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| <b>7 March 2018</b>   |  | <b>ITEM: 7</b> |
| <b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b>  |  |                |
| <b>Care Leavers into Employment, Education or Training (EET)</b>  |  |                |
| <b>Wards and communities affected:</b><br>All   | <b>Key Decision:</b><br>Not Applicable |                |
| <b>Report of:</b> Kate Kozlova-Boran, Inspire Careers Manager<br>Michele Lucas, Interim Assistant Director Learning, Inclusion & Skills |  |                |
| <b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Shelia Murphy, Assistant Director Children's Care & Targeted Outcomes                            |  |                |
| <b>Accountable Director:</b> Rory Patterson, Director of Children's Services  |  |                |
| <b>This report is Public</b>  |  |                |

### **Executive Summary**

This report summarises our approach to improve the number of Care leavers\* into Education Employment & Training to enable them to access the regeneration opportunities in Thurrock and to respond positively to our corporate parent role.

\*Care leavers is the collective term used throughout this document but also includes Children in Care and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking/Trafficked Children

#### **1. Recommendations:**

- 1.1 To note the pilot HMO and support the ongoing development of the programme to enable more properties to be available for the scheme**
- 1.2 To recommend that this approach becomes part of our housing strategy**
- 1.3 To recommend the activities continue to be delivered by representatives cross directorate, as well as making use of external agencies/services.**
- 1.4 To consider the development of a transitional housing scheme and provision of personalised support for young people as they enter the aftercare service.**
- 1.5 To recommend a that officers explore the establishment of joint officer role between Social Care and Housing.**

## **2. Introduction And Background:**

### **2.1 Local Policy Context**

The outline proposals within this report link with the Council's corporate priorities:-

- Create a place for learning & opportunity

### **2.2 National Policy**

The number of Looked After children (LAC) continues to increase; it has increased steadily over the last nine years; at 31st March 2017 there were 72,670 LAC children, an increase of 3% on 2016 ( Department for Education, September 2017). Nationally, 6% of LAC Children are unaccompanied asylum seekers.

Thurrock's data identifies different trends – 40% of Thurrock LAC Children are asylum seekers (124 children out of 309). Unaccompanied asylum seekers are predominantly male (92%) and 78% are aged 16 and over (national statistics 2017 SFR 50/2017, September 2017, DFE).

The system for supporting young people leaving foster or residential care in England to live successful independent lives is not working effectively, according to the National Audit Office (NAO).

'Too often services are not joined up, meaning that care leavers do not get the whole spectrum of support they need at the right time and, in the worst cases, one bit of the system can act in a way that undermines the work that another part of the system is providing' (Timpson E. ,MP, 2016)

The cost of not moving into adulthood successfully is likely to be high to both care leavers and the public. According to NAO, the lifetime cost of the current cohort of 19-year-old care leavers being NEET would be around £240 million or £150 million more than if they had the same NEET rate as other 19-year-olds.

The principal outcome measure is the number of care leavers not in education, employment or training (NEET). In 2014, 34.4% of 19-year-old care leavers were NEET compared with only 15.5% of their age peers nationally.

Thurrock follows the national trend: 34.1% of Thurrock LAC young people aged 17-21 are NEET. Though Thurrock's NEET LAC figure is marginally lower than the national average, the aim of the LA as the corporate parent is to reduce the NEET figure further to minimize the gap between the LAC and other young people.

Reports in 2016 'Keep on Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence' (July 2016), 'Evaluation of Better by Design: A Report for Achieving for Children' (July 2016) and 'Supporting Care Leavers to thrive:

Everyone's Business' (October 2016) are indicating that there needs to be a more collaborative and joined up, effective approach when supporting Looked After Children into positive destinations.

### **2.3 Thurrock's Local Arrangements**

In June 2015, representatives from 5 different teams, within Thurrock Council, formed a strategy group to increase the number of Care leavers into EET. The group defined the purpose of the work as:

Improving access of care leavers into EET so they can benefit from the significant regeneration programme underway in Thurrock.

The work initially built on the successes of the Diversity into Apprenticeships programme (DIA), a programme of mentoring and work experience support for Looked After children. Over the last couple of years this individualised programme of support has been successfully integrated into the work of Inspire enabling the LAC NEET young people to access a wider suite of services available through Inspire and partners.

This work directly contributes to the Child Poverty strategy and national strategies to reduce the marginalised population's reliance on the benefits system and ensure that we are continuing to ensure that inequities are addressed at a local level. However whilst we have identified all of the strategy links it is the difference this joined up approach has on the young people that has been evidenced by the reduction in NEET figures for care leavers.

