

## **EDUCATION, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL**

Minutes of the meeting of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 9 November 2023 at 4.30 pm at the Council Chamber, Portsmouth Guildhall

### **Present**

Councillor Brian Madgwick (in the Chair)

Councillors Mary Vallely  
Hannah Brent  
Stuart Brown  
Sanders (Anglican Diocese)

### **36. Apologies for absence (AI 1)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Oliver and Councillor Candlish. Mike Stoneman and Councillor Suzy Horton also sent their apologies.

### **37. Declarations of members' interests (AI 2)**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **38. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 October 2023 (AI 3)**

Rob Sanders advised that he had been missed off the attendance list of the meetings on 20 September and 18 October so the attendance list would be updated.

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2023 be agreed as a correct record subject to the above amendment.**

In response to some questions on the minutes from the Chair, officers advised the following:

- With regard to improving communication between the Council and the colleges, Amanda Percy said that she had spoken to HTP who raised this and has arranged to meet them to look at how to improve this and develop a service level agreement.
- With regard to teachers needing more training on trauma, Amanda said this was ongoing. The colleges were invited to attend a transition conference and she was looking at other options to deliver more training and 1-1 support.
- There are several children in the Council's care who do have disabilities. If a child has very significant needs and has care as a result, if you they cared for after a certain period, they become Looked After automatically by the virtue of their need. The legislation around LPS was delayed but they have looked at who it may apply to and

there are some children where they use the current legislation which is deprivation on liberty.

**39. Review into education, employment and training opportunities for our care experienced young people aged 18-25 (AI 4)**

Adam Murphy, Participation Officer and Georgia Sperring, Apprentice Participation worker gave feedback from the participation team survey that took place in February.

Adam said that his team gather the feedback from young people that access the service to ensure that operational and strategic decisions are as informed as possible about the lived experiences. There are a number of ways this is done; one is the annual survey that goes out to all children, young people, parents, carers and care experienced people that access support from children and families services. This is a key way to track and monitor the important areas of support being provided and the quality and consistency of the offer. During February 2023 they surveyed 338 care experienced adults and of that 226 (67%) took part in the survey. This is the highest rate it has been and the satisfaction rate has increased which is really positive news.

**Quantitative Feedback from survey of care experienced people 2023**

Do you think your personal advisor supports you well?

97% Yes                      2% Sometimes                      1% No

Do you feel supported in your employment, education or training?

86% Yes                      8% Sometimes                      7% No

**Questions from Scrutiny panel**

**1. What are the best things about having a PA?**

" The support we get. Even though we are adults it's nice to know we have the support to move forward with our lives and the support on coming out of care and how the world will be a bigger place"

"The PA I have now, Emma is genuinely the best person I've seen and spoken to. She just sits and listens, she helps me where she can to the extent she can. She's thoughtful and remembers my bother and sister. Helps with letterbox contact. I really enjoy seeing her"

"She always sticks to her word and keeps me in the loop, I have only had her as my PA for a short while and I cannot fault her! I was very nervous when I learned that my old PA was retiring because she was so good! But Kirtsen is like a younger Lynn and she supports me really well, I had some things happen over the weekend and Kirtsen was on the phone to me first thing Monday morning!"

"Whenever I need her, she's available. Always listens to me and is a great support"

"She's very involved, which at this age is important because you feel supported and less alone when going into the big world. Additionally, she respects that you are an adult and let's you be to your own devices, BUT you know she's there if you need her"

"Support me no matter how many tantrums I have and no matter what I am facing through my hardship times I have said many times I wanted to change my PA when I'm in tantrum but really I don't I couldn't have a better PA"

"Whenever I need her she is always there for me, she try's to help me in every way she can. She always responds to my messages quite quickly to"

"He doesn't treat me like his 'in charge' of me, let's me take control of the relationship. if i need something he is there to support and is amazing at it. doesn't pester me to do stuff and allows me to go at my own pace"

"Takes my interests into account and works with me to achieve my goals"

"She works very hard to make sure that I am happy and safe"

"She is amazing at supporting me and making sure i recieve whatever helps me move forward with my life"

"Helps me with everything I need help with, I don't need to ask her twice about the same thing. She will just get the job done"

"She always listens to what I have to say and any issues I have and then she supports me to the best of her ability. She always there when I need her" Ellie  
"The support she gives is the best. the way she approaches things with me is easy to understand"

"Yes first of all I would like to say thanks for her. she is really good person which she gave me the provides complete support"

"She is really approachable and easy to talk to. She is honest and respectful and actually listens to you"

"Helps me through life and offers me support with anything that I need - guides me in the right direction"

