped it might. Mainly due the Ofsted inspections which took place in December 2013 and January 14 and the absence of the P&TC service manager in April and May due to a bereavement. We are looking to implement this from March 2015. The models are written but the opportunity to deliver ha not presented itself.

Impact of New Belongings

What we asked of New Belongings was that they help Sheffield with establishing the Care Leavers Group. We had lots of support from the project and, ML met with the care leavers group several times to guide them, give example of what works and how they might attract other young people. Establishing the group has been, and remains, a slow process but we are persevering. New Belongings were able to frame, for the young people and the staff supporting the group, ways of working that they had not considered. The young people's survey took time and effort and the number



of returns were not high but did give us an overview of where young people's thoughts and views were.

*The Sheffield LAAC strategy has been amended as a **direct result** of Sheffield's involvement in the New Belongings project. We have added Priority 7 to the other 6 which is solely about care leavers and the issues that impact on them. We have a cross service steering group with representatives from Education, Health, Youth Justice, Housing, Community Youth Teams, Life Long learning Service, Sheffield Futures and of course P&TC. Alongside the steering group there are a number of sub groups:*

- *Health: including substance misuse services, midwives, LAC nurse, CAMHS and adult health.*
- *ETE: Sheffield Futures, Virtual School, FromCare2 Work, Life Long Learning, Sheffield College, YJS and P&TC.*
- *Accommodation: Scart, Housing, and P&TC*
- *Involvement: young people and P&TC*

All the groups have met once and further meetings are planned throughout October.

It is envisaged that young people from across all aspects of the 16+ group, those in residential and foster carer, NEET and ETE, those in supported accommodation and those young people at University, will be represented on all the sub groups once we have an established Care Leavers Group. I am not an advocate of having the same young people being the "token care leaver" on all groups.

The issue for Sheffield, in terms of New Belongings, as standalone local authority has been that the momentum has, on occasion, drifted due to service pressures. The Ofsted inspection preparation and outcomes had a significant impact on the work done; as did the absence of the service manager.

Staffordshire

At the beginning of the New Belongings project it was recognised within Staffordshire that a number of services were already in place that support the individual needs of care leavers e.g. an established care leaver forum, a training flat, Foundations to employment service for care leavers, AOB resource folder to support care leavers in independence etc. Therefore the New Belongings project enabled Staffordshire to review and build upon the services already available and identify new areas that care leavers would like further support with e.g. accessibility to information, consistent support from practitioners etc.

However, as a result of New Belongings Staffordshire County Council (SCC) has recognised an area of weakness and that is Access All Areas. Further work is to take place to ensure that Access All Areas is acknowledged by Senior



Leaders/Management. Work has commenced with regard to local policies and a larger piece of work is to be conducted with regard to embedding Access All Areas strategically.

Evidence of the impact of our input and actions on local policies giving explicit recognition of care leavers vulnerability and needs

Policies are clear and accessible on the intranet therefore Staffordshire County Council employees should be responsive and aware of how the policies impact on care leaver's vulnerability and needs. Particular policies include: Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) gives practitioners guidance and a clear process to follow. The impact of this is that practitioners work with young people in a timely consistent manner.

A review process has been implemented with regard to policies to ensure they are updated and reviewed regularly to incorporate the latest DfE guidance and also so that they make reference to New Belongings, attached is an example of this.

Evidence of the impact of our input and actions on how services are being responsive and personal in meeting the needs of care leavers

Good Practice guides have been developed to support practitioners whilst working with young people, one of the guides does focus on relationships (attached). It reinforces the importance of building positive relationships and ensuring the support given is responsive and flexible in meeting the needs of care leavers including those with specific and complex needs e.g. UASC, care leavers with a disability.

Bespoke independence training is now incorporated as part of a programme using mobile provision within the Throughcare Service. The mobile vehicle will be taken out county wide and will be utilised as a means of facilitating consultation sessions with care leavers e.g. the development of me, myself and I app (tool for practitioners to use to compliment and inform the pathway plan).

