

Appendix B: Barnet Care Leavers' Needs Analysis

Summary

This needs analysis was undertaken using data from the latter half of 2016 from a range of local and national sources. It includes the views of care leavers. The needs analysis informs the care leavers' strategy (Appendix A) and its priorities.

Profile

- There are 195 young people eligible for Barnet's care leaving services (Sept 2016). This number is expected to rise in the coming years.
- Males are disproportionately represented in the care leaving population (65%), as are young people from BME ethnic groups

Education, Employment and Training¹

- Around 2/3 of Barnet's care leaving population are in education, employment or training, which compares favourably to the national picture
- Barnet's care leavers are very aspirational for themselves, as are the professionals who work with them. Care leavers report that education, employment and training are a challenge for them – as well as the biggest opportunity for their futures.
- In Barnet, 71% of care leavers who were in foster care only, were later engaged in education, employment and training, which contrasts with 40% from other placement types
- 32% of Barnet's care leavers are not in education, employment or training (NEET), which is below the national average
- 9% of Barnet's current care leaving population attend university – higher than the national figure (6%) but significantly lower than their peers without a care background (33%).
- Only 2% of Barnet's care leaving population are undertaking apprenticeships, which is comparable with the national picture for care leavers (3%) but significantly lower than their peers without a care background

Accommodation

- 61% of Barnet's care leavers live within the borough. Of the remaining 37% who live out of borough, the majority live in London.
- 96% live in suitable accommodation, which compares favourably to statistical neighbours
- Circa 15% have entered into the 'Staying Put' arrangement, continuing to live with foster carers post-18
- Young people are not always ready to take on longer-term tenancies; however, there is a shortage of semi-independent provision in the borough

Other

- An audit demonstrates that nearly 2 out of 5 Barnet care leavers have mental health issues. 16% of the cohort had mental health issues at a higher tier and 23% at a lower tier.
- Council tax is an area of concern for many care leavers

¹ Referred to as 'work, studying and training' in the strategy

- Care leavers are enthusiastic about the help that they receive from their workers and the services at Woodhouse Road
- Barnet keeps in touch with 99% of its care leavers, which compares favourably to the national picture.

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1. Background Information

This Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) provides information on the profile and needs of the current and future cohorts of care leavers in Barnet.

1.1 Sources of Insight

The information in this JSNA has been gathering using diverse sources of insight at a national and local level:

Ref	Local/ National	Source of insight	Number	Month	Year
1	National	Research (e.g. Barnado's National Audit Office, Government)	N/A	N/A	2010-2016
2	Local	Local authority data from ICS	296 current and future eligible care	Sept	2016

			leavers		
4	Local	Care Leaver Analytics	-	June	2016
5	Local	Survey of care leavers	23 care leavers	Nov/Dec	2016
6	Local	Survey of care leavers	32 care leavers	August	2016
7	Local	Survey of Onwards and Upwards frontline staff	7 practitioners	Nov/Dec	2016
8	Local	Dip-sample of cases with staff	82 care leavers	Nov/Dec	2016

1.2 Definitions

The following cohorts are referred to throughout the report:

Care Leaver ('Former Relevant')

Young people aged 18-21, who have been eligible and/or relevant (see definition below). If at the age of 21 the young person is still being helped by the local authority with a prescribed programme of education or training, s/he remains a former relevant child (care leaver) until the end of the agreed programme.

Young people aged 21 - 25 who return to the local authority for assistance with education or training reassume their 'former relevant' (i.e. care leaver) status until they have completed the prescribed programme.

Future Care leaver ('Eligible')

A young person who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks after the age of 14. They are still in the local authority's care but will be entitled to a leaving care offer once they leave. They are referred to in this document as Barnet's future care leaver cohort.

Additionally, young people who were detained in hospital or voluntary patients in hospital before the age of 16 and who remain detained at age 16 and immediately before having been detained or admitted to hospital, had been accommodated for 13 weeks by a local authority.

2. Profile of care leavers in Barnet

2.1 Introduction

In Barnet, there are 195 young people eligible for care leaving services (Sept 2016).

The number of Barnet Care Leavers is forecast to increase in the coming years as a result of a number of trends:

- The increase in eligible young people, as more children in Barnet have entered care in the past year than previous years
- Increasing numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children in care and leaving care

- 16 and 17 year olds who present as homeless may become looked after children
- The Social Work Bill will require additional care leavers aged 21 – 24 to receive support from a Personal Advisor under the proposals in the Bill, to a maximum of an additional 187 young people by 2019/20 assuming full take up.

