

LAC TRANSITION TEAM

ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2013 TO MARCH 2014

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 2013-2014 has been an interesting, challenging and increasingly busy year for the team. We have made good progress in many of our aims for the year including the successful integration into the team of the supported accommodation service previously managed by NACRO, the establishment of a care leavers steering group and improvement in some key practice areas for example, working with young people who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation or who are missing through our links to the sexually exploited, missing and trafficked (SEMT) panel.

1.2 We have also seen improvement in respect of key performance indicators and improvements in respect of the quality of assessment and outcome focussed planning in respect of both care and pathway planning following the implementation of the single assessment documentation and the training associated with this.

1.3 Our progress has, however, slowed over the second half of the year in some areas, particularly strategically, as workloads have increased, given the rise in the number of looked after children and those qualifying for aftercare services, resulting in the service having to increasingly focus on practice to ensure that the needs of our young people are prioritised.

1.4 We welcome that these workload constraints have been recognised and redressed in the proposals for the LAC restructure though the provision of some additional posts and look forward to pressing forward strategically and achieving the objectives set out in the team's plan in the forthcoming year

1.5 This report details the vision of the LAC Transitions Team and the service we provide and comments on future goals

2 LAC TRANSITIONS TEAMS VISION

2.1 The team's vision is informed by legislation, statutory guidance and departmental policy and guidance including The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Children and Young Person's Act 2008, Wolverhampton's Children and Young People's plan 2011 – 2014 and the Corporate Parenting Action Plan.

2.2 Our vision is to improve outcomes for Looked After young people aged 14 – 18 years and Care Leavers in all areas of the Every Child Matters agenda.

We aim to provide a service which:

- Is accessible to young people
- Is child focussed
- Encourages young people to reach their potential
- Encourages young people to participate in the development of the service
- Uses resources effectively and efficiently

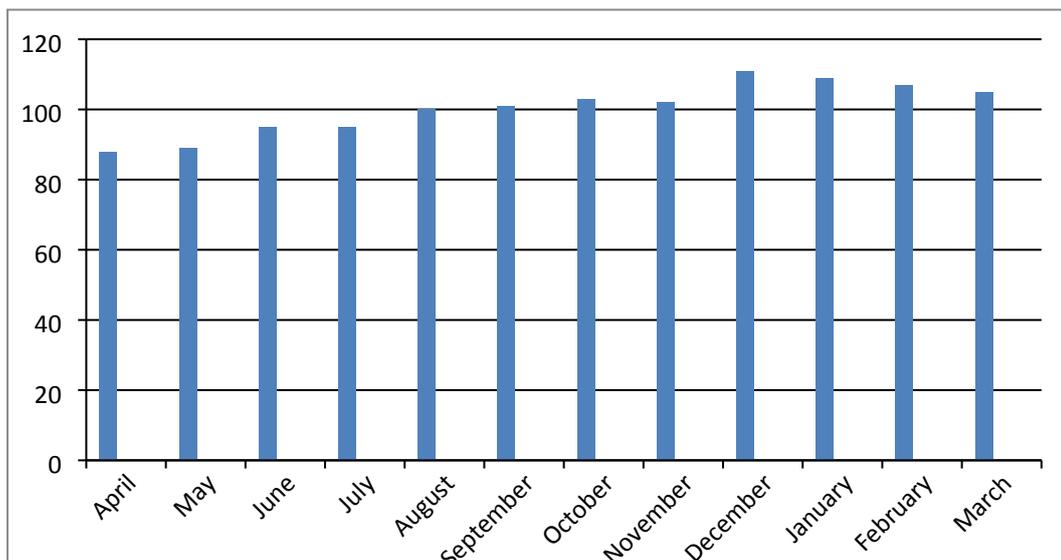
- Helps young people to prepare for and achieve independence
- Helps young people to avoid crisis and help them to identify and to respond to difficulties as they emerge
- Ensure young people know where to go for help and support
- Ensure young people are well supported by the team and our partner agencies
- Narrow the gaps between Looked After Children and Care Leavers and their peers in the community in all areas where these exist.
- Celebrates the success of young people

Our team plan details how we intend to achieve this.

