



Children and Families Select Committee
19 December 2012

**Looked After Children who are not in education, employment or training
(NEET)**

Purpose of the report: Scrutiny of services

To scrutinise services to increase looked after young people's participation in education and training and employment.

This report has been prepared at the request of the Committee

Introduction:

1. Across the country looked after children and young people leaving care are significantly more likely than their non-looked after peers to be NEET (not in employment, education or training). The Youth Support Service (YSS) has lead responsibility for the participation of all young people in Surrey and priority is given to ensuring that looked after young people are successfully participating (PETE). The Youth Justice Service, and latterly the integrated YSS, assumed responsibility for support and tracking of all looked after young people into provision from May 2011.
 - The YSS responsibility is undertaken alongside Children's Service and the Virtual School. The focus of YSS engagement has been threefold:
 - To ensure young people are in full time provision after leaving statutory education
 - To support this cohort if at risk of discontinuing from provision
 - To report monthly on the whole cohort's progress

2. Over the last 18 months participation by Surrey's looked after young people has increased and the numbers who are NEET are almost exclusively confined to those who have acute challenges as a result of multiple moves, significant emotional or physical health issues or because they are a parent or are expecting a child.

NEET Reduction and Prevention

3. Work has been ongoing to clarify the respective roles of the Youth Support Service, the Virtual School and Children's Social Care. Over-arching case responsibility sits with the looked after teams, with the YSS taking responsibility for participation and retention of ETE placements, while the Virtual School leads on young people's progression and attainment. In practice this means that the YSS's work is with those who are NEET or those most at risk of becoming NEET. The small number of young people who are NEET disguises the fact that there is a great deal of work with this cohort of young people who move in and out of participation in employment, training or education (PETE) at a higher rate than their non-looked after peers.
4. The approach taken by the YSS has been to work closely with social care teams to jointly visit and prioritise those who are NEET or are most at risk of becoming NEET in conjunction with Virtual School. Particular focus is given to ensuring looked after young people make a successful transition (usually to college) at the end of Year 11. This has also led to developing closer links with education and training providers to ensure financial / welfare support and communication processes are robust. The cohort is reviewed monthly and additional YSS input is triggered by social care communication as well as a provider input.
5. Improving outcomes has focussed on a number of strategies. Firstly a focus on improving relations with the providers of post-16 education and training have been the subject of much attention to ensure appropriate provision is accessible, to support young people to make sure they keep their place in training or education, and to promote effective communication so that issues are addressed early. This has led to half-termly review meetings for all looked after young people in a college between the college, virtual school and the YSS.
6. Secondly the extension of provision to meet the needs of young people who would normally struggle in traditional learning environment has created greater opportunities for looked after young people. Skills centres have developed to provide localised learning opportunities for those young people not yet ready for work or college. Meanwhile the Youth Support Service has been developing provision, the Ready for Work programme, for those needing a significant level of preparation and support in order to access full time provision. Both opportunities have been utilised in improving outcomes for this group.

7. Those looked after children placed out of Surrey have historically had worse outcomes than those living in Surrey. Over the last year the YSS has developed links with other authorities in order to ensure that our young people out of Surrey receive high quality advice and guidance in the authority in which they are placed. This is ongoing work but already this already bearing fruit in terms of improved participation as a result of the additional support that can now be accessed for those outside of Surrey. Arrangements with external local authorities will continue to be one of the priorities for further development over the next 6 months.

Young Person – Case Example

Mark's foster placement in Guildford broke down in August 2011 and he moved to a placement in Epsom. His social worker and youth support officer worked closely with Mark on his options in his new placement and he was supported to enrol in a local college. Despite close liaison with the college pastoral support service he did not sustain his place and discontinued by October. He was then accommodated out of county until February when he returned to Elmbridge. Because of the short-term nature of this placement he was unable to access education provision. He was re-engaged by the YSS and started on the Princes Trust course in May. He completed this course successfully. He is currently engaged in the Ready for Work programme (R4W) in Elmbridge and is gaining skills working on community projects which will prepare him for formal work and support his aspiration to be self-employed.

Placement changes associated with the challenges of managing Mark's behaviour demonstrate the difficulties in retaining ETE provision. Consistent support and close co-ordination between the YSS, the Looked After Team and Virtual School have enabled Mark to access a package of flexible ETE support now that he appears ready.