2.2 Age

The age of transition to and from care leavers' services differs across local authorities, spanning ages 15 to 25. In Barnet, care leavers transition to Onwards and Upwards at the age of 17 years and 9 months. Care leavers leave the service at age 21, or 25 if they have a disability or are in education.

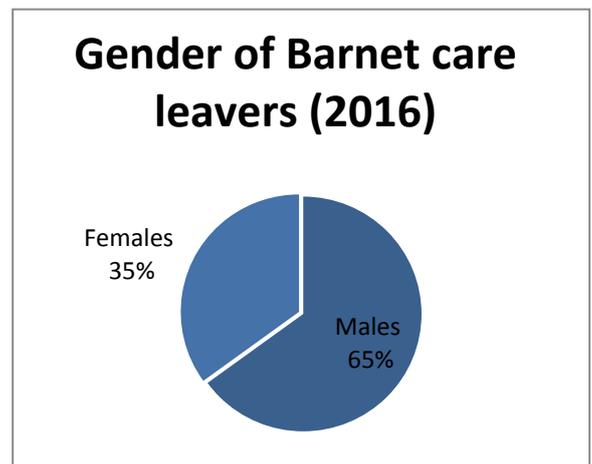
In Barnet, 18-21 year olds make up 89% of the care leaver cohort. This is similar to the national picture however Barnet has significantly more 18 year olds and fewer 21 year olds compared with nationally. This may be because more young people are entering care in their teenage years, sometimes voluntarily, and because of an increase in Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

Future cohorts	Age									
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
30th September 2015	35%	65%								
30th September 2016	53%	47%								
Current cohort	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
30th September 2015	2%	3%	27%	27%	25%	10%	3%	2%	1%	1%
30th September 2016	2%	2%	36%	22%	24%	7%	4%	3%	1%	1%

2.3 Gender

Nationally, the breakdown of care leavers by gender is as follows: 58% male and 42% female.

Barnet's wider population aged 18-21 is 53% male, 47% female. **In both the current and future cohort of Barnet care leavers, there is a significantly higher proportion of males (65%) than females (35%).** This figure is in part a reflection of Barnet's children in care cohort where males are overrepresented at 61%. This also reflects the higher proportion of males in the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker cohort.



2.4 Ethnicity

The most prominent ethnicity in the Barnet care leaver cohort is White (42%) which is significantly lower than the borough's 16-25 population (circa 60%).

BME ethnic groups are over represented in both Barnet's current care leaver and future care leaver cohorts. The Asian ethnic group is under-represented within both cohorts; however it appears that numbers will increase as future cohorts come through.

From the data available on current and future cohorts, **English is the most widely spoken language.** 10 other languages are recorded.

Approximately 15% of Barnet's population identify as Jewish. However this is not reflected within the looked after children population where only 4% of this cohort are Jewish.

2.5 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

20% of Barnet's current care leaver cohort are or were Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (n=39).

This figure is projected to increase up to a cap of 63 (which would be 32% of the current care leaver population), given ongoing global events and local authorities' responsibilities in this area.

2.6 Special Educational Needs (SEN)

In 2016, 14.4% of pupils nationally had special educational needs.

20% of Barnet's current care leaving population is recorded as having special educational needs.

2.7 Parenting

7% (n=6/82) of care leavers sampled were a parent.

Comparator data is not readily available.

2.8 Gang Membership

4% (n=3/82) of care leavers sampled were identified as being in a gang.

A further 6% (n=5/82) were identified as being edge-of-gang, which refers to association with gang members, or struggling with violent behaviour that puts the young person at risk of gang-related activity.

Comparator data is not readily available.

3. Education, Employment and Training

3.1 Introduction

A young person's experience in care has an impact on their educational attainment once they have left care.

Research shows a positive correlation between a young person's time spent in care, the stability of their placement and their educational performance². There is also a close relationship between care leavers' emotional wellbeing and their successful engagement in education, employment and training (EET).

In Barnet 63% of care leavers are in EET which is an improvement of 10% from 2015. This is also higher than the national rate.

84% of care leavers in EET are in full-time education, employment or training. For the majority of the Barnet cohort, this means full-time participation in education other than higher education (including college).

