

EDUCATION, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 13 July 2023 at 11.00 am at the Executive Meeting Room, Guildhall

Present

Councillor Brian Madgwick (in the Chair)
Councillors Stuart Brown
Peter Candlish

24. Apologies for absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brent, Oliver and Valley. Apologies were also received from Rob Sanders and Helen Reeder.

25. Declarations of interest (AI 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

26. Minutes of previous meeting - 22 March 2023 (AI 3)

The Panel noted the minutes of the previous meeting from 22 March 2023.

27. Review into education, employment and training opportunities for care experienced young people - draft scoping document (AI 4)

Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director of Children, Families and Education gave a summary of the draft scoping document for the review into education, employment and training opportunities for our care experienced young adults.

Members noted that the work programme for topics for the themed panels would be considered by the Scrutiny Management Panel at their meeting on 26 July.

Members agreed the scoping document with the following minor amendments:

Topic title to be amended to: education, employment and training opportunities for our care experienced young adults aged 18-25.

Shaping Portsmouth to be added to the list of witnesses for the review.

The panel heard from Keely Mitchell, Head of Service Adolescents and Young Adults who briefly summarised her background paper. She explained that the term care experienced young adults referred to those young adults aged between 18 and 25 who had been looked after by the local authority. Our young people have great skills and the aim is to help them develop these

skills through access to education, apprenticeships or work. Some of these young people will have had very difficult experiences so it was vital that the local authority as the corporate parent helps and creates opportunities for them and supports them. The local authority also supports young people who are seeking asylum. Personal Advisors (PAs) support our care experienced young people who are keen to get young people into apprenticeships. She gave an example of one young person who was having trouble with his apprenticeship and the Personal Advisor was going to his house each day to encourage him to attend. Ms Mitchell added that she had heard today that one of their young people had received a first at university which was a great achievement.

The panel also heard from Tina Henley, Head of the Virtual School & College. She explained that the Virtual School & College works with young people from the age of 4 up to the age 18 and this would encompass the start of the care experienced journey. In this context it is the support that the Virtual School & College provide for Year 12s and 13s that is most relevant. Each young person has a personal opportunity plan (POP) meeting to discuss their education, employment or training. Where they are not in education, employment or training (NEET) the Virtual School & College works with the Post-16 Skills Manager to formulate an action plan to support them to go back into education, employment or training (EET). In the current Year 12 cohort there are 64 young people including 22 young people seeking asylum. 8 of these are NEET which includes one new Mum; all but one of these have plans for September. In Year 13 there are 53 students including 14 young people seeking asylum. 14 of these are NEET including 2 new Mums, 4 actively working with career and progression advisers, 3 looking for apprenticeships, 3 looking for employment and 2 with limited engagement. Ms Henley said that they are desperate for more apprenticeships in the city. The lived experiences and past traumas of our young people mean it can be much more difficult to access opportunities and we need to ensure we provide the support they need to address individual needs they have that result from this. We can provide opportunities and support to turn their lives around and move forward.

The young people supported by the Virtual School & College have a range of education experiences. Some are doing the level 3 programmes (A levels), some are doing the entry level programmes, some are doing the ESOL programmes (English as a second language). There are several positive stories this year. Two students applied to university and were accepted and another young person who has deferred their application to university as they want travel and then join the Royal Marines. There are two young people starting a level 4 apprenticeship and one young person restarting the second year of their A level programme.

In response to questions officers advised that:

- There are 375 care experienced young people (aged 18-25), 171 are NEET. The Virtual School & College supports 471 students and will slightly overlap with this number.