Barriers to Participation

8. Barriers to participation are well documented with this group. The YSS undertakes deep-dives to understand the needs of those who are both looked after and NEET. The last of these took place between September and October 2012 focussing on the 19 NEET young people.
9. YSS work to increase looked after young people's participation identifies five recurring barriers to participation and were evident in the September deep-dive:
 - Placement instability: moving impacts on the stability of any provision and is the most prevalent theme amongst those who are NEET. Of the 19 NEET young people at 1st October 2012 12 had at least 2 different placements, while 7 had 4 or more over the previous 12 months. Work with Children's Service focuses on

ensuring where placements have to change that ETE provision is maintained.

- The more recently the young person has come into care the greater the chance they would be NEET. Of the 19 NEET young people, 11 had been accommodated over the previous 24 months.
- Disrupted statutory education reflects the final common barrier. 12 of the group had either been permanently excluded from school or were at risk of permanent exclusion.
- In addition of the 9 females in this group four were either expectant mothers or had a child.
- 6 of 19 NEET young people in the cohort had been on youth court orders in the last 3 months, thus reflecting the relationship between offending and participation.

10. These barriers demonstrate the need for a holistic approach to looked after young people's participation. This integrated approach between YSS, Virtual School and Children's Service has been one of the successes over the last 18 months and underpins improved outcomes for this group.

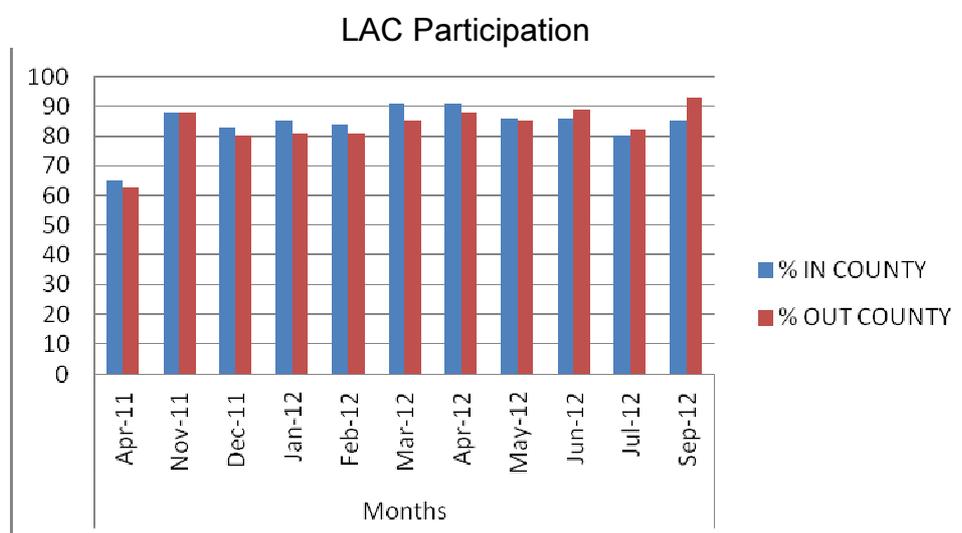
Young Person Case Example

Jason was accommodated at the age of 15 in 2011 while in Year 11 at school. At the time he was accommodated he had also entirely disengaged from education. Virtual School and YSS worked together with Jason's social worker to identify options and agree lead responsibility for meeting the aspirations identified in his aspects of his care plan. As a means of encouraging participation he was engaged in the Tall Ship scheme but, despite getting to undertake the voyage, disengaged just before the end of the project. He was subsequently offered the CSCS construction skills course in order to access work but failed to maintain this. A bespoke course at college (provided to satisfy 6 learners expressing an interest in this course) also failed to engage him beyond one week. He has gone in and out of casual work since then. Since September his placement has settled and he is now being supported in an application for the army and is now undertaking his CSCS card, which will help him to obtain work while he awaits the outcome of his application to the army.

Placement stability and developing a consistent relationship with his social worker and youth support officer have been critical in establishing a platform for Jason to move into participation.

Performance Outcomes

11. Performance over the last ten months has been on or above the target of 80% of all young people in provision. Current performance represents a halving of the number of looked after young people who are NEET compared with April 2011. However it is recognised that certain young people are constantly represented as NEET due to the interdependency of participation with other key factors such as placement stability, suitable accommodation local to ETE provision, behaviour management and involvement with the criminal justice system.
12. Significant progress has been made in respect of those young people placed out of county where outcomes now match those in-county. The current developments in bespoke provision (Skills Centre and Ready for Work: see appendix) hold the prospect of moving the remaining NEET young people into participation.



