

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES - EDUCATION, EARLY HELP  
AND SOCIAL CARE

<b>TO:</b>	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
<b>DATE:</b>	20 OCTOER 2021	<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	
<b>TITLE:</b>	PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE LEAVERS INTO EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (EET)		
<b>LEAD COUNCILLOR:</b>	COUNCILLOR PEARCE	<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	EDUCATION
<b>SERVICE:</b>	EDUCATION	<b>WARDS:</b>	BOROUGHWIDE
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	CLARE MARTIN, MAB AKTHER, KAYON MORRIS-JOHNSON	<b>TEL:</b>	
<b>JOB TITLE:</b>	TEAM MANAGER	<b>E-MAIL:</b>	<a href="mailto:clare.martin@brighterfuturesforchildren.org">clare.martin@brighterfuturesforchildren.org</a>

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 The report focuses on services being provided by Leaving Care, the Virtual School and the Elevate team within Brighter Futures for Children to children looked after (CLA) and care leavers (CL). The report provides an overview of the current picture of children looked after and care leavers aged 16-25 years, who have engaged in positive outcomes in education, employment and training.

1.2 There report evidences the work and developments that have achieved reductions in relation to the previously high numbers of vulnerable young people not participating education, employment and training (NEET).

1.3 The report explains how developing a high-quality support service that young people can readily access will further encourage and support positive participation into good quality education, employment and training outcomes which in turn will enable young people to live happier, healthier and more successful lives.

**2. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

2.1. That the contents of the report and what more the Council might do to provide opportunities for the young people of Reading in relation to training and work be considered.

### **3. POLICY CONTEXT**

- 3.1 Children and young people who are looked after generally do less well than their non looked after counterparts in relation to educational achievement, training opportunities and positive employment.
- 3.2 A large proportion of young people who are NEET have no formal qualifications or fewer than 5 GCSEs at grade 4 pass level. Care leavers do not always want to continue with education and are entering low level jobs that offer no training, are temporary and in the sectors that have been badly hit by the Covid-19 pandemic in hospitality and retail. A direct consequence of being in low paid work is job insecurity and when young people are in and out of jobs their chances of career progression is reduced.
- 3.3 As Corporate Parents it is incumbent on us to make sure we are having a consistent and impactful focus and support available to improve the life chances of our young people.

### **4. CURRENT POSITION**

- 4.1 There has been much focus on providing a more robust and targeted support to young people in our care to prevent them becoming NEET or to support them to stop being NEET. The aim is to offer a range of training opportunities that combine qualifications with work experience, for example a construction course delivered by the charity New Meaning (Tool Shed). We are expanding our communication and support so that young people know, about the options and choices outside the college or school environment to enable them to achieve qualifications and experiences.
- 4.2 As part of this offer, we are continuing to build and maintain regular communication and promoting local opportunities to encourage and enable social workers, leaving care advisers, placement providers and foster carers, support staff to actively promote local provision to young people. Learning and Training providers need to be accountable on ensuring that good quality provision is delivered to young people, ensuring that young people successfully achieve sustained positive outcomes.
- 4.3 We have a growing number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in Reading who need support with their career planning and further help to fast-track them onto ESOL programmes. We are working with further education providers and other employability programmes to encourage them to support these young people's future career aspirations and progression.
- 4.4 Young people sometimes move placements - so it is important that there is a more advanced Education, Employment and Training (EET) plan to support those young people moving placements and still needing transition support to their new EET placement thus ensuring greater coordination of placement planning in line with EET opportunities. This will allow for young people to successfully progress and sustain their education, employment and training opportunities.
- 4.5 There has been a very positive and continued take-up of care leavers going to study at University. The future focus is to both grow these numbers and support university retention. To help grow future demand, supporting programmes such as 'Study Higher', a partnership of higher education institutions (universities) and further education colleges will be offered alongside increasing university mentoring programmes such as Spring Forward and targeting secondary age students by raising awareness and actively promoting university open days and alternative viable Post 16 options.
- 4.6 Another key focus is identifying the reasons for the dropout rates from Further Education (FE). Many young people who are now NEET had been enrolled on a full time FE course

which they were not able to sustain for longer than 3 months. In order to support these young people, the Post 16 networking group is being re-started, bringing together a network of partners - training /learning providers, further education, support agencies/networks and employers, to work together to offer opportunities to young people in Reading. Each provider will bring something unique to the network, enabling us to build a strong offer of a range of opportunities and support for young people. The aim of the network is to have a pan-Reading approach to reduce our NEET numbers, prevent young people early on from falling into NEET and to promote alternative and vocational pathways to employment or training.