- With regard to a percentage of care experienced young adults who go into work over the past five years, Ms Mitchell said she would have to come back with those figures.
- The council has a corporate responsibility to support care experienced young adults and give them the best possible chance of success. There are cases where it looks like they would find it difficult to access work, but with the right support and encouragement it is often possible to do just that.
- Officers would like to develop more apprenticeships and opportunities for young people as there are not enough in the city. The thoughts and input of members on how best to do that would be welcomed. Officers would like to develop the Employability Academy to help care experienced young adults become work ready.
- There are some great starting offers from Shaping Portsmouth and Solent LEP but more is needed. There is no longer any funding for traineeships which is a pre apprenticeship year and which helps a lot of young people become work ready. The council is now looking to see if it can provide these opportunities working with our partners.
- There are many foster carers in the city and the priority is to have young adults cared for by families. There are a small number of children cared for in children's homes. When children reach 18, some will stay with foster families, and some move into semi supported living accommodation to support them to live independently.
- In September a supported internship programme at the Council is starting for young people with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) where they get a year working and learning before they move into employment. Officers would like to extend this model to our care experienced young people.
- The increase in NEET percentages as young people get older is a trend. However, covid has exacerbated this issue and learning opportunities have been lost.
- There is a grant for employers who take on care experienced young adults into their workplace for apprenticeships. This grant needs to be promoted further as it gives employers that extra support. It is also vital that employers have the right training to support the young people. This is something that Shaping Portsmouth are working on.
- The service is run through the Youth Hub which was a joint project with the DWP. The DWP has now pulled back from that funding. There is an advisor from the Virtual School & College so it is seamless in support. The PAs are qualified careers advisors within the youth hub setting.
- The cohort of the Virtual School & College varies each year in terms of their strengths and challenges so their pathways will be very different in terms of their level of education. Each year is tracked and monitored but that only goes up to the end of year 13. The NEET figures are consistent across the years.
- The Virtual School & College knows daily where their young people are and if they have dropped out of education how to support them. After they leave Year 13 the young people are tracked through the Employability Academy.
- The Employability Academy offers a variety of different opportunities as the young adults all have different strengths and have different

experiences and needs. As a city we contract with many different services so there is the potential to create many different opportunities and it was hoped to maximise this.

- Officers are doing everything they can with the resources they have to improve outcomes for care experienced young adults. This is a corporate responsibility and all directorates within the Council need to support this work. This also applies to all the partners the Council works with to ensure they are making the most of the opportunities available.
- Personal Advisors work hard to get young adults into stable housing and officers work with housing colleagues closely. Housing is a key factor to ensuring that care experienced young adults have the best start and officers said they could provide some data about housing prior to the next meeting.

Officers also said they would prepare some further background documents for members prior to the next meeting.

The next meeting would take place in September and it was agreed this would be an evening meeting to allow for maximum attendance of the witnesses. The date would be circulated by email in due course.

Draft meetings schedule

September

- Care experienced young people
- Foster carers
- Flying Solo charity
- Personal Advisors
- Ann-Marie O'Brien

October/November meeting (date TBC) Education and training providers

- City of Portsmouth College
- Prince's Trust
- Abri
- Reach 4 Skills
- Learning Skills Solutions
- University of Portsmouth

December/January meeting

- DWP/Jobcentre
- Shaping Portsmouth

EDUCATION, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel held on Wednesday, 20 September 2023 at 6.00 pm at the Civic Offices, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Brian Madgwick (in the Chair)

Councillors Mary Valley
Hannah Brent
Peter Candlish

25. Apologies for absence (AI 1)

There were no apologies for absence.

26. Declarations of members' interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

27. Minutes of previous meeting - 13 July 2023 (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 13 July 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

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

Sarah Read, Service Leader

Sarah explained that care experienced young adults no longer have a social worker but instead have a personal advisor (PA). These provide the young people with support into work, education or training and they also provide support in finding housing, managing finances and provide emotional support. Their view of their role is that they walk alongside the young people whilst they make their choices, and the PAs can pick them up when they make mistakes.

Portsmouth has high levels of young adults not in education, employment, or training (NEET). Motivation can be one of the main barriers the young adults are facing when it comes to getting into education, employment, or training, as well as opportunity. Some of our young people are working full time and there are 12 of our young people at university currently. We have young people with high aspirations who have had a smooth journey through the care system and may have been with the same foster carers so feel very settled and secure. This is not always the case for care experienced young adults. A lack of confidence due to their previous experiences is one of the things that really impacts their motivation. It also gets impacted by their negative

experiences within education. Often children in care have moved placements and have had to change schools' multiple times which has affected their confidence and this impacts on the young people far more than we realise. There is a lot of provision that is suitable for the young people to access, but when they are put into college settings they can struggle to get through the door as it is another new setting, and they lack the confidence.

