



## HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 12TH FEBRUARY 2013

**SUBJECT: LEAVING CARE SERVICE**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Health, Social Care & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee with information about the Leaving Care Service.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The Cabinet Member for Social Services visited the Leaving Care Team on the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2012, during that visit he met with the team members and one of the young people who receives a service. Following this visit the Cabinet Member requested that the young person attend a scrutiny committee to talk about their experiences.
- 2.2 This report is to provide background information on the Leaving Care Service and to introduce Members to some of the work that is carried out with Young People within the Caerphilly Borough.
- 2.3 The Leaving Care Team aims to improve life chances of Young People Leaving Care, by supporting them through their transition into adulthood and ensuring that young people are gradually and holistically prepared to leave care.
- 2.4 The Leaving Care team have seen an increase in demand for their services of late.
- Following the Southwark Judgement there has been an increase in the number of homeless young people who have qualified for services under the Leaving Care legislation.
  - Under the Legal Aid Sentencing and punishment of Offenders Act 2012 if young people are remanded to custody from 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2012 then they will be considered Looked After and therefore if remain on remand for 13 or more weeks then they will qualify for Leaving Care Services.
  - In October 2012 additional statutory guidance was issued by Welsh Government, which set out Local Authority responsibilities in Wales towards former relevant children to reconnect with care services from age 21 up to their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. The guidance places a range of duties on the Local authority in respect of reinstating the Pathway Plan, the services of a personal advisor and providing financial support in respect of education and training.

2.5 Leaving Care Staff currently work with 142 young people 52 of those are placed out of county (some are placed out of county due to breakdown of in house placements), 11 are in prison and another 13 eligible young people are awaiting allocation of a Leaving Care worker which will be on or around their 16<sup>th</sup> Birthday. They currently have an allocated worker within the long term children's team. As at 30<sup>th</sup> January 2013 there were a total of 309 children looked after by Caerphilly County Borough Council.

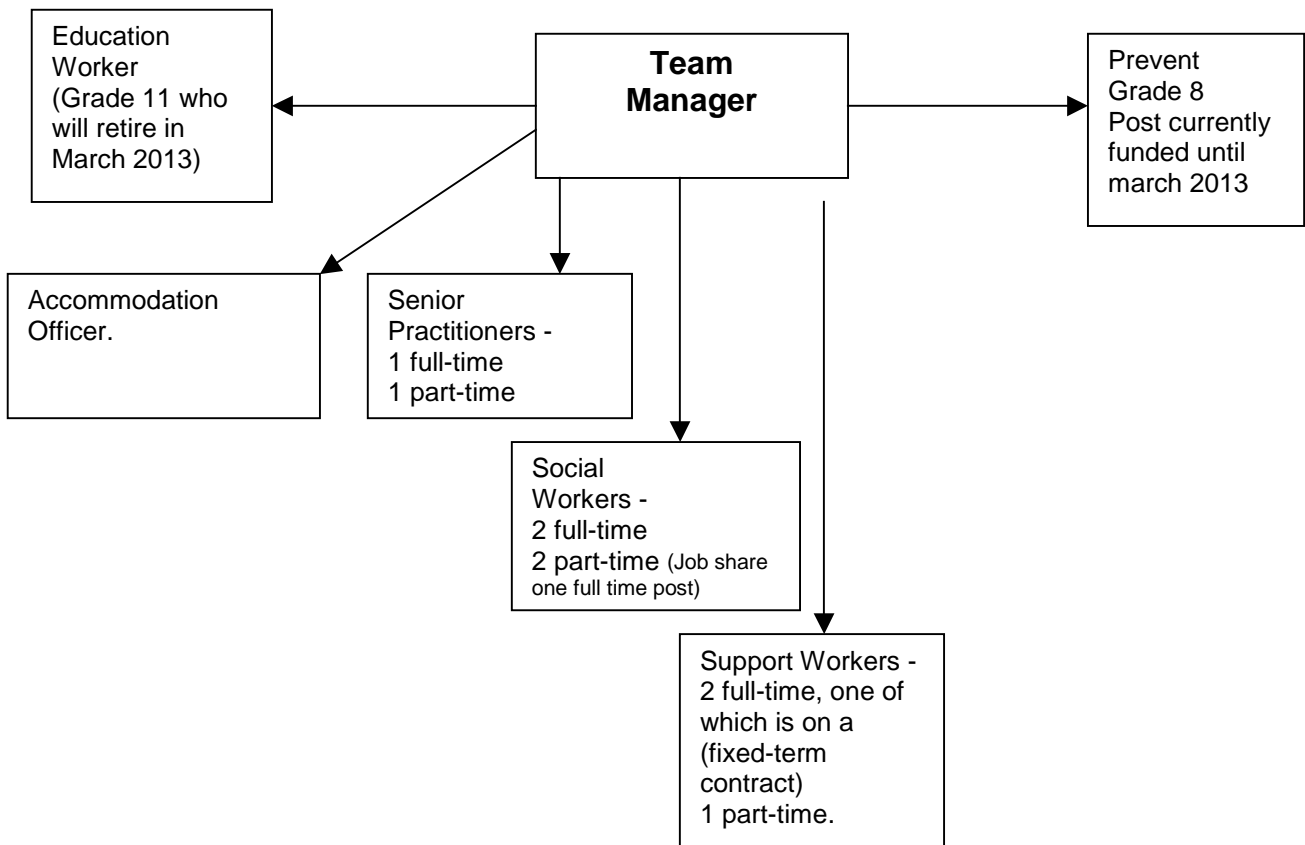
### 3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Children Act 1989 and 2004.
- 3.2 The Children and Young People's Plan.
- 3.3 Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.
- 3.4 Corporate Parenting Strategy.

