

	Corporate Parenting Committee 5 th February 2020
	Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People
Findings of Ofsted Focused Visit to Review Arrangements for Care Leavers	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	Appendix 1: Ofsted Focused Visit Letter
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Onder Beter, Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency Nigel Chapman Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of findings of a recent Ofsted Focused Visit on care leavers, which took place on 13th and 14th November 2019. The report also draws attention to learning points and actions taken following the Focused Visit.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to review and comment on the findings of Ofsted's Focused Visit as well as the actions taken by the Looked After Children and Permanency Service following the Focused Visit.
- 2.2 The Committee is also requested to support the work senior leaders have been undertaking with partners to increase the number of care leavers in apprenticeships.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 Focused Visits are undertaken as a part of Ofsted's Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) Framework and, unlike full inspections, are not concluded with a graded judgement. Ofsted publishes a letter with findings after the visit and the findings are taken into account during the Local Authority's next ILACS inspection. Ofsted published a letter with the findings on 18th Dec 2019: <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80489>
- 3.2. Inspectors reviewed the quality of service provided to care leavers as well as leadership and management arrangements. Outcomes for care leavers were scrutinised around suitability of accommodation; education, employment and training; health including emotional and mental health; quality of overall practice incorporating quality assurance arrangements. The inspectors spoke to young people, PAs, the Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care; senior leaders within the Council including the Chief Executive and Strategic Director, Children and Young People as well as some partners. They reviewed a large number of documents evidencing work undertaken with care leavers including individual case files of young people during the two days they were on site.

4. Inspection Findings

- 4.1 Brent's role as a 'corporate parent' was praised by the Ofsted during the focused visit. The Inspectors highlighted the fact that *"care leavers continue to be a council-wide priority in Brent". Care leavers were reported to be supported by a 'comprehensive' local offer together with strong corporate and political support.*
- 4.2 The letter published by the Ofsted noted the council tax exemption for care leavers, whether they live in or out of Brent. This was highlighted as an initiative developed by collective corporate and political support. The report stated: *"Care leavers benefit from being exempt from paying council tax, whether they live in or out of the authority, an initiative that was developed with full council and political support as part of the comprehensive local offer."*
- 4.3 Additionally, the following strengths were identified:
- Robust partnership arrangements to support care leavers.
 - Recent Transitional Safeguarding Workshop was well attended by partners to further develop pathways for transition into adult services.
 - Senior managers know their services well and address areas of practice where improvement is required.
 - Work undertaken by senior managers to stabilise workforce was praised.
 - Staff are aspirational for care leavers.
 - 'Accredited life skills programme', 'group work' and 'Networks for Life' are ambitious programmes aimed at building resilience and equipping young people with skills they need in adulthood.

- Majority of care leavers are in suitable accommodation as a result of effective partnership working and commissioning arrangements. No tenancy breakdown for care leavers, open to the Service, in the last three years was noted.
- Strong focus ensuring that care leavers access education, employment and training. Most care leavers receive help in developing skills to promote their independence; 10 care leavers in apprenticeships and the Council working with partners to increase the number of care leavers in apprenticeships.
- Health assessments are conducted regularly and are of good quality. Mental health support to care leavers provided by Safe Base Brent was deemed to be a strength.
- Voice of young people is listened to via various mechanisms such as the Bright Spots Survey, Care in Action, Care Leavers Hub and other enrichment activities.
- UASC receive timely and sensitive support which is a strength. UASC in all cases seen by the inspectors were receiving appropriate support with focus being on their personal histories, emotional and mental health needs.

4.4 The following areas were noted for further improvement in relation to both strategic partnership and practice:

- The need to increase the number of care leavers in apprenticeships and EET opportunities.
- Care leavers not always receiving a copy of their health history as part of their last health assessments.
- Need for consistency in timeliness and quality of pathway plans.
- Case recording including records of visits to care leavers, supervision records and management oversight and the management rationale for case closure.
- Audit arrangements to consider the quality of work with care leavers
- Risk assessments to articulate measures to address and minimise risk.

4.5. The first two points, which are partnership related issues, are being addressed within the regular partnership forum for looked after children and care leavers, chaired by the Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency.

4.6 The Focused Visit acknowledged the on-going work senior leaders have been undertaking to increase the number of care leavers in apprenticeships. This includes the right level of support young people need before, during and after taking apprenticeships. The work needs to expand by encouraging businesses and Council's external partners to offer apprenticeships for care leavers via using the apprenticeship levy and contractual arrangements with support from all Council departments and Members as corporate parents. Through enhancing existing partnerships and creating new opportunities care leavers will benefit from better education and employment prospects.

- 4.7 The specific four service improvement points detailed within the Ofsted Focused Visit outcome letter are tracked by an action plan. As per the plan, several workshops on the quality of recording, supervision and management oversight and pathway plans have been rolled out for staff. Some changes have been made to our Quality Assurance Programme to have a greater focus on care leavers. Overall, targets set to be achieved by June 2020 are all on track.
- 4.8 The action plan is scrutinised on a monthly basis by the CYP Strategic Director and will have been completed by June 2020 when a completion report will be brought to the Corporate Parenting Committee.

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Appendix:

1. Ofsted Focused Visit Letter