3.2 Aspirations

Low esteem and lack of confidence can prevent care leavers from achieving or seizing new opportunities. **Nationally, care leavers are five times less likely than their peers to attend university** and it is often confidence that determines which young people attend university³.

In a survey completed by Barnet care leavers, when presented with the statement 'I want the best for myself now and in the future', on a scale of 1-5 (with 5 being completely agree), the average score was 4.8. The lowest independent score given was a 3, which means that no young person disagreed with this statement. This shows that **Barnet care leavers have very high aspirations for themselves.**

In 5 years I want to:

- Be working as a carpet fitter
- Have finished my BA in music and have opened my first music studio
- Be a vet
- Work in a well-paid trade
- Be working full-time with my own place

(5 Barnet care leavers)

Professionals also play a central role in building aspirations, so that care leavers are empowered to take up new opportunities. Within the Barnet survey, care leavers were asked to scale the statement: 'professionals in Barnet have high hopes for me' (with 5 being 'completely agree'). The average score was 3.7 with 57% giving a 4 or 5, which shows how **Barnet care leavers perceive Barnet professionals as being aspirational for them, too.**

3.3 Care Leavers in Education, Employment and Training

When surveyed about the challenges they face, **38% of the Barnet cohort stated education, employment and training as the main challenge for them;** in particular gaining employment.

At the same time, **48% of Barnet care leavers surveyed stated that employment, education and training presented the biggest opportunity for them.**

² Who Cares Trust: *Open Doors, Open Minds* (2011/12)

³ Ibid

Similarly, when answering what they want to be doing in 5 years' time, **67% of respondents referred to education, employment or training opportunities.**

3.3.1 Education

The aspirations of professionals for care leavers plays a key role in the educational outcomes that they achieve, as well as the ability of professionals to provide guidance around all of the opportunities.

In Barnet and other local authorities, care leavers who spent all of their time in foster care are more likely to be in education, employment and training, on average. **In Barnet, 71% of care leavers who were in foster care only were later engaged in EET, as opposed to 40% in EET from other placement types** (residential, secure etc.), or a variety. This was echoed by a worker, who saw a noticeable difference in the motivation of young people who had experienced a stable period of care in foster care to those who had not.

3.3.2 Higher Education

Nationally, care leavers are five times less likely than their peers to attend university. There is little national data to demonstrate the comparative educational attainment of care leavers against their peers once they are in higher education.

9% (n=25) of Barnet's current care leaving population attends university. This is higher than the national figure for care leavers (6%), but still significantly lower than 33% of the general public that go to university⁴ (NAO 2015).



Higher education is the only way for me to fully be independent. It also opens doors for jobs

(Barnet Care Leaver)

3.3.3 Apprenticeships

Nationally, care leavers aged 19 to 21 not at university are eight times less likely to be apprentices, compared to the general population⁵. **Only 2% (n=3) of Barnet's care leavers are undertaking apprenticeships**, which is slightly below the national percentage (3%).

Apprenticeships provide a vital route into longer-term employment and there are clearly significant barriers nationally and locally to care leavers' taking up apprenticeship opportunities. At the same time, it is important to note that there can be discrepancies in the quality of apprenticeships and staff would want to ensure that young people are opting for high-quality apprenticeships that help them progress.

Survey findings from Onwards and Upwards staff indicate that this is as a result of the low apprenticeship wage, which presents care leavers with financial challenges. There are also cost implications of taking up an apprenticeship, including travel costs.

⁴ National Audit Office, [Care Leavers' Transitions to Adulthood](#) (2015)

⁵ Children's Commissioner: [Delivering a Care Leaving Strategy for traineeships and apprenticeships](#) (2016)

3.4 Care Leavers who are not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)

Nationally, 15% of young people in the general population are not in education, employment or training (NEET), which contrasts with more than 40% of 19-year old care leavers nationally who are NEET.

In Barnet, the percentage of care leavers who are NEET is 32%, which is below the national average. Some of Barnet's care leavers are NEET owing to illness and disability as identified by the practitioner (which may include learning disability); for others pregnancy and parenting may be a barrier to engagement in EET.

A dip sample revealed the following detail around care leavers who are NEET for reasons other than these:

Reason	Total (n)	Total (%)
Custody	1	5%
Non-engagement	1	5%
Lack of aspiration/ confidence/ motivation	7	37%
Immigration issues	4	21%
Want to find a job but no success	4	21%
Lacking qualifications	2	11%
Total	19	(100%)

Onwards and Upwards staff emphasised the need for not only a strong EET offer, but also an offer that fosters a mind-set in young people that helps them to engage sustainably in EET. This is often in the context of ongoing negative associations with education.