3 Services Provided

3.1 We are a multi-disciplinary team comprising of qualified Social Workers, Personal Advisors, a Senior Housing Worker and an Education, Employment and Training Coordinator. (See appendix 1 for Staffing Structure chart)

3.2 We provided services for Looked After Children and Young People aged 14 to 25.



3.3 The above table illustrates the number of Looked After Children receiving a service from the team. This demonstrates a rise in the average number of looked after young people on a social workers caseload from 17.6 in April 2013 to a high of 22.2 in December. This data also slightly underestimates actual caseloads as Social Workers will also carry some child in need cases e.g. where a young person who had been looked after subject to section 20 Children Act 1989 is rehabilitated home. In practice the caseloads were also not evenly distributed as we had three newly qualified social workers on the team who needed to be afforded some caseload protection. Given the high caseloads it was agreed in December 2014 that an agency worker could be

used across the three LAC teams. Our third share of this worker brought the average number of looked after children on a social workers caseload down to 19.68 in March 2014.

3.4 The Social Workers are responsible for assessing the needs of LAC and for planning how these needs will be met. The Social Workers are also responsible for leading their 'hub' which are central to facilitating collaborative working between themselves and the Personal Advisors.

3.5 Personal Advisors and Social Workers share responsibility for developing and implementing a Care Leavers 'pathway' to adult life. The pathway planning process changed slightly in summer 2013 with the introduction of new single assessment documents. Social workers retain responsibility for completing the assessment of need prior to the young person's 16th birthday but have gained the responsibility for recording the pathway plan for 16 and 17 year old Looked After Children. Each young person is required by statute to have a Pathway Plan when they are 16 years old. Personal Advisors contribute to the development of the pathway plan for 16 and 17 year old Looked After Children and continue to undertake direct work with them. They retain responsibility for reviewing and recording the pathway plan for care leavers over 18. Personal Advisors must visit Care Leavers, at a minimum of every 8 weeks.

3.6 The average caseload of a Personal Advisor has risen significantly throughout the year from 27 in April 2013 to 32/33 in March 2014. The Personal Advisors assume primary worker responsibility for young people aged 18-25 years and co-work with Social workers for Looked After Children from the age of 15 years and 9 months. This includes co-working with Social Workers from other teams as not all 14+ Looked After Children are transferred to the LAC Transitions Team e.g. where a LAC has younger siblings it is often best practice for the Social Worker on the LAC team to retain case responsibility for the whole sibling group.

3.7 The Employment, Education and Training (EET) Co-ordinator and Senior Housing Worker provided specialist advice and guidance to the Social Workers and Personal Advisors and undertake direct work with young people. The work of the team in the area of EET and accommodation is further detailed below

3.8 All assessment and planning completed within the team is child centred and involves the young person's family and friends, where appropriate, their carers' and other key professionals (see partnership section below).

4 Improving Outcomes for LAC and Care Leavers

4.1 The current structure of the team encourages earlier and better structured preparation for adult life and therefore improved outcomes for Looked After Children and care leavers. "A successful transition to independence is inevitably linked both to the quality of the care experience in general and the

specific support directed at the transition itself". (Rebecca Faith, Di Hart and Lisa Payne 2012). Previously with Social Workers and Personal Advisors working in separate teams referrals for Aftercare Services were regularly received late with the young person having received none or limited specific preparation for independence.

4.2 The multi-disciplinary nature of the LAC Transitions team redresses this. Our Social Workers and Personal Advisors work closely together in "Hubs" (See appendix 1) to ensure that planning for independence begins early, is collaborative, involves the young people, their carers' and others who support them and allows time for contingency planning when arrangements break down.

