

Children in Care/ Care Leavers Education, Employment and Training Promotion Action Plan Update

To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: 15th November 2023

From: Service Director, Corporate Parenting

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Outcome: To provide the Sub-Committee with an update on progress toward increasing the number of young people in education, employment and training (EET)

Recommendation: The Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee is recommended to:

- a) Note and comment on the report.

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1. Background

- 1.1 The numbers of young people in education, employment and training (EET) is a key positive outcome measure for children in care and care leavers so measurement of those in EET and those not in education, employment and training (NEET) is carefully monitored.
- 1.2 In 2020, it was decided that Matt Oliver would be given the task of pulling together a NEET strategy across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and ensure that all the different services supporting this work are working together to help improve performance across our vulnerable group. We completed a report in November 2022 regarding this strategy and action plan.
- 1.3 This report is to provide an update since that time.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 The current DfE (Department for Education) EET figure for care leavers aged 19 to 21 for Cambridgeshire is 54.1%. This was for 2022 and unfortunately the 2023 figure has not been published yet. This is in comparison to an EET figure 56.7% for East of England Average and an EET figure of 55.6% for Cambridgeshire Statistical neighbours.

Care Leavers	% in EET (DfE Annual Published Data)				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
East of England	51.00%	52.00%	53.00%	52.00%	56.70%
Cambridgeshire	47.00%	47.00%	44.00%	49.00%	54.10%
Cambridgeshire SN	51.80%	53.90%	54.10%	54.30%	55.60%

- 2.2 The above table shows that although Cambridgeshire is still behind our local and statistical neighbours, the gap between Cambridgeshire and these neighbours has been narrowed considerably and an excellent improvement of 10.1% from 2020 to 2022. This is reflective of the work that is being done to highlight the importance of increasing our vulnerable young people into education, employment or training.
- 2.4 As a wider NEET picture for Cambridgeshire, Cambridgeshire consistently achieves an average result of 3.0% for NEET and Not knowns for 16 to 18-year-olds. This result means we are within the first Quintile and score well in comparison to local and statistical neighbours.
- 2.5 By developing a quarterly reporting document called “NEET on a page”, this has helped us to highlight the results for Cambridgeshire including splitting down the vulnerable groups such as Care leavers, young people known to Youth Offending Service, young people who have an EHCP (Education Health and Care Plans) for SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) needs and teenage mothers. By raising the awareness of reporting, which shows we are performing well but also shows the areas we can further improve, and we are able to then focus resources to help to improve that performance.
- 2.6 Following the uncoupling from Peterborough City Council this summer, we are now developing a new Cambridgeshire Raising Participation Age Strategy and a new strategy group has been formed which is led and chaired by Tom Molloy, Head of Service for Cambridgeshire Skills. This strategy group had its first meeting in September 2023 and will

be looking at the issues that are being faced across the county with regards to our vulnerable groups.

Children in Care/Virtual School activities to promote Education, employment and training (EET)

- 2.7 The cohort of NEET young people fluctuates across the academic year. Specific trigger points include the end of October which is the point at which colleges review engagement and officially enrolls the young person, and a second trigger point is Christmas.
- 2.8 Risk of NEET is magnified due to a variety of factors including being a separated migrant young person. Strategic work to increase 'roll on/roll off' ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) provision was undertaken in the Spring term. A 10-week study programme, led by West Suffolk College, for 3 days started after the Easter holidays; the programme included ESOL, digital skills, maths and engineering tasters (e.g., welding). 18 post-16 separated migrant children in care attended this provision in the summer term alongside a small number of care-leavers. A bid for funding has also been submitted to the ESFA by the Prince's Trust to be able to run other courses of this nature.
- 2.9 To support Education, Employment and Training (EET) the Virtual School has employed Welfare Call to collect weekly attendance data for the post 16 cohort. This has enabled a timely Virtual School response to attendance concerns.
- 2.10 In response to the proposal in Stable Homes, that Virtual Schools will support young people in education through to age 25, the role of 'Inspiring Futures Lead' is being proposed; this will include developing a meaningful careers pathway from primary school onwards. It will also include a proposal to create meaningful work experience and employment opportunities within our local authority further evolving the role of the corporate parent and building on Cambridgeshire's choice to adopt care-experience as a protected characteristic.