### 4. THE REPORT

4.1 The Leaving Care team are based at Ty Pontygwindy in the Caerphilly South area. They provide services to Looked After children who are 16+, (Eligible -Young people aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after for 13 weeks since they were 14 and are still looked after, Relevant – Young People aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after for 13 weeks since they were 14 and were looked after while 17 but have now left care, and Former Relevant-young people aged 18 to 21 who were either eligible or relevant before they left care) Young People across the County Borough. They work closely with the Assessment and Locality Teams across the Borough to ensure young people maintain a good service.

4.2 The structure within the Leaving Care Team is as follows:



- 4.3 The Team have a statutory obligation to offer personal advisors to young people. The Personal Advisor Service is provided by Barnardos, the Personal Advisors are currently working with 16/17 yr olds.
- 4.4 The Social Work staff are allocated to work with all 16/17 yr olds and have the responsibility for completing the Leaving Care Assessment and the development of the Pathway Plan. The Pathway Plan is devised by the young person's sixteenth birthday.
- 4.5 Leaving Care Staff will work in partnership with the Young Person, the Personal Advisor, Foster Carers or Residential Worker, allocated Child Care Team Social Worker, Education Support Worker and Parents if they are involved and any other party who the young person feels is prominent in their lives.
- 4.6 Leaving Care Staff take responsibility for ensuring that young people are provided with learning opportunities and are taught the necessary self care and Independence skills that they will need in order to leave care and live in supported or independent living arrangements.
- 4.7 Leaving Care Staff take responsibility for ensuring young people are provided with specific information in relation to their Health needs such as contraception/ maintaining good sexual health, drug and alcohol misuse, sexuality etc. Some of these issues are address via group work session, which staff will develop and facilitate.
- 4.8 Leaving Care Staff have developed a Training Programme "Preparation for Independence Skills" Which has been delivered to Caerphilly Foster Cares over the past 7 years.
- 4.9 The Team has also developed partnership working with Llamau and the Fire Service who deliver Training to Care Leavers in respect fire safety in the home and the requirements of managing a tenancy.
- 4.10 Staff work closely with the Department of Work and pension to ensure that young people are claiming the correct entitlement to benefits and understand Budgeting and Money management.
- 4.11 Young People in Caerphilly have free use of 'CCBC Leisure Facilities' (Smart Card) for all Care Leavers living independently in the borough. The Team have established a 5 a side football team, they play regular matches with other leaving care teams from Swansea to Newport and the events have proved successful and young people make every effort to attend. This has a great impact on morale with young people, and they enjoy interacting with other young people.
- 4.12 In 2011, The Leaving Care Team acquired funding through the ESF Pre-Vent project. The Stepping Stone Coordinator works with young people who need support to access education, training and/or employment but also with soft skill development such as confidence building and self esteem. The role involves creating a bespoke, individual tailored support structure. The Stepping Stones Coordinator works closely with the young people to build on existing skills and encourage them to develop additional skills in order to reduce the risk of them becoming long-term benefit dependant and improve overall well being and mental health. The Team are currently supporting 7 young people who are studying at universities in Wales. One young person qualified as a registered nurse in September 2012 and has recently secured a job as a district nurse.
- 4.13 The Leaving Care Team also has a dedicated Accommodation Officer. This role is divided into two priorities:
  - a) The first being the coordination of the Supported Lodgings scheme - this scheme is available to young people open to the team who are in an education provision aged 16+. (Supported lodgings are a stepping-stone for young people to equip them with the skills to eventually live independently. The young person lives in a supportive environment whilst developing their practical and emotional skills to ensure they are

well equipped when independent living becomes the reality. Some young people remain with Foster Carers under supported lodgings arrangements, which involve placements being converted for a specified period of time whilst a course of education is completed. Other young people who have already left foster care can also access supported lodgings as there are also dedicated providers unrelated to fostering but who will still offer accommodation and support.) The Leaving Care Team have 13 supported lodgings provisions made up of foster care conversions and dedicated supported lodgings providers.

- b) The second element of the role is to develop accommodation opportunities for all leaving care young people. This involves working alongside supporting people and various other organisations to coordinate provisions. The accommodation officer is involved in regular meetings with Llamau, SOLAS and Gwalia to discuss how services are working and to address any difficulties. Work is also being undertaken within the private rental section to increase provisions.

- 4.14 The Leaving Care Team continues to make progress in all areas of development and service delivery. Experienced workers are committed to providing a quality service to young people. Regular supervision, team meetings and planned developmental time have all been significant factors in the team's success.
- 4.15 In summary the Leaving Care Team are currently working closely with housing to address issues from the Southwark Judgement in respect of homelessness and young people. The Southwark Judgement made by the Lords in 2009, is a piece of case law that obliges children's services to provide accommodation and support to homeless 16/17 year olds. Leaving Care staff have a key role within this area and are building relationships between housing colleagues to ensure young people gain a consistent and appropriate service.
- 4.16 Work is currently being completed on the further development of the leaving care service. The team will become a 16 plus service and endeavour to improve services across the borough to the 16 plus population. It is hoped that a seamless integrated service is developed where duplication and bureaucracy reduced.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 This report is for information purposes, so the Council's Equality Impact Assessment does not need to be applied.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no financial implications.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no personnel implications.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 The views of those consulted have been incorporated into the report.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 It is recommended that the content of the report be noted. The purpose of the report is to provide Health, Social Care & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee with information about the Leaving Care Service.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 To appraise members of the Health, Social Care & Well-being committee of the services of the Leaving Care Team.

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