"He is there when I need him for example when I need help with my mental health"

"I can call her and know I will get a reply, she is reliable and has my best interest, she will help me with any issues I have and I feel relaxed and can talk openly without feeling awkward"

## **2. What would you really like to be in the future?**

"I've always wanted to help young people like myself to understand what support they can get as many care leavers"

" I am interested in becoming a social worker as I have been through the care system and i would like to give back"

" Just the best version of myself that I lost along the journey of being a child in care"

OFTSED Inspection of Portsmouth City Council local authority children's services 2023:

" Leaders have plans to develop an employment academy and create more employment and apprenticeship opportunities, but these are not yet in place. Care-experienced young people told inspectors that they want more opportunities. For example, there is currently only one apprenticeship available for care-experienced young people within the council. Many care-experienced young people applied for this role, showing the level of interest in such opportunities"

## **3. What do you think might stop you from achieving this?**

"Cost of bus ticket for travel"

"My mental health and biological family"

"helping with housing situations"

"Support us to get part time jobs"

Adam then showed the panel three videos of care experienced young people which were made for Care Leavers Week. The videos can be viewed on the links below and a summary of each is included below:

Elyas

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWOIKdo0aUo>

20 years old who came to the UK with no English and did not know about the culture or lifestyle. He went into care and experienced many placements. He gained his A levels then went to college after which he moved to London to study podiatry at university. He experienced complications with being able to work as he was not a UK citizen, problems with accommodation and he was also diagnosed as having a learning disability. He had to work 10 times harder than others but proved to himself he can do it.

Michael

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WAcCRSzWC7A>

Went into care at 10 years old and he had a good foster family. It was a shock as new surroundings and moving to the countryside. He went to College and felt it was an achievement to be able to live independently despite having medical problems and learning disability but had the support that he needed. He now works for South Western railway and has ambitions to progress in his role. He was helped from the Princes Trust to get into this role.

Emily

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMyADIQkQ24>

Went into care with her Sister's Mother-in-Law. She had trauma due to past experiences prior to entering care. She was moved to a foster carer and started a new school, all was going well but she was suddenly pulled out of school by her outreach worker and moved to another foster carer without being told in advance and this led her to have trust issues with her new foster family. She later moved to a hostel and made some bad life choices but decided to she wanted to get a job and moved into a temporary flat share. She met her partner and they got their own flat but she was then treated badly by him but felt like she couldn't speak up about it. She then has met another partner and is being treated well and is enjoying working.

In response to questions, officers clarified the following:

- There are a high proportion of unaccompanied minors who are seeking safety or are unable to work as they are waiting for their leave to remain and this is frustrating for them.
- Every care experienced young adult has a PA who will have a pathway plan and within this will be tailor made support. PAs do a huge amount of work with their young people but the Council want to do a lot more work with businesses.
- There is a specialist carers guidance worker who works with the care experienced young people. She works directly in the hub and PAs can refer their young people to her; young people can also self-refer to her. This has been in place for almost two years and is having a positive impact. Prior to this there was the Youth Hub which was funded by the DWP but the DWP stopped funding the project. The Council have kept this running without the funding as the young people valued this. This is on the ground floor of the Civic Offices and is where the new care leaver employability academy work will be based. The Council are

trying to get the DWP to come back and see the young people in the hub as the DWP have not always understood the challenges the young people face when trying to find work.

- The academy has already started and will formally launch in January. Shaping Portsmouth are sitting on the academy as a member. NHS recruiting, the Co-op, the DWP and colleges have also joined.
- The hub offers drop ins at the youth centre at Paulsgrove and would like do more. Careers advisors will also travel to the north of the city to meet individuals. CIL funding was raised as a possible source of funding to enable more outreach work.
- Care experienced young adults have access to a PA until the age of 25, unless at 21 they choose not to have one anymore and the Council agrees to this. This is a statutory duty.

The Panel then received a presentation from Hannah Woods, and Sarah Read. They asked the young people that they support about their experience of being care experienced and how this has impacted their ability to gain employment and remain in education.

### **Q1 What would have helped you at school?**

L: Having a better balance between schooling/social life.

D: More revision sources to help with each subject

K: I wish I had more hands-on learning experiences and practical applications of what I was studying!

A: More support with English and Math's as English isn't my first language which made it more difficult.

M: Respectful classroom towards the teacher , banter is ok but people in my class telling a joke the fourth time stopped everyone else being able to learn.

J: My school was good ,it was at the end it went wrong, I technically finished , I was sent on study leave at the end this felt like they wanted to get rid of me .

