

Children and Young People Select Committee

Scrutiny Review of Care Leavers EET

Executive Summary

Although outcomes for young people in Stockton were in line with national averages, the review examined whether the Council was doing enough and what more needed to be done to further improve performance and outcomes for young people.

The Select Committee's key findings were as follows:

- The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 places a duty of Local Authorities to assess and meet the care and support needs of children moving from care into living independently
- At the time of the review, there were 242 care leavers and of these young people, 66% were EET and 34% were NEET.
- For those over 18, the NEET numbers increased with 92 EET (57%) and 69 NEET (43%)
- Out of the full NEET cohort, a much smaller number of young people are work ready. Other factors such as mental or physical health, homelessness, pregnancy etc. make it harder for them to enter employment or training. At the time of the review only 10 of the 69 NEET cohort were work ready
- In Stockton for March 2021 there were 6947 young people aged 16 – 19 and up to age of 25 with an active care plan. 5634 were in EET and 497 were NEET
- Outcomes for young people in Stockton are roughly in line with national averages
- Comparative data for March 2020 and March 2021 for the Year 12 and Year 13 cohort shows a small increase in NEET and Not Known compared to National and Regional data. In learning data for Stockton shows a slight increase but still slightly less than the Regional and National data
- The aim of the Leaving Care Service is to improve outcomes for young people as they leave care and make their transition into adulthood. Personal Advisors work across all domains of a young person's life (not just in relation to EET) helping with accommodation, finance, health issues, family contact, social/economic needs and with the development of independent living skills
- The Virtual School works with other services to support care leavers through ongoing challenge and support to all educational settings. The Virtual School funds two Senior Participation Advisors based within Youth Direction to work with Children and Young People in our Care (CYPIOC)
- The NEET and Progression Team in Youth Direction work to reduce the numbers of young people in NEET through impartial information, advice and guidance. The cohort of young people is tracked and monitored to ensure they are known to the service and offered appropriate support. Senior Participation Advisors work with over 100 young people made up from CYPIOC from Stockton Schools and Colleges and those in NEET
- Children's Service and HR work together to explore and promote opportunities for Children in Our Care (CIOC). All Council jobs are promoted to CIOC but specifically apprenticeship opportunities and they are guaranteed an interview if they meet the minimum essential criteria. Despite, this the Council have not received many applications from CIOC. Since 2017, the Council have recruited to 90 apprenticeship opportunities. Of the 90, four were from CIOC. Requests for work experience are considered on an ad hoc basis
- National and Regional funding provides some support to employers towards apprentice schemes. The Middlesbrough and Teesside Philanthropic Foundation have £85,864 to support of minimum of 16 CIOC secure an apprenticeship
- Support for employers is essential when opportunities are offered to care leavers
- More work experience would be useful to introduce care leavers to the working environment
- Partnership working can increase the number of opportunities available for care leavers

- It was important that staff resource was made available to identify opportunities for care leavers and develop links with agencies, colleges and employers and provide support to both the young person and employer
- Therapeutic approaches can help a young person become work ready, equipping them with the skills to cope with challenges and setbacks
- A survey of young people in Care and Care Leavers who were NEETS received positive feedback about the support they were receiving but reinforced the need for contact tailored to their individual needs

Conclusion

Although outcomes for young people in Stockton were roughly in line with national averages, the Select Committee concluded that more needed to be done for Children in Our Care as they make the difficult transition into independent living. The Select Committee recognised that Children in Our Care do not enjoy the inherited opportunities and access to family help and support. Often struggling to overcome issues with mental and emotional health and low aspirations, these children can feel locked out from achieving success.

The Select Committee's recommendations seek to do more to help Children in Our Care become work ready and maximise their opportunities through strengthened partnership working and a sustainable model to increase access to work experience and job opportunities with local employers and partner agencies.

Recommendations

That the Council:

Enabling Young People to be work ready

1. Improves transitions from pre to post 18 services and explore distinct approaches to provide coping mechanisms for our young people who are care leavers moving from education to employment or further training.
2. Redefines its approach and commitment to getting a young person in care or leaving care into education, employment or training by retraining and refocusing the workforce.

Creating Opportunities

3. Explores appropriate local and national incentives available for employee and employer when employment is gained.
4. Strengthens its commitment to seeking out and increasing access to interview opportunities to young people who are care leavers.
5. Ensures education, employment or training is at the forefront of Children's Services and partners' work with all children and young people, and in particular a strong focus on young people leaving care.
6. Has a corporate commitment to creating a sustainable model to increase access to work experience and apprenticeship opportunities within SBC for young people leaving care.

Brokerage Opportunities

7. Has a Borough-Wide commitment to creating a sustainable model to increase access to work experience and job opportunities with local employers and partner agencies for young people leaving care through the creation of a dedicated brokerage resource which will focus on pro-actively finding, placing and maintaining young people in education, employment and training.