Local data shows that the following variables can have an impact on a young person's likelihood of becoming NEET:

Age of entry to care

- In Barnet, children who entered care later (15+) were not more likely to become NEET. This is different from other local authorities where this is the case.
- Children who entered care at 10 or under were less likely to be future NEET
- Young people entering care at 14 or 16 were more likely to be NEET.

Type of provision during care

- There is a correlation between young people spending more time in residential care and becoming NEET.

Time in and out of care

- Children who spent time out of care (for example, they returned home to their family for a period) are almost twice as likely to be NEET

Stability

- Children with even 2 placements (as opposed to 1) since their 10th birthday were significantly more likely to be NEET.

4. Housing

4.1 Introduction

Housing is described as “a vehicle for stability” for care leavers and affects a wide range of other outcomes (Demos and Barnardo’s, 2010). Care leavers most likely to have housing needs are those who left care at a young age, young people with a health need or disability, those with mental health issues, substance use or offending needs⁶.

Housing is about more than the physical environment that young people live in, although the suitability of the accommodation is an important factor. Care leavers define safe, settled accommodation as follows⁷:

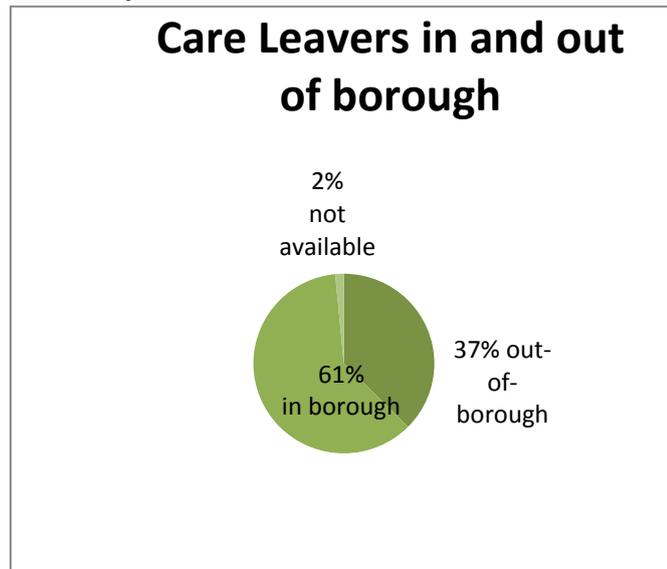
- having a choice when to leave care
- being prepared for leaving care
- having a choice in their accommodation
- being and feeling safe
- having practical and personal support
- having support from family, friends and former carers
- having financial support
- being involved in services affecting them.

61% of Barnet care leavers live within the borough of Barnet.

Of the 37% of care leavers that are placed out-of-borough, two-thirds live within the London area and a further third are placed nationally.

One in five of Barnet’s care leavers surveyed said that accommodation provided the biggest challenge for them. 70% of all complaints raised with the advocacy service by care leavers were about accommodation.

Strong relationships have been developed between the Onwards and Upwards teams, and various housing teams. Workers stated that many care leavers come



⁶ Barnados: [On my own: The accommodation needs of young people leaving care in England](#) (2014)

⁷ Stein, M: [Increasing the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation'](#) (2010).

back post-21 to resolve housing difficulties, including where the case is no longer open.

4.2 Suitable Accommodation

Accommodation is regarded as suitable if it provides safe, secure and affordable provision for young people. It would generally include short-term accommodation designed to move young people on to stable longer-term accommodation, but excludes emergency accommodation used in a crisis.

A Barnet audit undertaken in November 2016 demonstrated that **96% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation**. This compares favourably to the national average and statistical neighbours, where 79% of care leavers are in suitable accommodation.

As at September 2016, for those in suitable accommodation:

- Nearly half (49%) were living independently
- 13% of care leavers were living semi-independently or in transitional accommodation.
- 9% were staying with former foster carers ('Staying Put')⁸
- 8% were living with parents/relatives

Barnet does not use bed and breakfast accommodation, as this is unsuitable accommodation.

4.3 Staying Put

The national 'Staying Put' arrangement, in place since 2013, allows care leavers to stay with their foster carers after they turn 18, if the young person and foster carer agree to this arrangement.