P: More help when I was at school would have shown that I was struggling , I kept being told I was lazy . A teaching assistant or one to one tutoring would have helped with my maths and English. I want to be tested for ADHD , this is how I think my brain works. Smaller classes would have been better for me , I am so easily distracted.

Members learned that young people seeking asylum cannot go onto practical courses at college until they have their English and Maths GCSEs. Usually they can speak English very well and they are ready to progress to learn a skill and they get bored. It was suggested that if they could study Maths and English alongside their practical course, this would help keep them motivated. Councillor Brent who works at the City of Portsmouth College said

she would try to find out the reason for this.

### **Q2 Have you tried an apprenticeship? If so how was this?**

L: I haven't tried an apprenticeship, although have considered it.

D: No, I haven't tried an apprenticeship, but I have always considered doing one

K: I haven't tried an apprenticeship, but I've heard it's a great way to gain valuable skills and on-the-job training.

A: no and never thought about it.

M: My apprenticeship in Northcote Road Southsea was good , really enjoyed the time there ,distance was an issue as lived in Crookhorn ,the foster carers were always nagging me to be on time , and have to drive me , all of the nagging made me stop. Finding places closer to where people live would have been helpful.

J: I have applied for an apprenticeship in Art 3 years, I am not sure what the end result would have been

P: No, I haven't.

### **Q3 If you have not tried an apprenticeship, what has put you off?**

L: Although apprenticeships are more beneficial in the long run, the pay in some apprenticeships fields is a slight put off.

D: Nothing has put me off just when I have looked around at apprenticeships, I haven't found one that has interested me.

K: I haven't tried an apprenticeship because I wanted to explore other career paths first

A: Never had the chance.

M: Distance ,having my own bike and transport ,flexible times to start later in the morning , getting up in the morning is hard.

J: I did not complete the apprenticeship after being advised that I needed to work to earn some money.

P: Nothing there are no apprenticeships for youth work that I know of , voluntary work and or work , I am completing voluntary work to become a youth worker , I am also volunteering to become a basketball coach.

Sarah Read explained that young people living in their own accommodation have to pay a service charge on their rent and if they are earning this can affect how much housing benefit they receive and this means the pay might not be sufficient enough for them to live on.

She added that young people seeking asylum are not able to do an apprenticeship whilst they wait for their leave to remain.

#### **Q4 What do you think the barriers are to getting employment?**

L: Experience, flexibility in meeting the job requirements

D: I'm not to sure I just think it's really hard to get into employment

K: Some barriers to getting employment can be lack of experience, limited job opportunities, or a competitive job market.

A: no English no experience

M: My education GCSE results , if people know me they would give me a job because they know I would put 100% into what I do. Places like Tesco and big stores will take the A and B results , "man like me does not stand a chance".

J: It is difficult to motivate myself to find work , Transport is a big problem ,I see jobs that are out of the area ,this would be too expensive for me to travel and earn money. Haircuts ,Clothes , shoes and food are all expensive when you earn a low wage. I have qualified as a security job but have no experience , people do not want some one with no experience.

P: Experience and qualifications, I am completing these now.

#### **Q5 What could the Council do to help young people get and keep jobs?**

L: Continue as they have doing, but perhaps more programs that help young people acquire skills and experience for the working world.

D: That's a good one but I'm not to sure what could be set up like maybe an event or days where they hold interviews.

K: The council could provide more resources like job training programs, mentorship opportunities, and support for small businesses.

A: Give people their flat.

M: Help in the first month with transport or paying for travel until I get paid in the first month . Making sure I have enough money to buy decent food for lunch . All food is bear expensive. Helping me to get clothes /kit ,tools ,working with the employer before I start. They need to have an understanding of who I am and where I come from. I need to understand



them , who they are and where they come from, how I learn best. Clear conversations about the rules are important to me. I want to feel like it is a partnership at work. I need to be active and learning new stuff at my pace.

J: I have help with Anne-Marie O'Brien and Avril Rogers my HUB work coach , my PA also helps me. Money for haircuts , shoes and work clothes would help me, after tax and insurance on a low wage there is not much money left.

P: Helping me in the first month , the first week being dropped off in the morning and having help to be woken up. Help with clothes for work , money for food and drinks would be helpful. For employers to be honest with me , one job told me they did not need me and I did not understand why. I need people to be clear ,I am not good at seeing if there is a problem.

### **Quotes from young people**

'I just want a job, but no one will give me a chance!'

'If my English was better, I would have more chances'

'I think no one has time to train people in businesses, I'm a fast learner and can pick up skill really quick so I feel like I can go anywhere and learn a job but they always look for people with experience which is understandable.'