Sarah gave an example of when she was the Staying Close Manager and she had to take a young person to College. Several young females came out of the hairdressing section with beautiful hair and fashionable clothes and the young woman beside her visibly shrunk; she did not have glossy hair and she had poor quality clothes, none of which was affecting her confidence. Barriers such as this are not often acknowledged.

In response to a question Sarah said that the young woman lived independently, and she had to support her to leave her home to go to college. She did not have any clean clothes or have a choice of outfits and there was not time to take her shopping for clothes that morning. Her PA did later take her shopping for clothes and helped her with a weekly washing routine. The key thing was to get her into college that day, otherwise she would have been asked to leave.

The Council works with Shaping Portsmouth and have been able to secure some placements through them with local employers. One of the young men really struggled to get himself to work and do a full day's work on a building site. When the PA discussed this with them they found out it was because he was hungry. He had been on universal credit then switched to a work situation and did not have enough money for lunch or the bus to get to work. It was agreed to buy him a meal deal each day so that he was not hungry and had the energy to complete a full day's work.

Sometimes the young people are on medication due to anxiety and these medications can affect motivation and energy levels. Another effect of coming from a traumatised background is poor sleep routine which impacts on work. Some young people have often grown up in households where there is a different work ethic and not experience of people going to work. This impacts on their motivation for going to work. Neurodiversity can also impact, especially around communication. This makes it very difficult for them in a workplace as if there is an issue, they may not have the communication skills to deal with this. Due to a lack of confidence many will not go back to the workplace and they become too overwhelmed.

Many care experienced young adults have experienced abuse and neglect and they quickly realise that the only person they can rely upon is themselves, which can impact on their ability to work in a team and to easily trust other people. She felt that it was vital to build up the young people's skills so that they can build up their confidence and be ready to enter the workplace and manage any conflict they face. Care experienced young adults can also need help to manage their time and to be somewhere by a certain time, use public transport or plan ahead. PAs spend a great deal of time helping the young people with these skills when they start on a college course or start

employment. The team provide financial help towards clothes for interviews or the workplace as they often do not have suitable clothes.

When young people first start a college course or job, they feel that they are different and feel judged. The team are working with employers to ensure that the young people receive a welcoming and supporting environment, with an extra bit of nurture.

The panel then heard case studies from Emma Hayward, Personal Advisor and Hannah Woods, Team Leader.

What the service would like to see:

- Sarah Read said that care experienced young adults have had a lot of barriers to overcome and she would like to see work tasters being developed particularly within the Portsmouth City Council, as the Corporate Parent, where every directorate was committed to offering a certain number of work tasters. These could be two half days at first which could gradually be built on so they can gradually see what it is like to go to work and there is no pressure if they miss a day and feeling like they have failed.
- Staff would also like training to be made available to staff at the Council so they understand the impact that trauma has on care experienced young adults, as it is highly underestimated.
- Mentors in workplaces would also be welcomed so the young people have someone to go to for support. PAs do a fantastic job including giving young people lifts to work, phone check ins, texts to check they are out of bed and going to work and go above and beyond. The service are now offering financial support around clothing, support for travel to work and money towards haircuts all to make them feel more confident for going to work.
- Sarah said they would also like to see colleges providing more support. The City of Portsmouth College do a lot of work tasters but it would be great if this could be extended to include care experienced young people. Also for the colleges to understand the effects of trauma on a young person as sometimes their programmes are very rigid. It is important to allow the care experienced young person an extra chance.
- More communication between the providers and the Council would be welcomed when getting the care experienced young adults onto courses.

Adam Murphy, Participation Worker

Adam explained that his role is to ensure that there are systems and processes for the voice of children and young people who access their support to be heard by decision makers. He also manages and supervises care experienced young adults as part of his team. The Council completes a survey each year for young people and 62% of the care experienced young people completed this. 86% said they felt supported by their PAs in relation to education, employment, and training. This had increased by 8% on last year which was positive.

From a management perspective, they have supported 9 since 2014, 6 of these completed apprenticeships. The Customer Service and Housing teams at the Council successfully supported a care experienced young person each to obtain an apprenticeship.