The Throughcare Service has requested that care leavers are able to access out of hours Emergency Duty Service (EDS) via a free texting service. This will therefore ensure services are being responsive to care leavers when Throughcare Services are not available.

Evidence of the impact of our input and actions on joint working and protocols in place specifically aimed at improving services to care leavers and input and actions on current information and data sharing practices

There is a joint working protocol in place with Entrust for careers participation services for young people who are looked after by SCC. This is a bespoke service that meets the needs of individual care leavers therefore the impact of this service is that care leavers receive specialist one to one support, tracking and monitoring via EET (in Employment, Education or Training)/NEET (Not in Employment, Education or



Training) status. The policy ensures care leavers' needs are recognised and addressed earlier with many becoming EET rather than NEET. Care leavers have a careers plan and support to achieve their goals.

Care leavers up to age 18 can access the Youth Contract which offers extra support, tracking and monitoring in order to achieve positive outcomes. With regard to data sharing Entrust track and monitor via a system called Aspire this data information is fed back to Throughcare team managers and practitioners supporting young people. Joint monthly meetings take place to discuss the data and the young person's progress resulting in positive partnership working

The joint working protocol with Youth Offending Service (YOS) is in place. The intention of this policy is to reduce the number of LAC re-offending and encourage better partnership working between YOS and SCC. As the policy is embedding in practice improved partnership working is becoming evident.

Evidence of the impact of our input and actions on how care leavers are being prioritised in discretionary provision

There are currently 25 in house apprenticeships available where Looked after Children receive a higher rate of pay compared to the national apprenticeship wage. The impact of this has been that more care leavers are accessing apprenticeships and they have more in house opportunities. They are financially better off than those in other apprenticeships or claiming benefits and care leavers are completing the apprenticeship programme successfully with this incentive.

The 25 apprenticeship places are also bespoke to care leavers where individual needs etc. are assessed and responded to e.g. flexibility around completion timescales and pre apprenticeship preparation.

Evidence of the impact of our input and actions on systems to ensure care leavers know about and receive their entitlements

Care leavers and professionals can now easily access information about entitlements via Youth Box <http://www.youthbox.info/HelpAdvice/HomeLife/Planning-to-Leave-Care/Care-Leavers/Care-Leavers.aspx> and Staffordshire Cares (this page is not yet live), the impact of this has been improved clarification. Professionals have a better understanding of entitlements resulting in accurate information being given to care leavers in a timely manner and this is evident in pathway plans.



Care leavers can also access information easily and are able to see what they are entitled to via Youth Box and Staffordshire Cares (this has only just been set up as a result of New belongings therefore it is too soon to measure impact)

A good practice guide has also been developed to support practitioners (attached) however this has not been in place long enough to measure impact.

Evidence of the impact of our input and actions on how the Charter for Care Leavers is informing local practice



Awareness has been raised with regard to the Charter due to:-

- *Circulation in SCC communications*
- *Visits to teams with copies of the Charter*
- *All staff within Throughcare, foster carers, PA's Social workers have a copy of the Charter*
- *Presentation at Service Development Day with copies distributed*
- *IRO's have copies of the Charter and discuss it in all LAC reviews this is to monitor and check practitioners practice to ensure it meets the Charter requirements*
- *The Charter will soon be available in the AOB folder for young people*

Care Leavers developed the Charter therefore they feel they have ownership over it and are confident to refer it. Professionals have also taken more notice of the Charter because it has been developed by care leavers, PA's were also consulted during the development of the Charter therefore, it is also a good tool that they can refer to as part of their professional practice

Awareness has been raised within SCC particularly with the teams that support care leavers, staff are more aware of how the Charter influences work, informs practice and how it can be evidenced as part of the pathway plan. Practice is now being monitored in relation to the Charter resulting in monthly quality assurance audits of pathway plans. This has reinforced to practitioners the importance of referring to and using the Charter within their daily work.

