

## **Scrutiny Meeting with the Young People at Highfield House on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2012**

**Present:** Councillors G. Green (Chairman), J. Greenaway, Co-optees Dr A. Shaukat, M. Ward.

**In Attendance:** Karen Perry, Interim Assistant Director of Children's Safeguarding; Karen Kalinowski, Assistant Director of Care & Support; Chloe De Poix, Participation Worker for Children in Care, Mike Bould Rights & Representation Officer; Andrew Doggett, Team Manager for Safeguarding & Looked After Children; Paul Grainger, Team Manager for Transition & Leaving Care Team; Josephine Phillips, Youth Offer Developments.

### **Context**

Members had previously received a presentation on the Corporate Parenting Strategy which had identified the Pledges made to the Young People in Care. Members chose to consider the pledges relating to becoming independent.

### **Becoming Independent Pledges**

- Help you to gain the skills and have the confidence to look after yourself and support you with independence when the time is right for you.
- Talk to you before your 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, about your options. We will support you to leave care at your pace before your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, with a support package that meets your individual needs.
- Support you to make informal choices about your education, particularly with your options for GCSEs and your future career path.
- Make sure that you have the personal documents such as birth certificates and passports before you are 16.

### **Preparation for the meeting**

Members received a briefing and opportunity to ask questions about services provided before the young people arrived. Following an introduction of Members to young people and young people to Members expectations for the meeting were agreed followed by a short "ice-breaker" which involved a light hearted quiz for young people with a serious message about assessing readiness for independence

The group split into groups of adults and young people and each group looked at key questions:

### **What living skills do you think you will need to be independent?**

Comments from the young people included the practical skills needed; for example buy food and cook, clean flat, wash clothes and bedding, manage money, know how to register at the Doctors and Dentist. They also included insights into the emotional

support necessary and not always readily available to deal with loneliness especially in the evenings and weekends, and the value of hearing from older care leavers who had already moved into independence to “tell me how it was going to be” and tips on how to cope

### **What do you need to help you move on?**

Comments from the young people mentioned people (eg foster carer, support worker, and practical things like somewhere to live, money to cover the cost of bills, food, and clothes, and a Leaving Care Grant for furniture etc

### **Where are you planning to move to?**

Comments from young people ranged from staying with their foster carer until they finish school/college and going into supported living

### **What support do you need to complete your education?**

Comments from young people included

- views about how school staff behave toward them treat you like your different ‘special’ and always check if your ok. Its good to know that someone is there if you need them, but they shouldn’t treat you any differently to other children. Teachers sometimes try to get too involved.
- Views about the difficulties accessing school trips that some young people in care may miss out, on trips, and its embarrassing to have your social worker sign, your carer should be able to sign your consent forms
- Additional support with particular subjects eg young person currently getting extra support with extra Maths and English
- Young people described varying levels of support to plan for their futures being given eg visits to Colleges and Universities, help in getting an apprenticeship, one young persons carer’s took her to look round a university this was really appreciated. It was thought good to have plan and know where you want to aim for, and for adults around you to have good expectations, however support appeared patchy and career and option support advice of the type to read a book was felt to be no help. Carers also varied in their ability to help young people think about and plan for the future
- One young person knew exactly what she wanted to do, and didn’t need any help however others felt it was hard to know what you want to do, when you have no experience of the work place. Suggestions to address this included more access to the “positive pathways” (college programme) so that we know how to write a CV and how to act in the work place and a recognition that things like National Takeover Day help.

### **What would you like to do in the future?**

Comments from the young people included childcare, go into the RAF, unsure but recently did work experience in IT and enjoyed it.

### **Have you got the correct documents that you will need to become independent?**

Comments from young people: not all of them had birth certificates and passports.

### **Other issues raised**

#### **Why have I still got the same Social Worker from the Mount rather than one from Highfield House?**

Young people used to change social worker when they became 16 years now you keep the same Social Worker until you leave care, The Mount SW will work closely with the 16+/transition team to make sure you have the right support to help you move towards independence

#### **Why do some young people get more money than others?**

Young people will only get more money if they are receiving a grant to help with their study at college.

The Young People were thanked for coming to meet the Members and share their experiences.