



Exit from Care – Overview

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Exit from Care Team was developed in response to meeting our sufficiency requirements and ensuring children and young people are cared for in their local communities and with family where possible.
- 1.2 Work undertaken by the Exit from Care Team has had a significant impact on reducing numbers of children in care through Foster Carers becoming their Special Guardians and in rehabilitating children home or to family member where it is safe to do so.
- 1.3 The team was formed in 2013 and from April 2017 to March 2018, The Exit from Care Team supported 34 children to exit regulated care settings and have supported the Council in achieving an overall saving in excess of £2,632,847 for the duration of their childhood had those children remained in care.

1.4 Children in Care Council Summary

For some young people being in care is a good thing and can help them grow and develop and achieve good things. However there are times when children and young people might not need to be in care anymore.

Reasons for this could be that there have been big changes in the young person's family that mean they could go home or live with relatives or it could mean that a foster carer could become the special guardian for a young person who has been in their care for a long time.

It is the job of the Exit from Care Team to look at whether it is safe and possible for a young person to leave care or not and if they do leave care will they be safe and have good opportunities.

The social workers in the Exit from Care Team are really good at seeing if this is possible and making sure that plans for children and young people are right.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To note the progress of the Exit from Care Team and report this to the Corporate Parenting Board.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To ensure members of the Corporate Parenting Committee have an overview of and can comment on developments in relation to the Exit from Care Team.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 The Exit from Care Team is a specialist service established in 2013 in response to the high number of children in care (CIC) in Derby. Derby's team comprises 6 staff; 1 full time Team Manager, 3 full time Social Workers, 2 part time Social Workers and a part time Children's Practitioner. The Exit from Care Team is the mechanism to review situations where successful and safe rehabilitation to family may be possible and all options have been explored. This model has been effective in other areas.

The primary objective of the team is to support the successful transition of children from the care system to the care of their parents, carers or connected persons. This may be achieved in the following ways;

1. Return of a voluntarily accommodated child (S.20) to his/her parent
2. Placement of a child subject to a care order with his/ her parent under the 'Placement with Parent Regulations' and subsequent revoking of that order.
3. Placement of a looked after child with a connected person, and subsequent making of a Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship order.

The following groups of children are prioritised for consideration of reunification

- Children and young People expressing a persistent wish to return home or to family who do not have a plan for adoption
- Children who do not have a plan for adoption, are not in a stable placement and whose parents or family are expressing a strong and persistent desire to have them returned to their care
- Young people in unstable placements who have reasonably positive relationships with their parents or family
- Children in long term placements whose foster carers wish to adopt them or gain Special Guardian Orders for them

- 4.2 Since April 2018, 7 children have exited care: 6 have returned to birth family under Placement with Parents regulations with and 1 has returned under a Special Guardianship Order to their Independent Foster Carer. Whilst these young people still remain in care for a period under these regulations, change is evidenced within these families to suggest that a return home is the right option for them in terms of their relationships, opportunity and developmental outcomes.

- 4.3 Given the lower number by this point in the financial year than in previous years of exits from care, a series of actions have been undertaken to address this. Firstly, the area has been included the strategic priority of Reducing Looked After Placements and the progress is monitored on a fortnightly basis by People's Leadership Team. As part of the strategic action plan, the Exit from Care Team manager has proactively reviewed all children who have been in independent fostering agency placements for over 3 years. This identified 16 potential Special Guardian Carers for assessment in September 2018, of whom carers for 4 children

have come forward to undergo the full assessment and 5 cases are awaiting a court date and subsequent exit plan. Secondly the Team have re-issued their offer to locality social work teams to encourage future referrals and finally a collective approach between Independent Reviewing Officers and children's social workers has been implemented to both purposefully and consistently revisit the suitability of this option throughout the reviewing cycle for every child in care. Work also continues with internal Foster Carers to explore Special Guardianship Orders, where appropriate.

- 4.4 The Exit from Care Service continues to represent good value for Derby City Council. Not only in its progression of robust plans for young people but also through ongoing savings and safe reductions in the children in care population. The cumulative savings for council in the first 2 quarters of 2018 will be in excess of £1.3 million had those children remained in their previous settings.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Without a dedicated Exit from Care Team and strategy, the numbers of children in care would be substantially higher.

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer	N/A
Financial officer	N/A
Human Resources officer	N/A
Estates/Property officer	N/A
Service Director(s)	Suanne Lim
Other(s)	HOS Andrew Kaiser

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Background papers:	None
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 - Implications

IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 The savings made in quarter 2 is £159,284. For the remainder of the financial year the projected savings if those young people were to remain in care until 18 years of age is £581,284. The total savings since April 2018 is £291,727 for the remainder of this financial year and the projected savings if young people were to remain in care until their 18th birthday is £1,330,923.

Legal

- 2.1 A child is looked after by a local authority if s/he is in their care by reason of a care order or is being provided with accommodation under section 20 of the Children 1989 Act for more than 24 hours with the agreement of the parents, or of the child if s/he is aged 16 or over (section 22(1) and (2) of the 1989 Act). Children's social care are duty bound to satisfy the all assessment and safeguarding requirements when considering and recommending Placement with Parents or Special Guardian Orders.

Before making any decision about a child or young person returning to their parents, the key social worker will ascertain the wishes and feelings of that child in accordance with S.22 (4) of the Children Act, 1989 and in accordance with article 12 of the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child). The social worker will give consideration to those views, having regard to the child's age and understanding.

Personnel

- 3.1 No additional implications.

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- 4.1 No additional implications.

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 No additional implications.

Health and Safety

- 6.1 No additional implications.

Environmental Sustainability

- 7.1 No additional implications.

Property and Asset Management

8.1 No additional implications.

Risk Management

9.1 No additional implications.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

10.1 The report contributes to the following Council objectives:
Good quality services that meet local needs.