Evidence of the impact of our input and actions to bring in the community to support care leavers access to the same opportunities as their peers

Feedback gained from Staffordshire Care Leavers is that they do access the same services as their peers and therefore did not rate this as a priority. The resources for



the project have therefore been prioritised in the areas that care leavers have identified. All Staffordshire's care leavers were asked to complete a survey at the start of the New belongings initiative and no care leavers at that point expressed a concern that they were not offered the same opportunities as their peers. This was therefore followed up and the community element was discussed twice at forums and on two other separate occasions as part of an activity called 'diamond nine' but again care leavers did not consider it an issue. The Throughcare Service will continue to consult with care leavers and will closely monitor whether this particular area is raised as an issue in the future.

However we have started to make links via District Council and also with the voluntary sector, this is an area we will explore further but other areas have been prioritised in the first instance in order to meet care leavers needs.

Stockport

Priority 1 – Restructure 16+ Services

The restructure for 16+ services is now complete bringing together teams under one management structure. This has provided a more integrated team approach.

A key area of focus has been to create a team around the care leaver providing a virtual network with multi agency partners such as dedicated workers for EET/ Skills advisors, DWP, Stockport Homes, Health and Services for Young People (SfYP) who work within the team providing advice/ support to staff and direct to care leavers. We now have established weekly drop in session/s covering a range of services to support our young people with time advice, support and advocacy- a new leaflet has been created to advise care leavers about the team and the various drop in sessions available.





Priority 2 – To deliver statutory duties and responsibilities and embed the care leaver principles throughout service delivery

Quality assurance is a key service activity and embedded within the management role. The management team have audited case files and undertaken compliance audits with personal advisers in and outside supervision identifying corrective action where this has been necessary. This remains a key ongoing priority for the Team Manager and Senior Practitioner/s ensure quality recordings and statutory compliance evidencing embedding the care leaver charter principles within practice and interventions.

Priority 3 – improve employability of care leavers by widening, encouraging and supporting young people to EET opportunities with career plans

This is a key priority and there have been a number of work streams:

- ✓ *Dedicated Services for Young Person (SfYP) worker for the Care Leaver Team*
- ✓ *Dedicated Adults Skills Advisor and Job Centre Plus worker*
- ✓ *Contract with Pure Insight (a 3rd Sector local organisation supporting care leavers)*
- ✓ *Extension to the Council's targeted Apprenticeship Scheme*
- ✓ *Improved shared data and tracking of NEET young people*
- ✓ *Linking together information for care leavers*
- ✓ *Building on strong regional networks and links (e.g. through the Greater Manchester Looked After Children Forum)*
- ✓ *Finance entitlements have been reviewed and resulted in a young person's entitlements booklet*



- ✓ *Celebrating 16+ and Care Leaver achievements at a special awards ceremony*
- ✓ *Working closely with education colleagues to 'pilot' Education, Health and Care Plans for care leavers, and are reviewing this alongside Personal Education Plans*
- ✓ *Wider work undertaken corporately is developing opportunities for care leavers in education, employment and training*

Priority 4 – Ensure care leavers are living in safe and suitable accommodation that meets their needs and reduce homelessness

Increasing accommodation sufficiency has been a key focus of our work, and the following summarises key areas of progress in terms of what we are now able to provide to care leavers:

- ✓ *a 'taster' flat*
- ✓ *a 'starter' flat*
- ✓ *Post-18 supported accommodation*
- ✓ *Post-18 additional needs support (in conjunction with Adult Social Care colleagues)*
- ✓ *'Staying Put' options*
- ✓ *Stronger links with local housing associations to prioritise accommodation for care leavers*
- ✓ *Better information, including young people's guides*

Priority 5 – Improve preparation for and transition for care leavers to independent living and on-going support

We have listened to the views of our care leavers and they told us that we need to improve preparation for independent living.

