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**DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO BARNARDO'S BEYOND  
CARE**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee with a Darlington response to Barnardo's 'Beyond Care' report.

**Summary**

2. The 'Beyond Care' report challenges authorities regarding their level of service to care leavers.
3. Despite financial pressures Darlington provides an individual support package to care leavers, with a range of housing options and levels of support.
4. Councillors are 'Corporate Parents' and therefore have an important role in ensuring advice and support are provided 'beyond care' itself.

**Recommendation**

5. It is recommended that:-
  - (a) The report is noted.
  - (b) Work of the Corporate Parenting Panel is also noted.

**Jenni Cooke  
Service Director**

**Background Papers**

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|                                  |                                                    |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| S17 Crime and Disorder           | No direct impact.                                  |
| Health and Well Being            | Continued support to vulnerable young adults.      |
| Carbon Impact                    | No impact.                                         |
| Diversity                        | The report concerns all groups.                    |
| Wards Affected                   | Children Looked After are from all wards.          |
| Groups Affected                  | The report concerns those children 'Looked After'. |
| Budget and Policy Framework      | No direct implication.                             |
| Key Decision                     | No                                                 |
| Urgent Decision                  | No                                                 |
| One Darlington: Perfectly Placed | One Darlington – best start in life.               |
| Efficiency                       | No direct efficiencies.                            |

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

6. Barnardo's is campaigning to improve the accommodation and support given to young people as they leave care across England and distributed a number of questions to all Local Authorities. The questions focussed on three key themes, working together, finding accommodation and keeping accommodation. Barnardo's believe that, if local authorities are focussed on these areas, they will be well placed to deliver more effective accommodation and support for their care leavers
7. A number of key questions were posed in the report which are given below with a Darlington response.

### Focus on Children in Care and Care Leavers

8. Does your Council have an elected Member with specific responsibility for championing the needs of looked after children and care leavers?

**Yes Counsellor Hughes – (Cabinet Member) Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People.**

9. Does your Corporate Parenting Board routinely consider the needs of care leavers, including their housing needs and outcomes?

**Yes, young people are invited to all Corporate Parenting Panel meetings and are involved in the commissioning process including services to support young people leaving care.**

10. What support is your Local Authority offering to young people who are waiting for the outcome of asylum decisions?

**When a child/young person is deemed as an unaccompanied asylum seeker, if assessed as under the age of 18 years they become Looked After and**

**receive all of the services any Looked After child would receive. When they are approaching 18 years they would be allocated a Personal Advisor, again the same as any Looked After child, this support would continue until they reach 21 years of age.**

11. What support does your Council give to care leavers who are leaving prison to access suitable housing?

**The allocated Personal Advisors will support care leavers to access suitable housing prior to leaving prison, if required, meetings are set up between the provider and young person whilst still serving their custodial sentence.**

### **Joint Working**

12. How are Housing and Children's Services working together to meet the accommodation needs of young people, including care leavers?

**The Homelessness Protocol has been in place in Darlington since 1 January 2015. Within this protocol there are three allocated units specifically for the use of care leavers – one high vulnerability bed (based within the YMCA) and two dispersed units with floating support.**

**We have also been able to secure a one bedroomed 'taster flat' that has been used by two care leavers with great success.**

13. Does the Lead Member for Housing or a senior official attend your Corporate Parenting Board?

**The Lead Member for Housing is briefed about all relevant issues regarding care leavers. The Lead Member for Children attends Corporate Parenting Panel meetings and this meeting is chaired by the Chief Executive.**

14. What information does your Lead Member for Housing and/or Children's Services receive from your Authority about the number of young people who leave care each quarter and the accommodation they move to?

**Following a recent meeting with the Lead Member for Children's Services it was agreed that a quarterly briefing would be made available regarding all those young people leaving care and their accommodation needs.**

### **Suitable Accommodation**

15. How many of the care leavers in your area are housed in 'suitable accommodation'?

**All 41 current care leavers are in suitable accommodation based on pathway plan information.**

16. How stringent are the checks that your Authority makes on care leavers' accommodation?

**The Manager of Commissioning Services is currently completing a piece of work with regards to none accredited placements for care leavers, to ensure that they are put through the accreditation process. All other provision has/is going through the procurement/commissioning process and regular monitoring and review is undertaken.**

17. Does your social housing allocation policy prioritise care leavers, including those who have been placed in care out of your area?

**All young people who have been looked after by Darlington Borough Council and have subsequently left care are given priority when making applications for accommodation.**

### **Use of B&B's and Unsuitable Emergency Accommodation**

18. How many care leavers in your area have spent time in a B&B or all-age hostel during the year?

**In 2013/2014 two young people were placed in B&B accommodation, both of these young people had a number of other provisions prior to this and B&B was seen as 'the last resort'. There is currently a planned move in place for one young person and the other young person has failed to engage with services and there is currently a warrant out for his arrest.**

19. How many B&B placements have been for an emergency (only a few days)? Were any for longer than 28 days?

**There were two B&B placements in 2013/2014.**

20. Which departments in your Council are placing care leavers in B&B's and other unsuitable emergency housing?

**Only when all other avenues for accommodation have been exhausted do the Housing department and the Looked After Through Care team place young people in B&B accommodation.**

21. Are there any approval procedures in place to assess the safeguarding or other risks of emergency accommodation?

**The B&B accommodation is visited by the Personal Advisor for the young person to assess its suitability. We also use 'local knowledge' to ascertain if the placement is suitable. Requests for B&B accommodation are also overseen by the 'Darlington Access to Resources Panel' which is chaired by the Head of Service.**

### **Managing Tenancies**

22. What support does your Council offer to young people as they leave care to live independently?

**Floating support can be provided by Housing under the Homelessness Protocol, in addition the young person will be provided with support from their allocated Personal Advisor.**

23. What continued support does your Council have in place to help care leavers manage their private or social tenancies and move towards independence?

**Floating support is available to care leavers and they also continue to have support from their allocated Personal Advisor.**

24. Are there exemptions to council tax for care leavers?

**If care leavers are claiming benefits or attending education there is a reduction in the level of council tax required to pay.**

25. Are care leavers given priority for discretionary housing payment in your area?

**Care leavers in Darlington receive higher level housing benefit.**

### **Homelessness**

26. How many care leavers make a homeless application in your area and how many are accepted? What support is available for those who are not accepted?

**In the year 2013/2014 no care leavers made a homelessness application, however two care leavers approached Housing for advice and guidance.**

27. How many care leavers in your area were found to be intentionally homeless last year?

**There were no care leavers found intentionally homeless in 2013/2014.**

28. What procedures are in place to help keep care leavers away from having to make a formal homelessness application?

**Allocated Personal Advisors complete direct work with care leavers around managing and maintaining their tenancy agreement.**

29. Do care leavers have easy access to the services and support available for young homeless people in your Authority?

**Yes, if a care leaver found themselves homeless they would be supported by a Personal Advisor to attend an emergency Key Point of Access (KPA) meeting whereby their housing needs would be assessed and the young person would be matched with appropriate housing to meet their needs.**

### **Conclusion**

30. Having answered the questions set in the Barnardo's Beyond Care Campaign I believe that care leavers in Darlington are receiving a good service from ourselves as Corporate Parents.

### **Outcome of Consultation**

31. Following today's meeting and with agreement of the members present I will email Barnardo's with the response from Darlington Borough Council.