Challenges:

- As employers the support structure begins and ends during the work day, support is not available at weekends or evenings.
- Housing creates a significant challenge for the young people as if they do not have stable housing it presents a number of challenges and ability to attend work.
- Employers must accept that the young people will have good and bad days.
- A significant lack of external relationships, PAs are a massive support but that is only one person and they do not often have very big peer groups to encourage them.
- Working at a local authority is a significant environmental shift for the young people. Explaining where to get tea and coffee and what to do on a lunchbreak can cause anxiety for them.
- In 2017 the statutory responsibility to support care experienced young people was extended to age 25. A lot of care experienced young people are accessing the support longer and are more ready for an apprenticeship when they are in their early 20s. In November 2022 Adam had 14 applicants for one apprenticeship and all of them were very strong candidates.

In response to questions the following points were clarified:

- PAs come from a variety of backgrounds and there is a good team of committed people at the Council. Staff are honest with candidates at the interview stage about what the job entails and the demands. They also have a group of young people at the interview and a Q&A session takes place with Sarah and a team leader and then 20 minutes with the young people asking questions. The young people are asked to write down their feedback which is looked at against the scoring and a decision is made. If the young people say they do not feel they could talk to or trust the candidate this is all considered when the decision whether to appoint is made. It is crucial that they can engage easily with the young people.
- PAs and foster carers are all trained in trauma informed model of care (TIMOC). Sarah was unsure what training programme the City of Portsmouth College offers staff, and this should be discussed with them. It is a struggle when there are young people with different needs and she felt the Council should work with the City of Portsmouth College and South Downs to provide training and help with that.
- More support is needed around mental health issues and the team are working with health colleagues on that currently about what offer is needed in the city.
- From an employment perspective, all young people have access to the employer assistance programme which is a traumatic experience

for them. Trauma is a lifelong experience and it was important to get other people in the community more informed that trauma is important, rather than getting the young person to adapt.

- The opportunities for work experience within the Council has been raised through the Corporate Parenting Board. Once a young person is settled, safe and secure they bring a lot to the team; they have a lot of skills. If you can get the right person in the right place with the right support then they can thrive and this can give the employer a long term employee, trained to the appropriate level then they will stay as stability means a lot.
- The Employment Academy work is due to start on Monday and as part of that work is taking place with the different directorates to look at opportunities within the city. They will also be looking at all those services the Council contracts with and looking whether it is possible to build in a social element to ring fence roles for care experienced young people.

Members noted that the next meeting was on Wednesday 18 October at 4pm where education providers would be in attendance.

It was agreed that the November meeting would be on Thursday 9th November with a provisional time of 4:30pm. Officers would liaise on how to best get the views of care experienced young adults. Mike Stoneman would confirm arrangements in due course and the timing of the meeting may need to change.

EDUCATION, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel held on Wednesday, 18 October 2023 at 4.00 pm at the Civic Offices, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Brian Madgwick (in the Chair)

Councillor Peter Candlish

32. Apologies for absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hannah Brent, Stuart Brown, Leonie Oliver and Mary Vallely. Mike Stoneman also sent his apologies.

33. Declarations of members' interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

34. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 September 2023 (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

Post meeting note: Cllr Candlish said that immediately following the meeting he had been talking to officers; during the meeting discussion had taken place about the Council finding places to put people but the other way around would be if people define appropriate spaces and the Council could then look to see if there is a place that meets that description.

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

Simon Attrill, Recruitment Lead for HTP Apprenticeship College.

Simon explained that they are a private independent training company, with their head office is in the Isle of Wight and they have had an office in Portsmouth since 2005. The Portsmouth office is now at St Georges Business Centre. The college offer a more traditional study programme for 16–18-year-olds which extends to 25 for those with an Education Healthcare Plan (EHCP). They also run a traineeship provision, which sits before an apprenticeship, and allows young people to have tasters in different sectors with the hope that they will progress onto an apprenticeship or into employment or further education. The government have changed the funding for traineeships; previously they could take this up to the age of 25 but this now has to be embedded into the 16–18-year-old funding. With apprenticeships there is no upper age limit, and their offer is around the service sector with careers available in hospitality, business, health and social care and customer service.