4.3 The "hub" arrangements also provides better continuity for the young people we work with as there is an expectation that all of the workers in the hub will have some knowledge about the young people in their hub and the young person will have some knowledge of the workers.

4.4 The structure also ensures that pathway plans are overseen and authorised by a qualified Social Work Practitioner.

5 Partnership work

5.1 Practitioners continue to involve all key agencies from private, statutory and third sector organisations in assessing the needs of children and young people and planning how these needs will be met.

5.2 We have also worked strategically with internal and external partners including Adult Services, Human Resources, Residential Services, Connexions, Wolverhampton Homes and other accommodation providers, NCAS, the Education and Business Partnership and Base 25 to improve service provision and have provided training for partners.

5.3 'Exchange' and joint training sessions continue to be undertaken with adult services to ensure that practitioners have a good understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities, to identify and overcome challenges in the transition process and to generally improve working relationships between the teams. The outcome of this has improved the transitional experience for young people. Young people with additional needs who may need support from Adults' Services are identified and referred at 16 with co-working between the two services commencing by the time the young person is 17 ½ years old.

5.4 LAC Transitions have also been represented on several of the work streams for the 'transforming transition project' which is driving forward improvements in transition for young people with additional needs more generally. One of the changes arising from this work has been the establishment of a transitional panel attended by senior managers to ensure that any obstacles to a smooth transition are addressed in a timely fashion.

5.5 We have continued to work with Care Advisory Service members, regionally and nationally, throughout the year to keep up to date with changes in leaving care and benchmark practice so we can improve practice and influence policy makers.

5.6 Work has been undertaken with the Youth Offending Service to encourage effective collaborative working between the two services for young people at risk of offending. This has included the development of a joint protocol for care leavers subject to Detention Training Orders to ensure that an effective plan is in place for their release.

5.7 With a view to develop their knowledge and contacts, each practitioner has chosen a specialist area to promote partnership work. This enables us to provide a team with a vast and diverse bank of knowledge which can be shared with colleagues.

5.8 The team are also represented at a number of forums including CFUG, the Sexually exploited, Missing and Trafficked Panel and Wolverhampton's Young Peoples' Accommodation Forum.

5.9 The work with Human Resources, Base 25, Connexions, the Education and Business Partnership and other housing providers is detailed in the education and accommodation sections below.

6 Providing education, employment and training (EET) opportunities for Care Leavers.

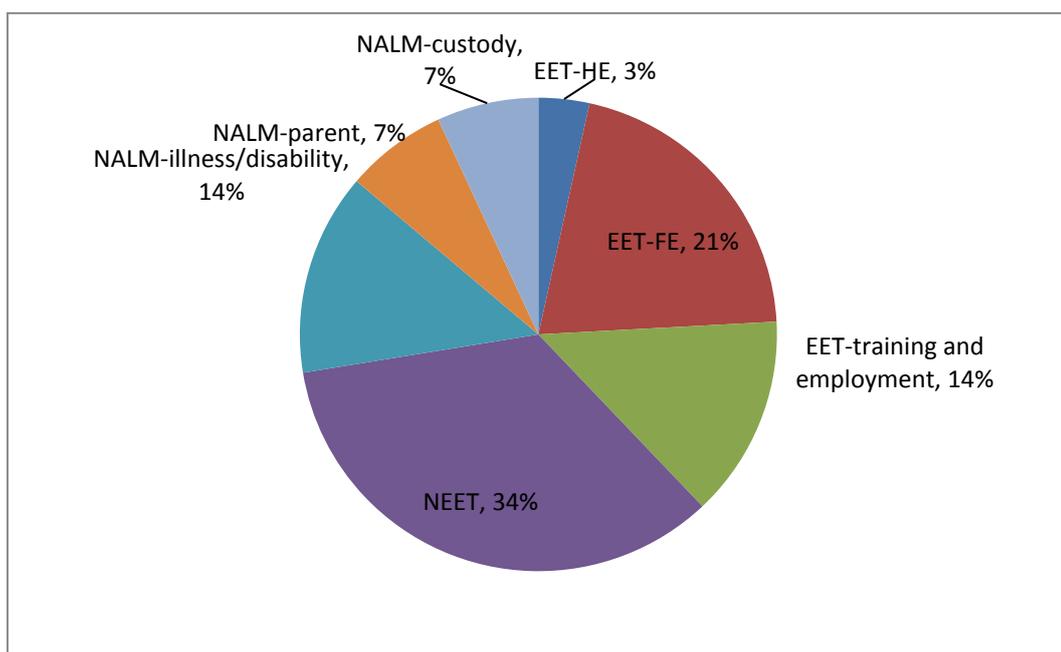
6.1 This has continued to a challenging area given the economic climate during the year, the impact of this on the labour market and because the vacant Education, Training and Employment Co-ordinator Post was not filled until late August 2013.