As at January 2016, 15% (n=28) of Barnet's care leavers in and out of borough are living with former foster carers after they turn 18, via the Staying Put arrangement. This is despite the fact that the majority of Barnet's care leavers live with foster carers immediately before leaving care.

A number of workers spoke highly of Staying Put, as it supports young people to continue to engage in education and gives them a more gradual transition to living independently. Conditions conducive to the Staying Put arrangement include a positive placement that meets the young person's needs, and the will of both the young person and foster carer to continue with the arrangement. Workers highlighted the discrepancy between this excellent offer and the offer for young people for whom Staying Put was not an option.

In some cases there may not be the will from either party to continue this arrangement; however, the low percentage of uptake suggests that foster carers are not fully informed about this relatively new option from a sufficiently early stage.

⁸ Note that the rate is higher at 15% as at January 2017

There is a need for an offer for those young people for whom Staying Put is not an option, and who cannot access semi-independent accommodation.

4.4 Unsuitable Accommodation

Of the 4% (n=9) of Barnet care leavers in unsuitable accommodation, as demonstrated in a November 2016 audit:

- 33% (n=3) were in a youth offending institution
- 22% (n=2) were not engaging with the service
- 33% (n=3) did not want to move from their unsuitable property and/or refused accommodation offered

4.5 Temporary Accommodation

Temporary accommodation is defined by the Housing Act as an interim housing arrangement, which is deemed suitable.

Temporary accommodation is not the preferred option for care leavers, and workers attested that placing care leavers in temporary accommodation can be challenging. Any young person without leave to remain is placed in emergency temporary accommodation. As at October 2016, 18 care leavers were listed with Barnet Homes as being in temporary accommodation.

More could be done to ensure that the needs of the young person being placed in temporary accommodation are fully appreciated. However, a shortage of housing stock means that care leavers stay in temporary accommodation before a longer-term housing solution is found.

4.6 Semi-independent and supported accommodation

There is a need for a greater volume of semi-independent and supported accommodation for both those young people who are not yet ready to enter a longer-term tenancy, as a transitional phase. This would also help to reduce the number in temporary accommodation and in arrears.

This is being progressed through the Placements Strategy.

4.7 Longer-term Tenancies

Longer-term tenancies are defined here as tenancies that are 5 years or longer. As at January 2016, 73% of our care leaver cohort living in-borough are in longer-term tenancies.

Longer-term tenancies provide stability that temporary accommodation cannot provide. Workers spoke highly of the relationship between the Onwards and Upwards team and the housing teams for care leavers in longer-term tenancies.

However, workers expressed concerns that young people were not always ready to take on the responsibility of a longer-term tenancy, leading to arrears in council tax and rent. They were clear that a greater range of semi-independent accommodation would help to build resilience prior to the young person entering a longer-term arrangement.

4.8 Choice of placement

A survey by Barnado's⁹ found that having a choice about where they lived was particularly important for care leavers who had unstable placements during their time in care.

National research reveals that only 69% of care leavers felt that they were in the right accommodation for them (Morgan, 2014) and that over half (55%) of care leavers felt that they had "no real choice" in the accommodation offered to them (A National Voice, 2005). This is compounded by forthcoming changes in national legislation, which places restrictions on the housing that care leavers are able to access.

In Barnet there is a need for a bespoke pathway for care leavers that allows more opportunity for planning, choice and support, via the housing nominations process.

4.9 Homelessness

Research studies show that about one-third of young people with care backgrounds experience homelessness at some stage between six and 24 months after leaving care¹⁰. 25% of homeless people nationally have been in care¹¹.

A study by Barnado's¹² indicated that problems with managing an independent tenancy and living on a low budget increased the risk of homelessness amongst care leavers.

Barnet currently has no care leavers in its care who are homeless. However, longer-term data on homelessness, following the young person's departure from the service, is not available and national data shows that care leavers are significantly overrepresented in the homeless population.

5. Health and Wellbeing

5.1 Introduction

Care Leavers have often suffered abuse and neglect during childhood, which are known to have a significant impact in adulthood. Many care leavers spoke about an abrupt withdrawal of support upon leaving care¹³. In an NSPCC survey, many interviewees also emphasised the variation in skills and aptitude for supporting looked after children's emotional wellbeing among social workers

As was voiced in many interviews conducted by the NSPCC, young people leaving care frequently experience many transitions in a short period of time, including

⁹ Barnado's: [On my own: The accommodation needs of young people leaving care in England](#) (2014)

¹⁰ Stein, M: [Increasing the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation'](#) (2010).