Activity to support Care Leavers

- 2.11 We have a joint protocol with the DWP (Department of Work and Pensions). We continue to strengthen our partnership more recently engaging the DWP in the EET empowerment forum with a focus on promoting higher aspirations for our young people. Universal credit training is being embedded into the annual training schedule for leaving care (the most recent training occurring in September 2023) ensuring baseline knowledge and understanding for services advising young people. We are focusing on advertising and encouraging the DWP SWAP's (Sector-based Work Academy Programmes).
- 2.12 We are part of the Eastern Region NNECL group (National Network for the Education of Care Leavers), a network of higher education institutions which supports us and young people with access to up-to-date information and materials. We have collaborated with Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach (NEACO), which delivers targeted and regional outreach activities across East Anglia as part of the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP). NEACO aims to support the most disadvantaged young people in England to progress into higher education and we have jointly produced booklets with them. We are actively promoting and encouraging our young people to access the ARU "Find out about HE" annual event in October specifically for care leavers and children in care interested in higher education. In preparing care leavers for Higher Education, Cambridge University held a skills day over the summer holidays and have recently

launched a first star academy in conjunction with Emmanuel college. This will work with a group of year 9 students from summer 2023 onwards for the next four years, raising aspiration and give clear pathways into higher education for children who are in our care. We are starting to see some impact from this work as our overall numbers in higher education continue to increase. 70% of our 18-year-old Level 3 learners have progressed onto university this autumn.

- 2.13 We have a Job-Hunting Pack (with a version for our unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people). This pack accompanies the “Stepping Out” preparation for adulthood work which staff and carers use as a tool to support our work with rising 18-year-olds. We are currently working with Form the Future on updating the job-hunting packs and having them professionally produced.
- 2.14 We have worked with colleagues in the Combined Authority to develop a 19 plus learning offer that includes no course fees for most courses, full-time post-19 ESOL provision and an enhanced vulnerable bursary for 19 to 22-year-old learners. This has been recognised at national benchmarking forum events. We are developing a local baseline offer for all Cambridgeshire and Peterborough care leavers. We have worked with Cambridgeshire skills to develop marketing materials designed to appeal to care leavers
- 2.15 A nine-month project was completed this year in partnership with the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum and the Care leavers Covenant which focused on establishing long term relationships with the construction industry, supported by the Esme Fairburn Foundation. This work has led to a workshop attended locally by Keir and Persimmon Homes to raise the profile of our young people to establish the connections to provide opportunities. Using this model, we had replicated this approach targeting the automotive industry for 2024. This has involved joint work with the care leavers covenant and our aim is to hold an employer session in conjunction with the covenant to improve industry awareness of care leavers.
- 2.16 Funding for 18-25 Mentoring scheme was awarded to organisation ‘Goal 17’, tasked with administering 40 mentoring relationships for care experienced young people over 2 years. The first cohort of 16 mentoring relationships launched in July 2023 and the second cohort is now being recruited. A steering group has been set up to get quarterly updates, and review progress of scheme. Funding for the next programme, with potential expansion to include CiC pre-18, needs to be discussed in January 2024 to allow continuity.

3. Alignment with the Council’s ambitions

- 3.1 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2045, and our communities and natural environment are supported to adapt and thrive as the climate changes

There are no significant implications for this priority.

- 3.2 Travel across the county is safer and more environmentally sustainable

There are no significant implications for this priority.

- 3.3 Health inequalities are reduced

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.4 People enjoy healthy, safe, and independent lives through timely support that is most suited to their needs

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.5 Helping people out of poverty and income inequality

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- This report includes information to support the deliverable of “ensuring people can access support to develop their skills as a route to financial security”.

3.6 Places and communities prosper because they have a resilient and inclusive economy, access to good quality public services and social justice is prioritised

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- This report includes information to support the deliverable of “working alongside the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to ensure the support for skills development is accessible, targeted and relevant”.

3.7 Children and young people have opportunities to thrive

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- This report includes information to support the deliverable of “ensuring all children have access to education from early years to post 16 provision”.
- This report includes information to support the deliverable of “ensuring that young people who experience care can access the support they need to move into adult life”.
- This report includes information to support the deliverable of “improving outcomes for children and young people with complex needs, including mental health needs”.

4. Significant Implications

Not applicable

5. Source documents

5.1 None