6.2 Even with constraints against us we have progressed in this area, as follows:

- Monthly meetings between the Looked After Children's Education Service (LACES), LAC Transitions and Connexions have been maintained to identify those at risk of becoming 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET) and promote appropriate intervention in response to this. This collaboration was particularly successful in ensuring the transition of year elevens into EET in September 2013 where 94.1% care leavers made the transition into year 12 and 84.1% remained in EET in March 2014. This cohort will continue to be tracked as they make the transition into year 13 this financial year together with the new year eleven cohort as they make their transition into year 12. We anticipate that this approach will incrementally improve our overall EET performance including increasing the number of our care leavers going to university.

- A strategic education meeting has been established on a quarterly basis to share information and drive forward the EET action plan. Membership includes representatives from the education and business partnership (EBP), Wolverhampton College, Fostering Team, Local Provider Services, Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and Connexions
- Human Resources have continued to circulate information to allow Care Leavers to apply for entry level internal job vacancies.
- We have worked closely with the EBP to ensure that Care Leavers take advantage of Wolverhampton apprenticeships and the agreement in place which guarantees them an interview.
- We have initiated work with the DWP partnership manager to work toward implementing the Governments expectations to improve cross service work to improve outcomes for care leavers as set out in the Care Leavers Strategy document, October 2013. All care leavers are now 'flagged' on DWP system to allow Job Centre staff to provide more flexible support and earlier access to the work programme for care leavers and to track and monitor the effectiveness of these changes on outcomes for care leavers.
- We have worked with Catch 22 to develop an action plan which should lead to the achievement of a Buttle Quality Mark in the next financial year

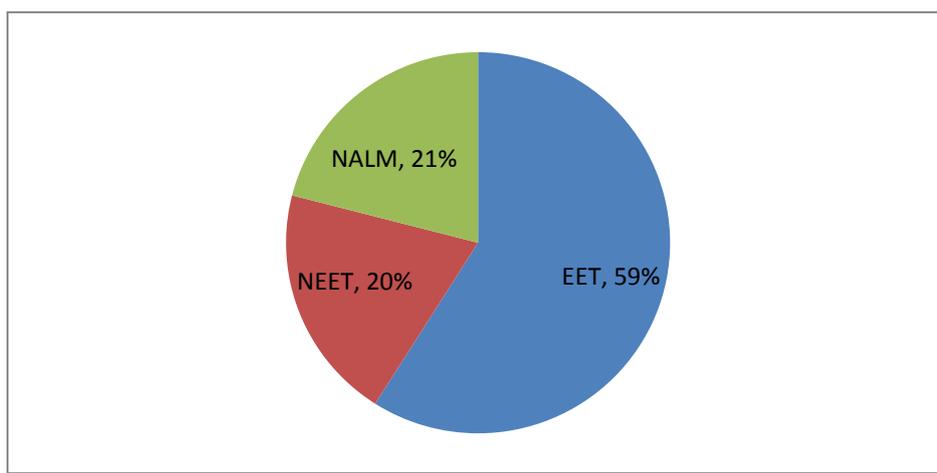
6.3 Data in respect of EET in respect of NI 48 cohort on 7/4/2014.