'I think if I hadn't been in care, I would be able to get a job but because I went into care no one wants me'

Hannah and Sarah added that a lot of care experienced young adults have anxiety and low self esteem so entering the workplace is very difficult for them. They have not had a steady upbringing that a family can provide; they are not lazy they just do not know to act in these situations. Sarah felt that mentorship opportunities would be a great way to help. The Council have many departments where young people could spend a week alongside somebody. The Council have recently taken part in a national programme where they linked with John Lewis. Five young people went to Waitrose in Southsea to have a look around at the different areas of work and two people were selected to do a five-day taster there. There is now an interview process and it was hoped that they will get offered a job. Links with businesses were improving slowly.

In response to questions officers clarified the following:

- There are a number of young people who have signed up to The Hive for volunteering opportunities and others who work in charity shops to gain employment experience.
- Anne-Marie O'Brien is the careers advisor who works with the young people and PAs refer young people to her. The Princes Trust is one example of an excellent scheme. Sarah said she would like to open up opportunities in the Council and to link the young people to areas that they are interested in.

- Sam Bushby said that there are opportunities in the children's services directorate and also Housing, HR and the Port, but the Council does also contract. She said that when a contract is awarded it might be possible to ringfence a certain number of jobs for care experienced young adults. Amanda Percy added that the Council's Housing department have agreed to become a corporate sponsor and offer work experience placements and mentoring and sit on the academy steering group. It was the intention to go to all the remaining directorates to get them on board.
- With regard to the aspiration levels being lower in the city than other parts of the UK, it was felt paramount to make young people aware of the opportunities that are available.
- Employers are willing to have training on trauma and Amanda is working with them on this currently alongside Shaping Portsmouth. One discussion that the academy steering group is having is looking to have a kite mark for employers to indicate when they are ready to take on a young person.
- Southern Universities Network a few years ago, got the voices of young people to look at the barriers to young people gaining access to university. They found that between the ages of 14-17 their lives are very unstable for reasons out of their control, so they do not get the required GCSEs. Southern Universities network said to the universities in their network that a system needed to be implemented where young people can say that they are capable and competent although they do not have the qualifications. As a result there are now foundation degrees that care experienced young people can apply to without the relevant qualifications.
- It was noted that the application process for jobs can be a barrier.

The Chair thanked the all the care experienced young adults who shared their views with the panel today.

It was agreed that the Panel would meeting in mid January informally to review the evidence already received and to see if any more formal evidence gathering meetings are needed.

The meeting concluded at 6.00 pm.

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Councillor Brian Madgwick  
Chair

## Information received post meeting on the Employability Academy

We are developing an employability academy that brings together opportunities, support, resources and expertise to help our young people to overcome barriers, raise aspirations and make a successful progression to employment and training.

What will this include:

- Careers advice and guidance
- The iCan development programme
- Aspirational Visits
- Work experience
- Employability workshops
- Apprenticeships
- Mentoring
- Education and training
- The Careers and Employability Hub
- Aspirational visits

Partners will include:

- Young People
- Portsmouth City Council
- Shaping Portsmouth
- Solent Careers Hub
- The DWP
- NHS Employment
- Key employers
- The voluntary sector

The offer will be based in the Careers and Employability Hub and build on current work being carried out to support care experienced young people.

In partnership with Shaping Portsmouth, we are developing training for employers to become care experienced ready. The aim is to ensure employers can recruit, support and retain our young people. We will support employers by:

- To ring fence roles for Care leavers
- Ensure simplified application processes
- Clear job descriptions
- Safeguarding & trauma informed line managers
- Learning & development opportunities
- Care leaver covenant- inclusive employment toolkit
- Aspirational visits
- Work experience
- Onboarding support and employment support

There is a steering group in place, work is underway and there will be a formal launch in January.

Delivery is already in place and current successes include:

### **Work Experience- john Lewis Partnership**

- 5 young people identified and invited for taster day- 2 attended
- 2 of those young people successfully completed Work experience at Waitrose Southsea

- Both young people should move into employment once the roles become live.
- Continued communications with John Lewis to ensure successful transition to employment.

#### **Education Opportunities**

- Supported one young person to gain work experience through Basketball4 Buckland initiative
- Application completed for funded level 2 Principles of Youth Work with National Youth Agency -successful
- Supported for further volunteering opportunity with PCC Youth Workers
- Currently completing qualification with support.

#### **Continued support:**

- Further young person supported to return to college to complete Maths Functional skills in preparation of applying to university.
- One young person completing Rail Futures programme in partnership with DWP
- One young person supported to complete Security Licence qualification in partnership with Princes Trust
- One young person supported to enrol and attend college
- One young person supported to apply for an apprenticeship with Civil Service