

Reality check visit update report

Care Leaving Service

A report for the
Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee

November 13th 2018



Appendix 3

Details of Reality Check Visit

The visit to the Leaving Care Service in Rock Ferry took place on Wednesday 18th October 2017. Cllrs Tom Usher (Chair), Alan Brighthouse, Wendy Clements, and Chris Meaden took part in the visit, which was hosted by Carole Nixon (Service Manager). Carole was accompanied by a management team of Jeff Hay, Peter Rogan and Chris Pentecost.

Following a presentation relating to the operation of the service, there was an open question and answer session with the Personal Advisor team and managers. Members then spoke to a number of Personal Advisors individually.

The Leaving Care Service in Wirral has traditionally been focused on providing advice, guidance and support to young people in the above categories up to the age 21, or up to the age of 25 if still in full-time education. Legislative changes were introduced in 2017 that require continued involvement for care leavers up to the age of 25.

Members identified a number of positive factors during the course of their visit. They were generally impressed with the energy and commitment of the managers and the team of Personal Advisors (PA's). The review team felt that staff presented a positive but realistic picture of the progress that had been made since the Ofsted inspection in 2016. They felt assured that improvements had been made, and this was particularly reflected in the efforts to "keep in touch" with care leavers.

Since the Member visit the team has continued to develop. It is now fully staffed and has a stable staff team. The team have moved to the Cheshire Lines building and this has brought about more effective working relationships with staff in the wider service. The care leaving service has been part of the Agile Working roll out and staff report a positive impact on their work including more efficient and effective ways of undertaking their direct work with young people, particularly in relation to Pathway Plans.

The challenges identified by members and an update in relation to these is provided in the table below. It should be noted that some of the issues listed will always be part of ongoing work to improve the quality of work across the board. This is particularly so in relation to Pathway Planning

Recommendation/challenges	Implementation Status - Complete - Partially complete - Not Started	Actions Taken / Progress	Impact of Recommendation
Recommendation/Challenges 1: Further progress is required on individualising and improving the quality of Pathway Plans.	Partially/Ongoing work	<p>Training provided to staff</p> <p>Regular discussions in Team meetings and staff supervisions</p> <p>The Pathway Plan format has been amended to ensure it is more relevant and user friendly.</p> <p>Requirement introduced for all Pathway Plans to be written in the first person</p> <p>Implementation of agile working tools</p> <p>Quality of these plans will be formally measured when we undertake a fuller audit of care leavers cases in the period from January – March 2019.</p>	<p>Improved capturing of the care leavers voice</p> <p>Improved participation from young people</p> <p>More plans maintained and updated</p> <p>More plans written in the first person</p> <p>Plans are smarter and supporting sustaining more positive outcomes for young people.</p>
Recommendation/Challenges 2: The Leaving Care Team is currently based in two different locations. Members noted staff comments on the advantage of being in one location, as the team has a mixture of skills and can share information and expertise.	Completed	<p>The Leaving Care Service is now fully located within the Cheshire Line Building but is working to an agile Team model</p>	<p>Agile working has led to more effective and efficient ways of working</p> <p>Care leaving workers are co-located with all the social work teams.</p> <p>The teams base is now just a minute walk from the leaving care drop in facility in the Response</p>

			<p>building on Argyle Street in Birkenhead.</p> <p>This has enabled easier co-working between the leaving care team and the children's social work teams.</p>
<p>Recommendation/Challenges 3: There is some uncertainty regarding young people in residential care and the transition arrangements to adult services following the integration of services with the NHS.</p>	<p>Partially will remain ongoing</p>	<p>We have continued to work with colleagues in Adult Social Care to facilitate improved work on transitions. There have been improvements in the early referral of cases for Adult Social Care Assessment, although there have been occasions even when referred well in advance assessments have not been completed quickly enough to enable good transition planning, particularly when it has been subsequently determined that young people do not meet the Adult Social Care criteria for services. In order to mitigate these risks we have worked hard to ensure better contingency planning within the Pathway Planning process.</p>	<p>Improvements in early referral to ensure advanced planning</p> <p>We are planning to include this element of our service in the planned review of support to children with special need as it is a key transition to adult.</p>
<p>Recommendation/Challenges 4: Relocation of the care leavers drop in facility from the response building</p>	<p>Partially</p>	<p>The relocation of the overall service to Cheshire Lines and roll out of agile working has been the key focus for the service over the last few months.</p> <p>Work has been undertaken across the Participation Service, 14 – 19 Team & Leaving Care Service to create the specification for a dedicated centre for care leavers.</p>	<p>The response building continues to be used regularly by care leavers</p>

		<p>Initial discussions have already taken place between the Head of Service and the Head of Assets but the availability of the right property in the appropriate location will be a challenge and/or involve significant resources implications.</p> <p>It is also important to note that care leavers are able to meet with their Leaving Care Personal Advisors at a number of other locations of their choosing around the Wirral.</p>	
<p>Recommendation/Challenges</p> <p>5: There is uncertainty around increased pressure on the service in future in relation to the changes in legislation requiring a service for all care leavers aged up to 25, should they request it. Whilst the impact of these changes should be monitored closely over the coming months, members are impressed with pro-active approach taken by the team so far.</p>	<p>Partially/Ongoing</p>	<p>The service is currently experiencing a steady increase in demand from 'remaining' or 'returning' 21+ care leavers.</p> <p>We are currently supporting an additional 51 young people under this scheme and this does naturally increase workload pressures.</p> <p>Wirral has been given a grant of £22,000 from Central Government for this financial year. This is being used to fund a Temporary Personal Advisor Post for the next 6 months until the end of March 2019.</p>	<p>The new requirement has led to increased workloads but is clear that there is a need for some of the 21+ care leavers to receive ongoing support</p> <p>Presenting issues have ranged from the straightforward to quite complex.</p>