This pie chart represents the EET/NEET/ 'not available for the labour market' (NALM) data in respect of NI 148 cohort in April 2014. This is group represents the sample of 30, 19 year old Care Leavers reportable for National data collection purposes. Our performance in this area, with only 40% of the group in EET, reflects, at least in part the limited availability of EET provision for those aged 19 and over. (Please note chart marginally underrepresents %EET as each of the three EET areas have been rounded down on the chart to show representation as a whole number)

6.4 Data in respect of Care Leaver Population over 16

The chart below represents the EET situation for the 209 care leavers aged 16 plus for whom there was a EET classification on 7/4/2014.



7. Providing accommodation options for Care Leavers

7.1 Due to the diverse needs of Care Leavers, the LAC Transitions Team has access to a range of semi-independent and independent accommodation options. These are:

- Supported Lodgings
- Supported Accommodation
- Semi-independent Accommodation
- Independent Living in the Social or Private Rented sector, with flexible floating support as needed
- Enabling a young person to remain living with their former foster carers i.e.: Staying Put

Through effective planning and by working in a multi-agency setting, the Housing Service works with the Social Worker and Young Persons Advisor to ensure that there is a planned move towards independence for each Care Leaver and that the accommodation is most suitable towards their individual needs.

7.2 Supported Lodgings: The YMCA Open Door provides a contracted service to the LAC Transitions Team, with the provision of 8 supported lodgings placements for Care Leavers.

As at 31st March 2014, there were two Care Leavers, aged 16-18 years in stable supported lodgings placement, and a further three going through the matching process. There were also three Care Leavers, aged over 18, in Supported Lodgings placements, claiming Housing Benefit.

Regular meetings are held between the LAC Transitions Team and YMCA Supported Lodgings management to ensure that the terms of the contract are being complied with. The Senior Housing Worker also attends the quarterly Supported Lodgings Steering Group and sits on the Supported Lodgings Host Approval Panel.

7.3 Night-stop:

Through effective partnership working with YMCA Black County, a Service Level Agreement was entered into in September 2012 to provide a Night -stop Provision to Care Leavers. This has eliminated the need to use Bed and Breakfast as an emergency provision. 11 Care Leavers have been placed in temporary Night-stop placements during 2013-14, two of which subsequently converted into a permanent Support Lodgings Placement.

7.4 Supported (Semi-independent) Accommodation

Semi-independent accommodation offers Young People an opportunity to live more independently whilst still having other people around and receiving support to develop independent living skills and work towards their goals in education, training employment and other areas of life. The move into Semi-Independent accommodation from a care placement is planned by the Social Worker and Young Persons Advisor through the appropriate statutory meetings and in discussion with the Young Person. Once it has been agreed that the Young Person is ready a referral will be made to the Wolverhampton Young Person's Accommodation Forum (WYPAF) in accordance with Wolverhampton City Council's Homeless Young People and Care Leavers Housing Protocol.