- ✓ *The role of the Personal Adviser now includes 16 and 17 year old looked after children, as part of their 16+ assessment*
- ✓ *Developing a 'Preparation for Independence' Complex, involving three flats to reflect different stages of progress that a young person is at in leaving care*
- ✓ *Piloting the 'Get Ready for Adult Life' Toolkit*

Priority 6 – Promote and improve the physical, emotional well-being and mental health of care leavers



Health is the area that Stockport was given the lead for within the New Belongings cluster. This has been a difficult area to deliver change as the business case has needed to be prepared by Health Commissioners and is within the remit of the CCG's for transformation for CAMHS agenda and any health flexibilities for vulnerable groups. Locally health colleagues are committed to delivering improved health promotion and services for care leavers and we have made progress;

- ✓ *Pilot Nurse/s are attending Pathway Planning and Review meetings*
- ✓ *New Health Drop-in Centre*
- ✓ *Explored dental access and flexibilities*
- ✓ *The services of Teenage Pregnancy Mid-wives have been extended for care leavers*
- ✓ *Availability of health trainers for care leavers*
- ✓ *Sexual Relationships Education worker provides advice and support through the drop-in centre at Café Zest*
- ✓ *MOSAIC drug and alcohol service continues to provide support*
- ✓ *The business case for extending CAMHS up to 25 years of age has been made, is awaiting a response by the Clinical Commissioning Group*
- ✓ *We are piloting personal health budgets to reduce self-harm*
- ✓ *There are contracts in place with four 3rd sector organisations, Stockport Samaritans, Relate, ARC and Beacon, to provide 24/7 counselling and support to young people*
- ✓ *Improved information about health services for care leavers*
- ✓ *All looked after children and care leavers receive free membership to local leisure facilities*

Priority 7 – Support care leavers to receive financial advice and guidance so they can maximise and manage their income and reduce risk of falling into debt

Financial payments and entitlements has been a key area of focus and we have undertaken two main reviews of finances over the past 12 months. The first to restructure payments to be incentive based to promote and encourage care leavers engagement in EET. The second review in July 2014 was to seek approval to move towards personal budgets (for corporate costs) providing more money and choice to care leavers. For example;



- ✓ *Reviewed 16+ maintenance payments to bring them up to benefits levels and create incentives for young people to engage in education, employment or training*
- ✓ *Reviewed care leaver entitlements and introduced personal budgets; and produced a young people's guide to entitlements*
- ✓ *Developed a protocol with Job Centre Plus and the Department for Works and Pensions to advance job seeker allowance claims (to six weeks before 18th birthday), put in place arrangements for emergency payments and top up the Setting Up Home Grant to £3,000*
- ✓ *Cost-effective deal struck with Stockport Homes to provide affordable food items from their 'Penny Pantry' (i.e. a £2 weekly subscription gets 15 items of food)*

Priority 8 – Promote safeguarding and reduce risk factors for care leavers offending, drug and alcohol use, self-harm and Child Sexual Exploitation

Workers within the Leaving Care Team are given specialist lead roles to cover these areas

Access to Youth Offending Service support has been extended to care leavers

Through the free yearly passes all looked after children and care leavers are encouraged to engage in positive activities; and the feedback and take up by young people has been positive

Priority 9 – Develop care leaver engagement, participation and information

This is a key area of focus and we have refreshed our information and continue to work with colleagues to promote engagement and participation of our young people.