- 4.7 History of illness, ill mental health, complex SEND needs are sometimes evident in young people's inability to communicate and wish to avoid professionals. Substance misuse and unstable/ unsupportive living circumstances also play a role in young people's readiness to engage in EET activities. We promote re-engagement opportunities to young people that are not ready to access work or formal training. For example, we have commissioned LAS Mindset, a local company that offers mentoring and one-to-one personal training in the gym. Starting Point also matches mentors who focus on building young people's confidence, self-esteem, offering them social and skills building sessions. Social Workers can make referrals to the Virtual School Emotional Health and Wellbeing Triage Support Group.
- 4.8 Having a criminal record is a significant barrier and limits access to EET opportunities including access to FE and training providers due to risk of reoffending or legally young people are not permitted to work in certain geographical areas or industries. Elevate has a careers coach based at the Young Offending Service (YOS) which works with YOS officers to engage young people, including children looked after and care leavers into EET.
- 4.9 Pregnancy/ Parental responsibility for most young people means that they are not available for work by their own choice or their circumstances are not enabling them to be flexible when looking for work/training opportunities. Leaving care advisers refer young parents who are career planning or ready to work into the Elevate service for advice and support.
- 4.10 Children looked after and care leavers who are residents out of Reading do not have consistent careers support as many other local authorities have very limited NEET services which often excludes care leavers. Elevate researches the local provision for young people who need more "hands on support" e.g. filling in application forms, accompanying young people to visit employers and training providers. We aim to continue to offer a virtual information and guidance session to each young person and have started working with Resume Foundation, whose job coaches can virtually support young people into EET. This virtual career offer will help to support care leavers and children looked after, who are based outside of the Reading area, and enable them to take-up EET opportunities.

## **5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

- 5.1 The purpose of this section is to ensure that proposals contained in reports are in line with the overall direction of the Council by meeting at least one of the Corporate Plan priorities:
1. Securing the economic success of Reading and provision of job opportunities
  2. To protect and enhance the lives of vulnerable adults and children
  3. Ensuring that there are good education, leisure and cultural opportunities for people in Reading

- 5.2 *State here how the decision contributes to the Council's strategic aims. The strategic aims are:*
- *To reduce the NEET position in Reading/living out of Reading for CLA and Care Leavers*
  - *To support Reading in securing economic success by increasing EET opportunities for Young People*
  - *To protect and enhance the lives of vulnerable young people*

5.3 *Also state any contributions made to the following:*

## 6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 *Not applicable*

## 7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 *Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—*
- *eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;*
  - *advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;*
  - *foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.*

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**REPORT TEMPLATE**

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The financial implications arising from the proposals set out in this report are set out below:-

**1. Revenue Implications**

Use this Table in the report or as an Appendix to set out the revenue implications:

	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000	2020/21 £000
Employee costs (see note1)			
Other running costs			
Capital financings costs			
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Income from:			
Fees and charges (see note2)			
Grant funding (specify)			
Other income			
<b>Total Income</b>			
Net Cost(+)/saving (-)			

The net cost of the proposal can be funded from (specify service and approved cost centre budget).

**Note 1:** Specifying any one off early retirement and redundancy costs. With regard to early retirement costs set out capitalised pension cost and pay back period in a separate paragraph.

**Note 2:** In a separate table/appendix set out detailed fees and charges proposals and sensitivity analysis.

**2. Capital Implications**

Capital Programme reference from budget book: page line	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000	2020/21 £000
Proposed Capital Expenditure			
Funded by			
Grant (specify)			
Section 106 (specify)			
Other services			
Capital Receipts/Borrowing			
<b>Total Funding</b>			

**Note:** where more than one option /proposal is being made it may be easier to set out the above information in an Appendix.

**3. Value for Money (VFM)**

Given the continuing need to demonstrate VFM please include evidence that the proposal offers VFM (e.g benchmarking data)

**4. Risk Assessment.**

Include relevant comments around any key financial risks associated with the proposal(s)