## **3. Progress To Date**

### **3.1 Strategic Position**

December 2017 figures show that 16.7% of Care leavers (aged 17-21 years) are NEET. This is a significant improvement since December 2016 when 27% NEET figure was recorded. The successful increase in the number of NEET young people is outlined below:-

Planning for Care leavers has been significantly improved when the After Care team moved under the Inspire team in April 2017 creating an opportunity for colleagues who previously were in different teams to come together and look at innovative approaches to reducing the LAC NEET by fostering joint visits, faster progression and increased expertise. We recognise the challenges that are faced by this group and each experience triggers cross directorate conversations, reallocation of resource, different approaches to enable access into EET.

Developing this strategic approach has sharpened our focus to consider the suitability of every programme we offer/will create in the future and whether it will be accessible by care leavers and how we secure their engagement. We

continue to consult with care leavers in the development of Inspire, thus ensuring that they have a voice in the ongoing support that Inspire can provide.

The senior management team is committed to creating an environment where care leavers can experience 6 months employment to develop useful skills in the workplace. In May 2014, Thurrock Council reviewed its Pay Policy to provide National Minimum wage rates to Apprentices whose performance is satisfactory after 6 months employment. For an 18-20 year old, this has made a real impact on the level of salary that they receive.

There is increased awareness of the need to create positive employer encounters for Care leavers. As a result, many Thurrock Council Departments are willing to create work experience placements, along with constructive feedback to this group to enable targeted support.

### **3.2 Specialised Support**

There has been a number of individualised programmes generated to re-engage those LAC young people who are not yet ready for full time commitment with education on a five day per week basis – department for Education has recognised this characteristic of LAC young people and is encouraging local authorities to re-engage these vulnerable young people in bite size, individually tailored to them provision with a clear progression to more substantial training/education in the future. This has had the most positive effect on the NEET LAC figures.

The successful funding Thurrock has secured for the delivery Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) enables additional capacity to tackle some of the challenges and extend targets for Care leavers to find and stay in meaningful employment.

In addition, there are two innovative programmes both run by two personal advisers from Inspire: the Duke of Edinburgh framework for Looked After or Care Leavers young people designed to broaden the young people's outlook, increasing their self-esteem and promoting their engagement in EET and the Independent Living Skills programme assisting young people's transition into becoming self-sustaining functioning members of society which meets a developmental need identified in the 2016 OFSTED inspection.

Inspire has successfully bought in an employability programme run by partnership agency TCHC through the YEI funding which sees at risk of NEET LAC young people access provision at the Inspire Youth HUB – developing their employability skills and preparing for the world of work.

The Careers and Enterprise Company funding secured in Thurrock is already creating ideas/plans for different types of employer encounters that may appeal to Care leavers (such as World at Work days, mock interviews, work shadowing for building skills and citizenship).

Inspire is working with National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) to increase entry into HE for young people in nine wards in Thurrock by providing access to individualised support, advice and guidance as well as workshops and summer schools. Six LAC children participated in the 'Higher Degree Apprenticeship Summer and Autumn Schools at Grangewaters with fantastic feedback.

#### **4. The Challenges**

Tracking Care leavers across directorate, where services have responsibility for different age ranges (Inspire Careers 16-19 years, After Care 17-25 years, Virtual School 4-18 years, Employability & Skills 16-24 years) and two unconnected databases can be challenging/

The key priority growth sectors are focused on business development. Their staffing structure is very lean which makes investing sufficient time, to care leavers in the workplace, very challenging, however the work of the Inspire has continued to support local employers in the recruitment and ongoing development of care leavers into work experience/apprenticeships.

There is a dialogue open with JobCentre Plus to formally recognise regular engagement/training by this group as 'preparation for work' which enables for benefits to continue.

#### **5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

5.1 Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

#### **6. Impact On Corporate Policies, Priorities, Performance And Community Impact**

6.1 This report contributes to the following corporate priorities:

- Diverse opportunities and future

#### **7. Implications**

##### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Nilufa Begum**  
**Management Accountant**

This report has no financial implications – however it has evidenced a reduction in costs incurred by our Leaving & Aftercare Team.

## 7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**  
**Deputy Head of Legal Services**

The Committee is asked to note the report content under the remit of the Committee's terms of reference and powers

## 7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**  
**Community Development Officer**

Supporting our young people is a key strategic priority for Thurrock Council, we ensure that we can utilise our powers to positively discriminate to create opportunities. We continue to seek the views of young people to shape the programmes on offer and continue to utilise integrative partnerships to secure Brighter Futures.

## 7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental

- None

## 8. Appendices To This Report:

- None

## Report Author

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Inspire Careers Manager