- **Voice of Care Leavers** - *We have a Children in Care Council (CICC) and Care Leaver Forum (CLF), the CLF represents the voice of care leavers. Both forums are led by the engagement & participation officer/s. We also have a voice from care leavers that attend at cafe zest who feed views into the Care Leaver Forum. The forum/s have their own web pages on the council website and has an agreed work plan which includes to produce a newsletter and help with the planning for care leaver week/ awards ceremony this October 2014. Recruitment to the Care Leaver Forum remains a key priority to ensure it has a strong voice representing our care leavers and those living in Stockport.*



- **Information about services, Rights and Entitlements** - We have refreshed the information, rights and entitlements for care leavers available on our council website.
- **First Care Leaver Newsletter** – we have produced our first care leaver newsletter for care leavers and this issue is dedicated to the New Belongings pilot and the progress we have made to improving services for our care leavers. It also includes news, what's new and events coming up and has been posted to our young people this week.
- **National Care Leaver week** – we are currently preparing the care leaver week programme for October 2014 in consultation with the care leaver forum. We have reviewed young people's feedback last year and designing this year's programme around their wishes. Given the positive feedback from last year, we will be having another care leaver awards ceremony to celebrate our care leavers successes and achievements.

There is no current statutory requirement for notification of care leavers moving into LA areas like there is for LAC. It would be beneficial if this statutory duty could be extended to include notifications for care leavers, this way local authorities will know the population of care leavers living within their area which would better inform commissioning and service developments for care leavers.

We have developed a contact policy with care leavers for when they are no longer anyone's statutory responsibility, so we can be a lifelong champion as their corporate parents this is currently being consulted with care leaver forum and staff.

Summary

We are now 12 months on from the launch of the New Belongings pilot and in reviewing the action plan it is evident that we have made a significant amount of progress against our priorities with improvements to our information, services and support for our care leavers. We have made big strides with designing the foundation and infrastructure of a new structure for 16+ services and working towards a clear vision of integration for the future. There are benefits of integration for care leavers, service and the council.

In September 2014, we are re-doing the snapshot survey with our care leavers to hear their views/ comments about our services 12 months on to be able to compare views to those made last year. The comments from this year's survey along with outstanding areas from our action plan will inform the key priority areas for the next 12 months business plan 2014/2015.



The New Belongings pilot may be coming to an end but we remain committed as a Council and a Children's Trust to making a difference for our care leavers and striving to deliver 'gold standard' care leaver services.

Trafford

Trafford have provided the evaluation with the following update on the progress they have been making.

Since signing the Care Leavers Charter Trafford Council have made significant progress in a number of new areas, and some other areas that were under development at the time of the launch. We have also strengthened existing arrangements within the service, and as corporate parents.

Trafford have a number of on-going developments and things that we have achieved for our care leavers. These include:

- *Independent Advice and Support through the Children's Rights Service, which has recruited a care leaver as an apprentice.*
- *Strengthening our use of the 16+ Greater Manchester Framework to ensure good affordable accommodation that meet the needs of care leavers and offers a good level of support. A protocol with a local housing provider gives 'priority' banding for care leavers.*
- *The 'Staying Put' Policy enables foster carers to convert placements into supported lodgings, allowing young people to remain in their placement beyond the age of 18; and, in some cases, until they have completed their further education.*
- *Care Leavers at University are provided with a non-taxable bursary of £2,000, and support with the cost of accommodation outside term time. They continue to have an allocated Personal Adviser.*
- *Trafford are developing a new project, in partnership with Skill Solutions and Trafford College, to deliver pre-employment training, with the aim being to offer young people an apprenticeship provided by Trafford College.*
- *The Leaving Care Financial Policy has been completed in consultation with the Children in Care Council, resulting in a raise in the Leaving Care Grant to £2,000 per year, plus added incentives for young people who are in education, employment or training. Weekly allowances for young people seeking work have also been raised to above benefit rates.*
- *Trafford have 38 young people on Apprenticeship Schemes, 4 who are care leavers.*