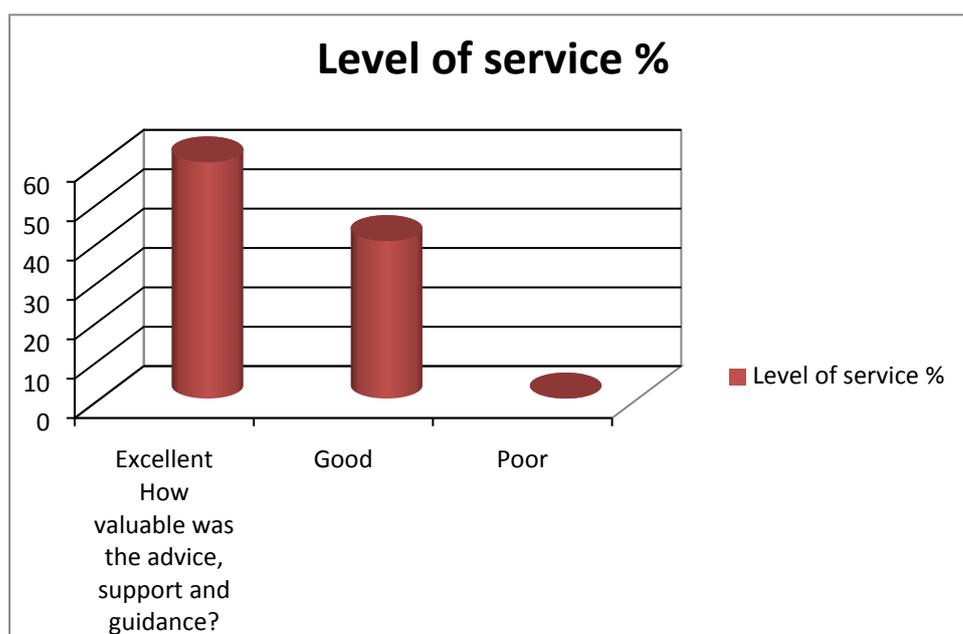
WYPAF is a multi-agency response to the housing and support needs of Young People, including Care leavers and the membership of the forum comprises of representatives of providers of supported accommodation, move on accommodation and agencies offering specialist support to Young People. The Forum is compliant with the Supporting People Framework.

The Senior Housing Worker presents the Young Person's referral at the forum and a majority decision will be made by representatives based on the needs in matching accommodation and support requirements on where the most suitable accommodation will be. 23 Care Leavers have been referred through to WYPAF for supported accommodation as part of the transition into Independence.

7.5 Supported accommodation in house scheme

The supported accommodation service previously outsourced to NACRO has been managed in-house since April 2013 with the 2.5 Housing Support Workers supporting the service joining the employment of Wolverhampton City Council subject to TUPE arrangements. The positive outcomes for young people achieved and its cost effectiveness have led to plans being developed to extend the service from 6 to 10 units in the next financial year with a potential saving of £142,531.

7.6 Feedback about the quality of our supported accommodation service



7.7 'Inde' group

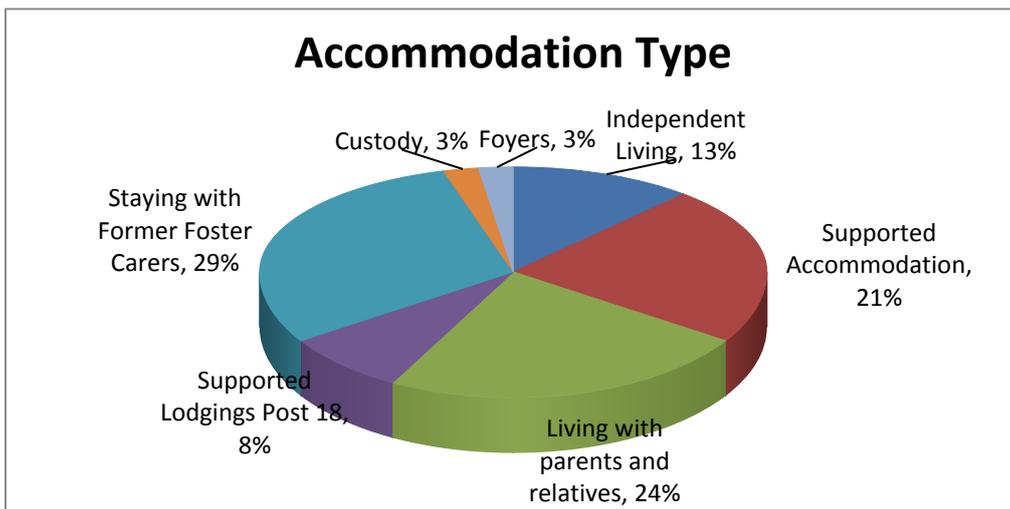
Consultation with care leavers including steering group members led to the establishment of the 'Inde' group in 2013. This informal monthly meeting provides young people thinking about moving into supported accommodation and those living in supported accommodation the opportunity to get together to share information discuss concerns and learn independent living skills. Representatives from partner agencies are invited to come along to talk about relevant topics e.g. anti-social behaviour, healthy eating, reducing risks in the home etc.