In Portsmouth, the main offer is on apprenticeships, but they can work with individuals for the traineeship programme. On the Isle of Wight, they have run some structured traineeships with the local NHS trust. 15 people completed this last year and 12 of these progressed onto the apprenticeship in their chosen area. The college also work with young people on an individual basis to match them to a suitable placement. The college work proactively with young people if they are referred to them and work with employers if they have vacancies; for example, Portsmouth Hospitals University Trust (PHUT) who they have some good apprenticeship vacancies with. The college work with employers all across the south within approximately 1.5 hours of Portsmouth. The culture for HTP is to help young people and they are happy to receive referrals from organisations in the city to work proactively with people to find them a way forward to meet aspirations.

In response to questions Mr Attrill said that:

- HTP does not have a full-time provision as other colleges in Portsmouth have; their offer for this geographical area is apprenticeships and also traineeships. The reason they have not

helped more of NEET young people is that they have not had the referrals to be able to build up that partnership.

- There are approximately 450 people on apprenticeships across the organisation; a small percentage of these will be at PHUT. There are currently about 7 opportunities for young people at PHUT.
- Employers will come to the college either because they have an existing working relationship with them or they have found their details, and they will say they are looking to take on an apprentice. The college will go and meet the employer to discuss their requirements and ideally get a job description. The college can then advertise through the government 'find an apprenticeship' service and link with partners such as the Solent apprenticeship hub. It is vital to build partnerships with stakeholders and employers and he felt this is where there is a gap currently.
- The college does not have any entry criteria for some of the level 5 apprenticeships and they take people on a case-by-case basis. It is for the employer to make the final decision on who they employ. The college will either respond to an employers needs to find the best fit for them or if they get a young person referred, they will do what they can to place them. There will always be the challenge of young people not turning up to interviews or work.
- Apprenticeships are employed position and there is an employment contract with the organisations. Most private companies invest in the young people and want them to stay on at the end of the apprenticeship. The ambition is that 95% of the time they will go into substantive employment.

Amanda Percy, Post 16 Skills and Campaign Manager, PCC, said that if young people want that support, they will continue to give it. There are care experienced young people who do not enjoy their apprenticeship and the personal advisors will support them in their next steps. Some care experienced young people do not want to declare that they are care experienced with colleges. Care experienced young people are entitled to funding which is phased. Amanda said she would share the details of the care leaver apprenticeship bursary with the panel after the meeting.

Tess Cole, Vice Principal, City of Portsmouth College

Tess explained there are four campuses in the city:

Highbury - which predominately has the vocational provision;

North Harbour - construction

6th form campus - A level provision

Arundel campus - for young people who have social, emotional or behaviour issues.

There is a vast range of provision on offer ranging from entry level through to degree level. They have provision for students with EHCPs and specialist level 1 provision across a range of vocational areas where students get additional support because they are care experienced or have issues at home, to encourage them to stay on programme.

The vocational courses prepare students for the world of work; work experience is built into their courses. The college work closely with Amada's team at PCC and receive lots of referrals from the Council and external agencies. She felt that the college do know how to support those students who need additional support. If a student does not succeed on one course they have different systems in place to support them to find one that is a better fit for them.

The college do pre 16 provision for 14–16-year-olds as school is not the right place for those young people and they want to try a more vocational course.

In response to the question of when the impact of trauma is seen, Sam Bushby, Deputy Director Children and Families, said that this can be at any point of a child's life dependent upon their experiences and the impact this has upon them. This could be a young baby born impacted by harm in utero. It is known that first 1,000 days of a child's life is significant in terms of development and traumatic experiences during this can have a significant impact. Young children can be seen to struggle at nursery and infant school due to trauma in their early years. Some children can find school a sanctuary and can do well even though they have been harmed, but any transition in a child's life can be particularly difficult -including entering adolescence and adulthood.

In response to a question as to what the college do well, Tess felt that the City of Portsmouth College is very flexible. The start of the year has begun but they are still taking on students who had not made their minds up and they take new students all the year round. In terms of what could be better, she felt that they do have behaviour issues and attendance can be an issue. The staff try to support them and it does sometimes help over time.

The college work closely with schools and pupils in years 8,9,10 and 11 to offer taster days and hold open evenings with parents and young people. Some young people come in have a clear plan on what they want to do and how to do it. There are careers advisors if young people are still unsure on what pathway they wish to take. Amanda Percy added that the careers world has changed, and these young people are entering a different world and are likely to have a minimum of 7 different jobs in their career. Therefore, staff need to help them be resilient for a career moving forward and developing transferrable skills that can be transferred between sectors.