¹¹ National Audit Office: [Care Leavers' Transition to Adulthood](#) (July 2015)

¹² Barnado's: [On my own: The accommodation needs of young people leaving care in England](#) (2014)

¹³ NSPCC: [Achieving emotional wellbeing for looked after children](#) (2015)

leaving their placement (and carer), a change of key worker and, in some cases, moving to a new geographical area to live in new accommodation. This means that leaving care can be a stressful time, which impacts on a young person's health and wellbeing. Discussions with young people and professionals indicate that preparation for leaving care tends to be focused overwhelmingly on practical concerns rather than on emotional preparation.

5.2 Disability and Learning Disability

14% of Barnet care leavers have a disability. Comparator data is not readily available for the national 18-25 cohort, but there is likely to be an overrepresentation of disability in the care leaver cohort given that 16% of the UK population aged 16-64 has a disability – and care leavers are at the lower end of this spectrum.

0.5% of the Barnet adult population have a learning disability. **11% (n=9/82) of care leavers sampled were identified as having a learning disability.**

Of these:

- 7% have a severe or moderate learning disability
- 4% have a mild learning disability.

5.3 Mental Health

A study of care leavers' outcomes found that those who left care with poor mental health were at greater risk of experiencing homelessness and were twice as likely to have poor employment outcomes¹⁴. Around half of care leavers nationally have a SDQ score¹⁵ that is cause for concern.

A care leaver surveyed by the NSPCC said that for him, poor wellbeing was "waking up and thinking 'oh is it today already?'"

Onwards and Upwards staff fed back that there was significant need around mental health in the care leaver population, both at a lower-level where poor mental health was a barrier to accessing service, to higher-level needs that may or may not have a diagnosis.

Accessing adult mental health is the first step, then I can think about working

(Barnet care leaver)

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) cases are closed on the young person's 18th birthday, and these often do not meet thresholds for adult social care intervention; however, these young people have the added complexities and vulnerabilities of being care leavers. One worker highlighted the ways in which low-level mental health issues can have a significant impact on a young person's ability to engage with education, employment and training.

¹⁴ NSPCC: [Achieving emotional wellbeing for looked after children](#) (2015)

¹⁵ The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a brief measure of psychological well-being in 2-17 year olds. It is probably the most widely used measure of its kind.

In the Barnet survey conducted in November, **few care leavers selected 'being well' as a key challenge for them. It is likely that this is a significant underrepresentation, given the stigma surrounding mental health.**

Circa 15% of men and women aged 18-64 in Barnet have some form of common mental health disorder¹⁶.

To gain a more nuanced picture of mental health issues, 82 cases were analysed across 4 Onwards and Upwards workers. This revealed that:

- **39% of the Barnet care leaver cohort has mental health issues**
- **16% have mental health issues at a higher tier** (significant/diagnosed mental health issue)
- **23% have mental health issues at a lower tier** (poor mental health).

6. Managing finances

6.1 Introduction

Research by Barnado's¹⁷ shows that budgeting is particularly difficult for young people living alone after leaving care. Many young people found the abrupt shift from having few responsibilities while in care to running their own household to be a significant challenge, even if they had previously felt prepared to live alone or had support to move towards independence.

We are left with a lot of instant decisions.

(Barnet Care Leaver)

When surveyed, **43% of Barnet care leavers said that their biggest challenge was living independently.** 78% of those said that this was in particular down to managing finances. Following this, when asked what support could help them in overcoming this challenge, common themes were help with council tax and housing benefits.

6.2 Transitions

At present, young people in care transition to care-leaving services at **17 years and 9 months.**

This means that the young person may move out of their placement, exit education and receive a change of social worker at a significant transition point in their lives, all whilst starting to manage their finances.

There is a need for better planning for points of transition, taking into regard the vulnerabilities of the young person.

6.3 Benefits

¹⁶ Barnet JSNA

¹⁷ Barnado's: [On my own: The accommodation needs of young people leaving care in England](#) (2014)

National research and local insight suggests that navigating the benefits system can be difficult for care leavers, especially as they may be entitled to a variety of benefits that alter according to their changeable employment or housing status.

