

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Children and Young People Panel	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	15 th July 2015	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
TITLE:	Update on Care Leavers Service	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: N/A		

1. THE ISSUE

This report is to update the Children and Young People Panel on the activity of the BaNES Leaving Care team over the previous 12 months.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

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 resource or financial implications outlined or addressed in this paper as its remit is one of broad update.

4. STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

There are no specific statutory considerations to be addressed in this report. The Council will continue to address any identified issues that relate to Care Leavers through compliance with the Children Act 1989 and 2004.

5. THE REPORT

The Leaving Care service currently provides support to 88 young people that qualify as Care Leavers. The cohort of Care Leavers is primarily those young people between 18-21 years, although if a young person continues to be in education beyond 21 years we also have a duty to work with them until 25 years of age.

Banes was one of the first Local Authorities in the Country to develop a “Staying Put” programme for care leavers that wished to remain in their foster placement beyond 18 years and until they are 21 years old. This scheme has now been running for nearly three years and currently we have 12 young people that have actively chosen to remain with their foster- carer beyond their 18th birthday. Our consultation with young people and foster-carers on this scheme remains overwhelmingly positive, and this is allowing young people to take their first steps into employment, or maintain a secure base whilst attending university with the same level of support and encouragement that would be afforded to those young people living with their birth family.

Performance in relation to some of the key issues for Care Leavers are out-lined in the table below.

The first set of data sets out the numbers of Care leavers we continue to be touch with following their discharge from care. This is important in continuing to offer a corporate parenting role of advice and assistance where it is possible to do so and where young people wish to accept this contact or remain living in the area. The figures for all age groups are positive and are higher than both statistical neighbours and the national average. The team run a bi-monthly meal for each age group as a way of facilitating contact and an opportunity to meet up as a group in an age appropriate manner and in a way that might replicate how other young people would meet with their family to share experiences or talk through issues of concern. These meals have proved very popular as well providing a good, non-threatening forum for our Care Leavers to meet.

In touch data by care leaver age banding	19 years old	20 years old	21 years old	TOTAL 2014/15 in touch figure, 19, 20, 21st birthday
In touch	22	28	29	79
Not in touch	5	0	4	9
Total qualifying care leavers by age	27	28	33	88
% of former care leavers in touch with the local authority	81.5%	100.0%	87.9%	89.8%

Suitable accommodation data by care leaver age banding	19 years old	20 years old	21 years old	TOTAL 2014/15 NI147 figure, 19, 20, 21st
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				birthday
Accommodation is suitable	23	28	29	80
Accommodation is unsuitable	4	0	4	8
Total qualifying care leavers by age	27	28	33	88
NI 147 % former care leavers in suitable accommodation	85.2%	100.0%	87.9%	90.9%

Employment, education or training data by care leaver age banding	19 years old	20 years old	21 years old	TOTAL 2014/15 NI148 figure, 19, 20, 21st birthday
Engaged in activity	17	19	18	54
Not engaged in activity	10	9	15	34
Total qualifying care leavers by age	27	28	33	88
NI 148 % former care leavers in employment, education or training	62.9%	67.8%	54.5%	61.3%

The second set of data outlines the type, and suitability of housing for Care Leavers across the three age bands of care leavers. This also continues to be broadly positive picture, with the majority of care-leavers being assessed as being placed in or remaining in accommodation that is suitable to their needs.

For both the 19 years age group and the 21 years age group there are still small but significant numbers of young people where concerns remain about the appropriateness of their accommodation. This could be for a number of reasons, it may be that they have chosen to return home and the support worker still has concerns about the suitability and safety of the family home, or on other scenario's the care leaver has chosen to live with friends where the support worker is concerned about possible criminal activity or mis-use of substances. In scenario's such as this, if we can maintain regular contact with the young person we will continue to work with them to ensure if additional concerns arise we are able to assist through housing advice or offer strategies to resist involvement in criminal activity.

The final set of data provides information on NEET and EET activity for Care Leavers. For the first time, the government has extended this data to include NEET data for 21 year olds (in previous years this has only been requested for 19 and 20 year olds). This data shows a rise in the numbers of care-leavers who are classified as NEET. As a consequence of this the percentage of Care Leavers who are EET has fallen from 78.6% in BaNES in 2013/14, to 61.3% 2014/15. This might be partly explained by the expansion in the cohort, although a more detailed break-down of the cohort shows that seven of those not engaged in activity have returned home, and a further six Care Leavers are currently claiming Emergency Support Benefit (previously Incapacity Benefit) as they are presently unable to work. Although it is disappointing that this figure has fallen this year it is important to understand that as the cohort is relatively small, small changes in numbers can make this volatile and although the 14/15 data for both the national comparitors and statistical neighbours are not available, these figure are still ahead of the 13/14 data of 38.9% for our statistical neighbours and 45% across the country.

It is also important to highlight that an increasing number of our Care Leavers continue to achieve qualifications via Higher education. Currently we have 5 Care Leavers under-taking degree courses and a further twenty-nine who are enrolled in other higher education courses that will lead to other academic or vocational qualifications. This represents a significant rise in the numbers of Care Leavers who were able to access these types of course five years ago.

6. SUMMARY;

The BaNES Leaving Care Team continues to work well and effectively with this cohort of young people. The age and circumstances for many of these young people means that it can often be difficult to engage with them, particularly when they have left their foster placements, or returned home. The high levels of engagement and suitability of accommodation reported in this report continue to demonstrate that we meet the needs for the vast majority of young people that leave our care. We continue to develop new and innovative ways of remaining in contact with young people, who face difficult challenges as they seek to take their initial steps of independent living in a difficult and challenging economic climate.

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Background papers	Children Act 1989
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