Conclusions:

13. Looked after young people will remain a very high priority for the Youth Support Service working alongside Virtual School and Children's Service. Key areas to develop in order to further increase participation are:
 - The development of a local re engagement programme, 'Ready for Work'. The flexibility of this programme will mean continued engagement for young people where placements change and for those who have specific challenges.
 - Inter-authority agreements will ensure young people out of county can be linked into local services.
 - Increased support for care leavers in conjunction with the Leaving Care Service.

14. These developments offer the genuine prospect of full participation for all Surrey's looked after children.

Financial and value for money implications

15. No new financial implications are contained in this report.

Equalities Implications

16. Equal opportunity for looked after young people to participate underpins the approach outlined in this report

Risk Management Implications

17. None identified

Implications for the Council's Priorities or Community Strategy

18. The approach outlined supports the Council's corporate parenting priorities

Recommendations:

19. That the Committee recognises the progress made in increasing participation for looked after young people and endorses the developments outlined.

Next steps:

As outlined in the conclusion.

Report contact: Ben Byrne
Contact details: 01483 517014

Sources/background papers: None

Ready for Work Programme and Skills Centres

At any one time, Surrey has between 800 and 1,000 young people who are not participating in education, training or employment. By 2015, it is our aim that all of our young people are participating. This is articulated in our Young People's Employability Plan 2012-17.

National information suggests that around 40% of young people who are NEET are participation ready and require limited support to access appropriate training or employment. For a further 40%, many of whom will have been NEET for six months or more, we have developed the **Ready 4 Work (R4W) programme**. Designed to be delivered by Youth Support Service staff, this programme has a core curriculum but will be tailored to the specific needs and opportunities in each borough, drawing upon the expertise of YSS practitioners to engage the hardest-to-reach young people. Much of the R4W curriculum will be delivered either in small groups, supported by work on a one-to-one basis, promoting the most effective engagement with our most vulnerable young people.

The Ready for Work programme is in development in each of the districts and boroughs with some provision having started in most but with capacity being incrementally increased over the next six months. The R4W package for each young person will be bespoke reflecting the most suitable activities for them from a menu in their district or borough.

An example of a well-developed borough offer is R4W activities available in Elmbridge. These include the GASP motor project run from Brooklands Museum, the Walton Bike Project (repairing bicycles provided by Surrey Police), and the Community Projects Team (known locally as 'The Firm') which has worked with Walton Charities and is developing a community orchard in West Molesey. All these activities are accredited and develop basic skills around team work and self-management, as well as specific vocational skills which will increase these young people's employability. All young people have a Youth Support Officer supporting them through the R4W programme and onwards into sustainable education, training or employment.

We estimate that the remaining 20% are in need of a different kind of provision, delivered in small to medium sized groups and providing a crucial transition to mainstream further education or employment. **Skills Centres** offer this provision in a familiar, non-threatening setting. The training is delivered by colleges and training providers from our youth centres and is tailored to the needs and aspirations of young people in each of our eleven boroughs, based on close working with the local YSS teams.

The training offered in Skills Centres varies from area to area and may include vocational provision in practical disciplines such as bricklaying, catering or horticulture. Young people are given opportunities to gain short, work-focused qualifications which may represent passports to employment in some industries, such as hospitality. At its core Skill Centre delivery focuses on development of key employability skills, complemented by the offer of

meaningful work placements and is closely aligned to employment opportunities available in each local area.

Three year contracts have now been awarded for all Skills Centre borough packages. Five Centres are already open, with further centres to follow in January / February.

A summary of the Skill Centre contract awards is provided below. For more information, please contact Cass Hardy – cass.hardy@surreycc.gov.uk

Month	Area	Centre	Provider
October	Spelthorne	Ashford	Brooklands College
October	Reigate & Banstead	Horley	East Surrey College
October	Runnymede	Addlestone	Brooklands College
October	Elmbridge	Walton	Brooklands College
October	Surrey Heath	Old Dean	NACRO
Jan/Feb	Guildford	Ash/Discovery or alternative (TBC)	Waverley Training
Jan/Feb	Waverley	TBC	Waverley Training
Jan/Feb	Woking	Lakers	Surrey Care Trust
Jan/Feb	Epsom & Ewell	Linton's	NESCOT
Jan/Feb	Tandridge	The Street	East Surrey College
Jan/Feb	Mole Valley	The Malthouse	East Surrey College

Ben Byrne: Head of Surrey Youth Support Service
06/12/12