[Many care leavers] want to work, but as soon as they do, they have difficulty making payments and they're not financially better off.

Social Worker, O&U team

Benefits may also provide disincentives to engage in education, employment or training, as the young person may receive a smaller overall amount of money, particularly if they move into an apprenticeship or entry-level job. Onwards and Upwards workers attested to these very real barriers to care leavers taking up opportunities.

6.4 Council Tax

The majority of care leavers fall into the lower council tax bands A and B. Care leavers pay council tax to their host local authority.

A survey was undertaken at the August 2016 Care Leavers' BBQ around issues important to care leavers. Of the 32 care leavers surveyed, **60% selected council tax as an area of concern**. Other key areas of concern were housing and benefits; more so than issues like relationships, crime and parenting.

Being able to live independently, manage my bills and prove I can do it presents the biggest opportunity for me

(Barnet Care Leaver)

Whilst some care leavers have in the past been left with council tax concerns and some have been referred to the bailiff, links between the leaving care team and revenues are much improved and have led to discretionary reductions being granted to some care leavers. Most are already entitled to Council Tax Support, but under Barnet's current scheme 20% remains due.

An additional discretionary hardship fund is also available, which is applied on a case by case basis. A review is underway to ensure that care leavers are supported adequately by the council tax team, and that all applicable discounts are applied.

6.5 Emergency Payments

Occasionally, young people will require small emergency payments to tide them over in times of financial need. A number of workers raised the issue of easily getting money to young people in an emergency, noting that the current payments system was not sufficiently flexible to enable a swift and resource-light transfer of funds.

7. Care Leaving Services

7.1 Introduction

Ofsted has reported that 64% of care leaver services inspected are inadequate or require improvement. Lack of personal support was a problem for care leavers at many of the local authorities it has inspected. Care leaving services were graded 'Good' at Barnet's previous Ofsted inspection, across the following domains: being well, staying safe, enjoying and achieving and making a positive contribution (including user engagement).

Nationally, professionals were often concerned about the limitations in support that they were able to offer to care leavers¹⁸. The Barnet care leaving team has highlighted that in order to provide the best possible service for care leavers, a more flexible approach to the working day needs to be considered.

There is a correlation between the resourcing of care leaving services and how supported care leavers feel¹⁹.

7.2 Feedback from Care Leavers

In response to the survey question 'What works well for you?' many care leavers mentioned the help they were getting from their worker and/or supportive staff at Onwards and Upwards.

At a recent focus group, care leavers talked enthusiastically about the help that they had received from their social workers and personal advisers.

7.3 Caseloads

A sample of 22 local authorities across England showed that there was an average of 25 cases per worker. In Barnet, the workload for the Onwards and Upwards team in October 2016 was 195 cases with an average caseload of 17.7 cases. Lower caseloads support good practice.

When it comes into force, the Social Work Bill will require the local authority to work with care leavers up to the age of 25, regardless of their circumstances. This will require additional resource of up to 10 personal advisors in 2019-20 to work with 187 additional young people aged 21-24.

Staff raised the fact that there was further work ongoing with older care leavers who did not meet the threshold for case-reopening, but were still vulnerable and requiring ad hoc services from the team in order to live independently and keep safe.

7.4 Participation

Children and young people in care, and care leavers, consistently report that good emotional wellbeing and *feeling listened to* are one and the same thing. Looked after

¹⁸ NSPCC: [Achieving emotional wellbeing for looked after children](#) (2015)

¹⁹ Ibid

children and care leavers reported that want to be valued by their local authorities as experts on the care system²⁰.

Work is ongoing in Barnet, supported by the Participation Strategy and action plan, to strengthen the participation and engagement of both children in care and care leavers. A care leaver, who is undertaking an apprenticeship at LB Barnet, facilitates the child in care/care leaver council (#BOP) and there is a care leaver representative within this group.

7.5 Facilities and Activities

The Woodhouse Road centre was highlighted as an excellent resource by care leavers, staff and partners. Young people stated that they valued access to the DWP coach, housing advisor, and their social workers/personal advisors, as well as computers and other facilities.

88% of care leavers surveyed at the summer BBQ said that they were happy with the service received at Woodhouse Road and areas for improvement related largely to physical improvements to the hub and gardens.

It was noted by workers that care leavers who live at the other side of Barnet, which is London's largest borough by size, or out-of-borough, were less likely to be able to access services at Woodhouse Road.