- *Trafford currently have 12 young people involved on the Activity Agreement. 8 of these are looked after children, increasing their chances of securing employment and or training for the longer term.*
- *Trafford successfully held a Care Leavers Celebration Event, hosted and sponsored by the Manchester United Foundation, which has led to a number of opportunities in the footballing industry.*
- *Trafford have recently bid for funding to support single parents getting work placements.*
- *The Reporters' Academy have created an exciting programme where the young people taking part will be developing skills and raising their expectations and aspirations educationally and socially. Trafford is working with the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to support care leavers in taking part in this programme.*
- *Trafford have introduced Pre-Payments Cards for Care Leavers, which act like a hole in the wall card for their Leaving Care Grants and, in some cases, giving quicker access to emergency payments.*
- *There is a new Exit Questionnaire, developed together with the Care Leavers Forum, enabling care leavers can inform the Authority of things that they do well and things they could do better as they leave care.*
- *The website for looked after children and care leavers has now been launched.*
- *Strengthening the 'Transition To Adult' Services by including an automatic entitlement for young people to have an assessment either before or around their 17th birthday.*
- *The Children in Care Council recently completed a survey of young people in care and leaving care about the awareness they had of their rights, and what is expected of the Authority. The responses to the questionnaire were very positive, and those requiring action have now been completed.*



Walsall



Clarify and restate entitlements for care leavers

Care leavers and staff have worked together to clarify their understanding of entitlements and how they are explained. This is being reflected in the training for PAs. The wording to explain the entitlements has been created by the care leavers and this information will be made available on the website and in print – though the funding for that is uncertain at the moment.

Embed the Care Leavers Charter and Access all Areas.

The care leavers have written a set of pledges that encapsulate how they want to be treated and what they need, which reflects the Care Leavers Charter. The corporate parenting strategy has been rewritten to reflect the Charter and the views of care leavers in Walsall and should be signed off by the authority in August. There is a campaign across the council, supported by the CEO, to raise awareness, particularly in the areas of finance, accommodation and employment.

Work experience and placements (Planning for life beyond care)

There are now named contacts in each area of the council for care leaver services to approach to seek placements and experience for care leavers who are interested in working in particular areas. The approach is proactive on the basis of what an individual care leaver would like to do. The expectation is that it is to provide real work experience (not making coffee and filing) and an element of informal mentoring is expected. The approach is informal and flexible to reflect the interests of the care leaver.

Explore development of secure Facebook/Twitter/web page for care leavers (Planning for life beyond care)

Consultation with the care leavers showed that they wanted a site separate from Facebook that they can access when they want to and that is only for care leavers. The support of the “active involvement” team on the council has been secured and it will use the New Belongings title. It will include material from care leavers about their experience since leaving care and also enable care leavers to post comments about current services to help service providers and inform the leadership.

Easy access to joined up services (embedding Access All Areas). This has a number of strands of activity:

A better relationship with the Jobcentre

Named contacts in the Jobcentre are being identified to deal with the first claim by care leavers and to give them advice. The Jobcentre is being asked to extend that to handle subsequent claims too. PAs are learning about the process of signing on to improve the support they can give to care leavers



The care leaving team is working with other areas in the council to improve services

This is part of a wider council initiative on business change. PAs can input issues about care leavers and about procedures in dealing with other council services; for example, adult services have welfare rights advisers but not services for care leavers

Wider community support

This has been challenging in the context of the local elections in May.

Possibility of passport to hairdressing services

This had been a request by care leavers. This has taken time to negotiate with the local college but the college hairdressing salon has agreed to provide haircuts to care leavers for £4 – cards are being produced (with serial numbers to avoid abuse of the facility).

Possibility of further development/refinement of Leisure passport

The request to leisure services by the care leaver team is to extend the discounts available for looked after children (and reduced rates for foster carer families) to care leavers. This provision has now been extended to care leavers by leisure services.



Possibility of access to concerts for care leavers

Again, this was a specific request by care leavers. It is proving hard to define an outcome that is both acceptable to the care leavers and achievable in the local context.

