

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Early Years, Children and Youth Panel.	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	24 th November 2014	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
TITLE:	Update on Issues relating to Services for "Looked After" Children	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: None		

1. THE ISSUE

The purpose of this paper is to update the Early Years, Children and Youth Panel on the progress and developments for "Looked After" young people in Bath and North-East Somerset. This update allows the Panel to ensure that the Council's duties as Corporate Parents continues to be fulfilled to the highest possible standard.

2. RECOMMENDATION

There are no specific recommendations attached to this paper, it is tabled for the purposes of up-date and discussion.

3. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

There are no specific requests for additional resources or funding included within this report. It is for information and discussion only.

4. STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

The Council continues to undertake its statutory duties in relation to all looked after young people and care-leavers. These duties are covered within the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004.

5. THE REPORT

At the end of Quarter two there were 141 young people in the care of Bath and North-East Somerset. This is a reduction of 14 young people who were in care at the end of the previous quarter and again broadly in line with the numbers of young people that have been in our care over the past two years. For the majority of this period we have had a steady number of young people in our care which typically remains within the region of between 140 and 150. This figure puts us significantly below the national average figure and also slightly below the figure for our comparator cohort of Local Authorities. These figures are calculated by a "per 10,000" calculation, which show that BaNES is currently at 41.4 children in care per 10,000 of the population, compared to the national figure of 60 and the statistical neighbor comparator figure of 42.6 per 10,000 of population.

We have also made good progress in ensuring that when young people have to come into care we are able to provide a good level of stability for them. As the panel will know, when children have experienced trauma in their everyday lives there is a need to ensure that where possible the Local Authority provides stability and consistency, particularly at the early stages of foster care whilst longer-term plans are being formulated. Currently only 6.4% require three or more moves in the first 12 months, which is significantly lower than the maximum target figure of 10%

We have continued to develop the 'In Care Council' following the re-tendering of the contracts to deliver these. The contract is currently undertaken by "Off The Record" who work with both the "Junior In Care Council" (7-11yrs) and the Senior group (11-18yrs). Both of these groups have increased the membership and offer a range of activities and opportunities for the young people that attend. The focus of both groups is to promote confidence and provide opportunities to understand that many other young people might be experiencing the same anxieties and pressures that are sometimes felt by those young people that live away from their families. Recently the Senior group attended the Corporate Parenting panel and spoke to members about the role of the In Care Council. More recently some of the group also played a significant role in presenting the awards at the LAC Awards Ceremony.

In line with the Government's move to extend the upper age limit that young people can remain in foster-care we have continued to develop the scope of our "Staying Put" programme for young people that wish to remain with their foster-carers up until the age of 21 years. BaNES had established this scheme a year ahead of the government's announcement that it was extending this provision. Over the past two years we have had about 5 young people each year wishing to remain with carers for a further period. This has meant that for young people just starting their careers, or wanting to return home from college/university at Christmas, Easter or through the summer there is continuity and a re-assurance that people are around to support them should these first steps into independence prove difficult.

Our work with care leavers continues to be of a high standard and with good and positive outcomes for the vast majority of our young people. At the end of the 13/14 period all 28 (100%) of our 18-19 yr old care leavers were in suitable accommodation. This compares to an average figure of 90.4 for our statistical neighbours and the national figure of 80%. One of the other key measures of the quality of work and support to care Leavers is the measure of former Care Leavers who are in employment, education and training (EET). At the end of 13/14 we had a figure of 78% former care-leavers in EET, compared with our statistical neighbours average of 59.6%, and the national figure of 58%.

The service has also continued to provide respite activities over the summer period via our R2K project, which takes groups of “Looked After” young people on activity weeks and involves them in a series of challenging activities that emphasise the importance of team-work, collaboration and some of the everyday skills in relation to establishing and maintaining friendships. Some of these activities were featured in our recent very successful Awards ceremony.

6. RATIONALE

Not applicable

7. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Not applicable

8. CONSULTATION

In preparing this report I have consulted with the manager of the Looked After Service, Pete Campbell.

Contact person	<i>Richard Baldwin; 01225 396289</i>
Background papers	<i>21014-15 Service Plan</i>
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