Staff reported that young people generally know about the drop-ins available, but that the appointment times do not always fit in with young people's lives. At the same time, attendance has been variable when evening drop-ins have been made available.

Events with food are well-attended. Staff report that care leavers enjoy the informal setting of these events, including barbeques and themed food nights.

7.6 Frontline work

Staff spoke of the important role that they plan in helping young people manage risk themselves, and manage risk to the young person. This risk may fluctuate considerably and risk assessment is an ongoing process.

Staff also spoke about the need to build aspiration and self-esteem, but the possible barriers to achieving this when practical tasks needed to be carried out with the young person during a visit. This was particularly the case where the young person lived out-of-borough.

7.7 Keeping in touch

Over the past 6 months, Barnet has kept in touch with 99% of its care leavers. This compares very favourably to the national picture and demonstrates that care leavers see the value of continued relations with a social worker or PA.

²⁰ Ibid

8. Care Leaving Services in Barnet

8.1 Introduction

Barnet's care leaving service, Onwards and Upwards, is situated within the Permanence, Transition and Corporate Parenting service area of Family Services.

The team is based at Woodhouse Road, North Finchley. As at January 2016, the team consists of a Head of Service, Team Manager, Deputy Team manager, 2 Advanced Practitioner, 3 full time equivalent social workers and 5.5 FTE personal advisors, with a further personal advisor being recruited. The team is experienced and culturally diverse, reflecting the diversity of young people. The management team is recruits with this in mind. In addition, there are resources and staff dedicated to care leavers across Family Services and the wider council, as part of its Corporate Parenting role

All care leavers are supported by a Social Worker or Personal Advisor from the Onwards and Upwards team. They support the young person to transition from care, and provide them with advice, support and a meaningful pathway plan as a care leaver. Staff are readily available for young people to contact, via email, phone or drop-in at Woodhouse Road on weekdays. Thursdays are the busiest days of the week for drop-ins.

8.2 Services

At Woodhouse Road, young people are supported to access specialist services; housing; education, employment and training; money management; volunteering opportunities; drug and alcohol services; health services and immigration services.

To facilitate this, the Onwards and Upwards team have the following core offer in place:

Topic	Organisation	Frequency
EET	Job Centre Plus	Up to 3x week
EET	Virtual School	1x week
EET	Drive Forward	1x week
EET	Bridging the Gap	2x week
Housing	Barnet Homes	1x month
Living Independently	Money Management	1:1 via referral
Being Well	Sexual Health	1x month
Being Well	Drug counselling (YPDAS)	1x week
Being Well	Family Nurse Partnership	1:1 referral

Care Leavers are invited to access care-leaving services via the care leaving hub at Woodhouse Road, but they are also supported in the community and remotely, both in and out of borough.

A training flat is available for young people to experience independence and prepare them for managing their own or semi-independent accommodation. There is

logistical and emotional support to attend appointments, including health, housing and court.

A range of events take place throughout the year, including the care leavers' BBQ, achievements day and seasonal celebrations for a range of different cultural activities.

Woodhouse Road provides a 'safe space' for all care leavers, with facilities including computers, a pool table and a relaxation area. Staff are on duty daily to provide immediate support and assistance to care leavers as required.

8.3 Working with partners

Onwards and Upwards have sought to build strong strategic links with housing, council tax and benefits team, to ensure that care leavers' vulnerabilities are known and supported in a holistic way. Care leavers are flagged on the housing system. Quarterly meetings take place with Barnet Homes to address housing issues including the training flat, processes and any issues.

For council tax, an officer provides dedicated support to young people in long term tenancies in-borough only. Council tax matters are handled through the council's contact centre, where two officers have informally agreed to be the point of contact for care leavers.

The Housing Benefit Team Manager is now the first point of contact for all applications for care leavers living in-borough and ensures that they are handled promptly and sensitively. This link has helped to avoid the eviction of care leavers from their properties.

8.4 Feedback

There is a clear governance structure for children in care and care leavers to be aware of their rights, entitlements and for their views, wishes and feelings to be taken into account in planning for their current and future development.

Channels such as questionnaires and feedback from complaints, compliments and comments, ensure that services are designed and delivered with care leavers' input.

8.5 Innovation

Barnet is currently working with Social Finance as one of six local authorities as part of the Leaving Well analytics hub to develop tools and a 'what works' centre to improve services and outcomes for care leavers.