

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

10 October 2016

OFSTED MONITORING VISIT – NEXT STEPS

Report of Head of Looked After Children

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with the opportunity to comment and scrutinise the information provided within the letter.

2. Background

- 2.1 Where local authority children's services are judged to be inadequate, Ofsted will carry out monitoring visits and report on the progress made by the local authority, to support them to improve further.
- 2.2 Usually two HMI will undertake each visit. Each visit will usually last for two days. Wherever possible, the same HMI will lead all these monitoring visits.
- 2.3 Monitoring activity relates to the key weaknesses and recommendations in the inspection report. The role of the HMI conducting the quarterly visits is to monitor and report on the local authority's progress since the last inspection.
- 2.4 This is the first visit by Ofsted since the May 2015 Inspection and the visit looked at Sunderland's progress made in regard to the experiences and progress of care leavers.
- 2.5 The visit considered a range of evidence, and spoke to eight Care Leavers, and a number of staff, including Managers, Social Workers, and Housing providers.

3. Summary of Findings.

- 3.1 Senior managers within children's services have responded determinedly to the areas of improvement identified in respect of the experiences and progress of care leavers, which were judged to be inadequate at the last inspection.
- 3.2 Senior managers have a sound understanding of the key priorities for improvement in services for care leavers, demonstrated through a clear, evaluative and accurate self-assessment.

- 3.3 Workers at all levels within the Next Steps service for care leavers report that they feel more confident and supported by senior managers and that there is a more open and receptive culture of leadership.
- 3.4 New policies, procedures, documents and accompanying training are supporting workers to improve the quality of practice and recording.
- 3.5 Care leavers feel safe and well supported where they are living.
- 3.6 The percentage of care leavers who are now in touch with the Next Steps service has increased from 30% in May 2015 to 82% in June 2016.
- 3.6 While the number of pathway plans undertaken has improved, the quality of these is not consistently good, especially in consideration of chronologies, assessments of need, analyses of findings and the detail of plans.
- 3.7 The quality of case recording is not consistently good, lacks detail and does not evidence the work undertaken with care leavers.
- 3.8 Management oversight, including challenge from independent reviewing officers, is weak. It is not clearly recorded in young people's records and is not effective in progressing their plans.
- 3.9 The overall outcome of the monitoring visit is "The local authority is making significant progress to improve services for care leavers".

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to read the report and accompanying papers and to make any recommendations or comments on its content.