The role of the Chief Executive Officer

The CEO launched the plan. He has raised the project proactively with the top three tiers in the authority and asked them to support the care leaver team leadership in delivering the project. He has included the project, and his support for it, in the newsletter to all staff. What he has done effectively is licensed the leadership of the project and the care leaver team to talk to people across the council and to try to enlist their support for what the project is trying to do.

Wirral

Wirral signed up to the New Belongings Project, focusing on the issue of improving the quality and range of supported accommodation and housing for care leavers.



Through the project we have also considered 16 and 17 year olds who present as homeless, some of whom subsequently become looked after following an assessment. Due to the economic climate in Wirral, we were faced with the challenge of not only improving these services but also making budget savings. Significantly, the need to make savings provided an increased focus for the project and actually helped us to develop a range of services, which we feel now better, meet the needs of young people and care leavers. The requirement to make budget savings has proved to be a lever to bring about change and galvanise the Children and Young People's Department (CYPD), Department for Regeneration and Environment and local housing providers as all parties were directly affected and a sense of urgency was created. The changes and budget savings have primarily been realised through the reconfiguration of existing supported housing services (funded through the Regeneration & Environment Directorates Supporting People Programme) for Looked After Children (16/17 year olds) and Care Leavers.

Through close partnership working we have focused on the following activities:

- ✓ *Development of Emergency Accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds.*
- ✓ *Reconfiguration of existing Supporting People funded Supported Housing Services for Looked After Children.*
- ✓ *Establishment of a Young Persons Strategic Housing Group*

In conjunction with the above activities, the project has also considered:

- ✓ *Improving the website and development of Apps for looked after children and care leavers*
- ✓ *Developing young people friendly policies (starting with the Leaving Care Financial Policy)*
- ✓ *Development of a drop-in service for care leavers*
- ✓ *Discretionary Housing Payments*

Wirral have been running a pilot 'Staying Put' Scheme for the past year, which they have evaluated and now propose to expand on this. To date, 16 young people have 'stayed put' with their foster carers, which is a very positive outcome as this represents all of those who said that they wanted this option. An extension to the scheme has also been applied; intended to minimise disruption, and support young people taking exams.

- *Wirral has achieved the From Care to Work Quality Kite Mark Award. This shows the work we have been doing in regards to employability.*
- *We have a dedicated team which works with LAC and Care leavers up to 21 who aim to improve the education, employment and training outcomes for young people. Each person is assigned a Personal Coach who supports the young people. This includes one to one Careers Information Advice and Guidance sessions. For 19 year olds April 2013-March 2014 we had a success rate of 62% of the Care*



leaver population at 19 were in EET. Before the inception of the team three years ago Wirral had a figure of 37% for the same cohort. We work closely with the leaving care team to achieve this.

- *Wirral Apprentice Programme which ring fences 10% of its opportunities to Care Leavers*
- *As a Council we agreed with HR that we would include a box on Wirral Application forms for Internal Apprenticeship opportunities so that anyone who is a Care Leaver who applies is guaranteed an interview.*
- *Funded a dedicated partnership with Connexions specifically around support, guidance, tracking and monitoring of Care Leavers.*
- *We organise an annual programme called Get Real, this is a programme that engages between 10-12 young people aged 16-19, it focuses on Personal and Social development, motivation and confidence building, employability skills and goal setting. This culminates in an 8 week paid internship with local employers which we then look to convert into apprenticeships where appropriate.*
- *We also arrange Training provider and college visits for care leavers.*

Wirral's strong relationship between the 14-19 service and its leaving care service has contributed towards a care leaver successfully obtaining an eight-week traineeship with a well-known cycling retailer.



APPENDIX 3: A self-assessment against the Charter for Care Leavers

[Portsmouth City Council]



This is a model self-assessment tool used by **Portsmouth** prior to the outset of New Belongings, which it then used to formulate many of the plans that it came up with.

