Appendix 2 – Learn2Live – NEET paper

This report will summarise the work that has been ongoing in the Learn2Live Team (Leaving Care) to address issues of employment, education and training with respect to Barking and Dagenham’s care leavers. It will also provide the plans that are being implemented to improve performance.

Introduction
The key issue for this area of work within Children’s Services is to improve performance in respect of improving life chances for care leavers by ensuring that they are engaged in education, employment and training and are not NEET. This has always been a challenge due to the issues care leavers experience in their personal lives, but is made even more difficult in the current economic climate.

In 2012-13, our performance for this indicator was 56.4%, which increased from 40.4% the previous year. Our statistical neighbour performance was 51.6% and the national average was 58%.

Prior to 2013-14, the cohort that was monitored relating to this performance indicator was care leavers reaching the age of 19 in that year (3 months before or 1 month after their birthday), they were in employment, education or training or considered to be NEET. This year the cohort has been expanded to include all care leavers up to the age of 21. This has increased the cohort considerably (from an initial 38 young people to 165). The borough’s cohort target for 2013-2014 has also increased to 60%.

It is clearly acknowledged that the Learn2Live Team has a duty to provide services to all care leavers until the age of 21 (or 25 if in further education), but a significant number of young people choose not to receive this service between the ages of 18-21. They are classed as adults once they reach the age of 18 and this makes engagement more difficult. Continued attempts are made to maintain contact or resume a service if the young person re-presents at some point during this period. Some of the young people in this cohort are failed asylum seekers. This group of young people are aware of their status and then choose to no longer remain in contact in case we inform the Home Office of their whereabouts. These young people make their own arrangements and often have their own support mechanisms in place.

Issues
In addition to the issues outlined above, many young people have experienced a high level of neglect or abuse, resulting in them being in care in the first place. These experiences can have long standing implications for how resilient some young people are and how they can move on in their lives. Many of our care leavers experience the following issues: substance misuse, criminal activity, emotional difficulties, learning difficulties, anger management and relationship problems, young parents (some of whom lose their children as they are unable to care for them safely), ongoing dysfunctional family relationships and gang culture/activity.

All of the above issues impact on a young person’s level of motivation when trying to sustain attendance at college or a job and maintaining a daily routine. This is coupled with the challenges of finding appropriate courses, training opportunities, apprenticeships and employment opportunities in today’s economic climate. Young people from the general
population are struggling to find EET options, without the complexities of the issues facing many care leavers.

As a result of the issues highlighted above the team face some very hard challenges to engage young people. There is a high level of ‘hand holding’ required to even get someone to attend an interview at college before being able to encourage them to attend and maintain their attendance on a course.

Another factor that needs consideration is the benefit implications for young people taking on training/apprenticeship opportunities. Apprenticeship opportunities provide an average incentive of £110.00 per week. However this is then considered a wage, resulting in their Housing Benefit being reduced and they are eligible to pay Council Tax.

Following a financial assessment (monthly calculation) with a small group of 3 young people the average outgoings were as follows.....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill’s</th>
<th>Monthly Payments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council Tax</td>
<td>£50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>£196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric</td>
<td>£22 - 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas</td>
<td>£14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>£120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.V license</td>
<td>£12.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>£17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>£54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>£22.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>£515.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering the above their outgoings exceed their income by a sum of £75.88. This calculation also allows you to appreciate that there are no luxuries e.g. clothes nor socializing has been accounted for.

Apart from the above having a major impact there is also the issue of benefit dependency which for some young people is inherited as well as their low level of motivation.

**Action taken to support NEET Care Leavers**

The Learn2Live Team continues to hold dedicated events (create your future) throughout the year for young people to access a vast variety of EET provisions all under one roof. Although there is success on the day with the number of young people who access the event, the struggle remains with the motivation of the young people to sustain the opportunities provided.

The NEET worker we appointed to work directly with our young people now works 3 days a week instead of 2.5 days and although she is based in our drop in facility and continues to offer careers advise, practical support such as identifying opportunities, completing applications and CVs, interview preparations, the plan in the near future is for her to provide surgeries within accommodation providers.

Towards the end of last year much time and effort was put in engaging our young people in one of the borough’s commissioned provisions. It was unfortunate that due to difficulties
experienced around the quality of the service and communication issues it resulted in our young people losing confidence in provisions which has also impacted on their motivation to engage in future services offered.

The team focuses on ensuring the young people who are EET maintain this through positive events. The team’s second Achievement Awards Ceremony took place in November 2013 where we were able to dedicate an evening to celebrating young people’s individual achievements and providing them with awards.

Whilst the team have continued to review and develop initiatives, they are faced with new issues all the time. The current issues include the restrictions on young people that although there are numerous providers available to engage and support young people, they all receive their funding from the DFE therefore young people can only ‘sign up’ with one provision, reducing their opportunities. There is also a lack of provisions available to 19 + cohort.

**Current & Future plans to support NEET Care Leavers**

The continuation of the dedicated events exploring new opportunities available to young people leaving care. The team’s events vary and are focused on facilitating engagement of young people even if they are not linked directly to NEET issues; it is believed the positive engagement will improve their desire to engage in EET. These events include ‘Create your future’, cooking sessions, Theatre trips, Theme Park, Bowling, Summer BBQ, Awards evening etc.

Using the NEET worker allocated to the team we aim to improve the quality of our data and tracking of young people who are NEET.

In the New Year we aim to target a group of NEET young people and engage them on an intensive course. Our aim is to develop relationships further as this proves the main source of success, motivate the young people using CIC success stories, offer intensive support and handpick opportunities for them and assist them taking the first step. This programme has a cost implication and we are currently exploring where we can gain support with this.

In the summer of this year a large piece of work that was initiated was a NEET / EET survey across the team’s open case load (219 young people) gaining their views around the barriers preventing them from accessing EET or attempting to sustain EET, as well as the support they feel they require to access or sustain EET. The feedback received was that young people wish to continue to receive the ongoing advice and assistance they get from their allocated workers. They also would like the continued support with education bursaries, travel expenses and being able to benefit from a laptop as well as additional financial support to allow them to participate in all areas of their course e.g. college trips and equipment. Young people who have no recourse to public funds expressed a wish to access alternative courses other than ESOL.

The information collated has been reviewed and will continue to be used to help us improve service delivery in order to reduce our current NEET figures.