In response to a question, Tess said that the college do hold independent living skills for their level 1 students and their SEN provision. This includes budgeting and money management, and a certificate is awarded at the end of this course. There are also trips and experiences to help open their eyes. This is compulsory and timetabled in for their lower-level programmes.

Charlie Miller, Director of Student Progress, Havant and South Downs College.

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Charlie said that HSDC offer a course in everything apart from construction or horticulture. There is 14-16 provision which can be home educated or via school referral. They offer foundation learning from E1 up to higher education and adult learning which is at the Havant and Leigh Park campuses. The college offer English and Maths only for their vulnerable students that are unable to manage a full programme. There are 3,000 full time students at HSDC and half of those are from Portsmouth. Amanda added that there are two members of PCC staff who work in the colleges in the Autumn and Spring terms to look after the care experienced young people.

In response to a question on what could be improved, Charlie said that the communication between the Council and the colleges could be improved. They are not made aware of the vulnerable students until they are enrolled as this information is not allowed to be shared until they are enrolled. This is why the number of NEETs is high. It is about how they can offer bespoke courses and offer places if they do not know who they are. HSDC have 111 Looked After Children but they are still trying to establish what LA they are attached to, 23 are from Portsmouth but there are others where they would not know until January that they have been in the care system which is inadequate. It is a combination of when they receive handovers from schools and schools cannot share information with colleges until they are enrolled with them legally. For the young people who do not make it to college, they do not know who they are. If they are at identified risk of sexual exploitation or county lines they know who they are as they attend the Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (MET) meetings held weekly and happen to come across some of the NEETs. Sam Bushby added that the MET meetings are multi-agency meetings and is a good example of good multi-agency working. They consider children who live with their family, or are cared for by the Local Authority.

Charlie said that all senior leaders at HSDC are trauma informed and they run bespoke programmes, but they need to know who the young people are. They are also doing some work on relational practice. Amanda Percy added that there are 169 young people who are NEETs aged 18-25. When the young people leave the virtual school, they are RAG rated as to the risk of becoming NEET and any young person rated red is put into a NEET prevention programme. A lot of the young people are up to age 25 and may not be looking for a college place but employment. There is a separate piece of work around the general NEET population where the Council rely on referrals from schools to say they are concerned about the risk of NEET and then the Council work with the colleges to try and place those young people. It is important to have a broad range of options for the young people. There is a shortage in Portsmouth of 'roll on, roll off' provision; if a young person drops out in November, they do not want them to have to wait until the new academic year until they can restart a course. The Enham Trust provide this and they cannot offer any more places currently.

Amanda said that through the employability academy they are working to ensure that employers and teachers are care experienced ready and have some training around trauma and how to support these young people.

Portsmouth is a trauma informed city and schools receive free training on this. Charlie added that for further education this is not offered and they are expected to fund this themselves. She added that they can share with the permission of the young person that they have experienced trauma or if they feel it is a need-to-know basis. If staff are trauma informed they would not insist that a student does something for example a foot massage as part of the health and beauty course, as they will be aware that they have experienced trauma and this could be a trigger for them.

In response to a question why Portsmouth have so many young people NEET, officers said it is for a variety of reasons including mental health, anxiety and having appropriate housing and it is hard to think of work or training when they do not have secure housing. Once they get the support our young people have a huge amount to offer. If employers can get on board with the trauma understanding this will really help. Sam Bushby said that officers are concerned about the high number of care experienced young adults who are NEET which is why they suggested this topic would benefit from scrutiny. She said that at the next meeting they could look deeper at the reasons and they would be hearing the voices of young people at this meeting and say what more could be done to help them.

In terms of young people who have sought safety and asylum there are currently 164 care experienced young people in Portsmouth and there are 43 who are children in our care currently seeking safety and asylum. PCC offer a lot of support in terms of accessing courses and colleges hold English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL). It is very difficult for young people struggle when they are not allowed to work whilst their application is pending. They really want to work but it can take some time to get their 'leave to remain' and they are significantly restricted in what they can do in this time.

The panel thanked officers and the education and training providers for attending and all the work they are doing to support our care experienced young adults.

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=qMyADlQkQ24>

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.

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