TO RESPECT AND HONOUR YOUR IDENTITY

What we do well...

- ✓ Individual Pathway Plans are of high quality
- ✓ Working sensitively with young people from a wide range of cultural backgrounds
- ✓ Providing interpreting services when required
- ✓ Ensuring contact arrangements are appropriate

What we could do better...

- To recruit and develop carers from a wider range of cultural backgrounds, especially to care for our Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers
- Develop stronger links with different faith and community groups, for example the Muslim community
- Earlier identification of learning difficulties for those with disrupted schooling

TO BELIEVE IN YOU

What we do well...

- ✓ We hold high aspirations for our care leavers
- ✓ All care leavers have access to a qualified careers adviser
- ✓ We take time to understand the goals each young person has for themselves
- ✓ We have developed apprenticeship and work placement opportunities within the council and some partner agencies

What we could do better...

- To further reduce (from 27%) the proportion of care leavers without education or employment



- To ensure all colleges and training providers are able to offer quality education opportunities and associated support for care leavers
- To develop apprenticeship opportunities within partner organisations including the community, voluntary and private sectors

TO LISTEN TO YOU

What we do well...

- ✓ We have a robust, challenging and effective Children in Care council
- ✓ We enable feedback through Independent Reviewing Officers and an Annual survey
- ✓ We visit care leavers regularly
- ✓ We commission an advocacy service from an external independent provider
- ✓ We have a high quality complaints process

What we could do better...

- Increase the number of care leavers on the Children in Care Council
- Take up of the advocacy service could be better
- Develop use of social media to engage with (and inform) care leavers

TO INFORM YOU

What we do well...

- ✓ Ensure all young people have a copy of their care plan
- ✓ Involve young people in all aspects of their care planning and pathway planning

What we could do better...

- Ensure that all young people are consistently provided with up-to-date information on support and opportunities available in the city and beyond

TO SUPPORT YOU

What we do well...

- ✓ We have a Young Persons' Support Team which takes on the lead social worker role for Looked After Children at age 14 so that we can ensure maximum continuity during the transitions of adolescence
- ✓ Assessment and Pathway planning
- ✓ Practical support and mentoring for Care Leavers through the voluntary sector 'Boost Project.'

What we could do better...

- Ensure that for care leavers with complex issues, support from agencies is effectively joined-up and work is co-ordinated
- Reduce delays in accessing mental health support
- Ensure consistent access to universal health services (GP, dentist etc.)



- To ensure consistency of support offered to all young people

TO FIND YOU A HOME

What we do well...

- ✓ An effective Young Persons Housing Panel
- ✓ A 'Stay Put' policy to maintain young people in foster placements until they are ready to leave
- ✓ Provide a range of accommodation options which meets young people's needs
- ✓ Good take up of tenancies in council properties
- ✓ Two training flats to provide a supportive environment to learn skills for independence

What we could do better...

- Maintaining previously high rates of care leavers in suitable accommodation (down from 96% to 89%).
- Develop more supported housing options, especially for young people with more complex support needs

TO BE A LIFELONG CHAMPION

What we do well...

- ✓ All care leavers have an allocated worker up to the age of 21
- ✓ A duty-system is in place if young people in crisis are unable to contact their allocated worker
- ✓ Drop-in help is available at the Go For It Centre – an access point for multi-agency youth support for all young people in the city
- ✓ Tracking of young people
- ✓ Transition support into adult services for care leavers with disabilities

What we could do better...

- More formalised 'staying in touch' processes for those over 21
- Ensuring support is available post-21 from community services
- Role model and mentoring from the private sector
- Explore 'peer support' models so that care-leavers are 'buddied' with other care leavers to provide on-going support





**New Belongings: A Better Deal for Care Leavers,
The Care Leavers' Foundation, October 2014**

An Independent Evaluation of the New Belongings Project
by Dr Mike Lindsay, consultancy support from Prof Mike Stein

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