7.8 Move on into Independent Living

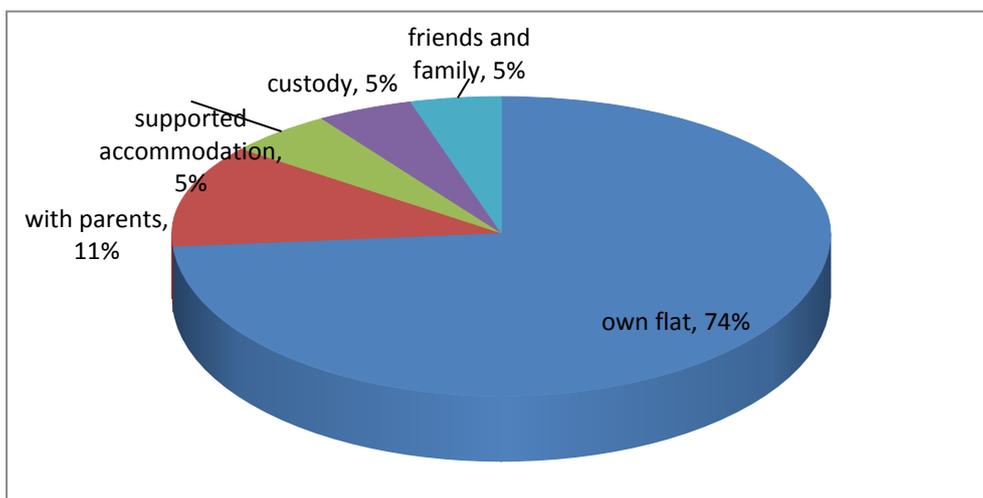
The move into independent living is planned and demonstrated in the Care Leaver's Pathway Plan. A Move On application is made and presented at the WYPAF meetings by the Senior Housing Worker. The application is supported by documentary evidence that the Young Person is ready to move on and ensures that all the necessary steps have been taken to enable the young person to take up an introductory tenancy with Wolverhampton Homes. Where appropriate, tenancy support is offered through the Tenancy Sustainment Team.

Applications accepted for Move on are referred to Wolverhampton Homes Housing Inclusion Team and processed onto Homes in the City by Wolverhampton Homes or other accommodation providers. As a Care Leaver, the Young Person's application is moved into Band 1.

7.9a Accommodation situation on leaving care of 40 Young People who had their 18th birthday during the year:



7.9b The chart below shows the accommodation situation of the 20 Care Leavers who completed the exit questionnaire in 2013-2014 aged 21 plus.



This illustrates how over the period of three years the majority of Care Leavers mature sufficiently to live independently.

8 Participation of Young People

8.1 The children and young people we work with are encouraged to participate in the assessment, planning and review processes which inform the care that they receive. This includes encouraging them to chair their own meetings.

8.2 We also want to encourage Children and Young People to participate more broadly and have established a steering group and an 'Inde' group during the year to provide opportunities for care leavers to influence the development of the services provided by the team

8.3. Care Leavers leaving the service aged 21 years have completed an exit questionnaire. The analysis of the information they provided is available in a separate report.

8.4 We involved young people in every recruitment campaign.

8.5 We did advertise for an apprentice participation worker in 2013-2014 but unfortunately received a poor response and were unable to recruit to this post.

9 Plans for the future

9.1 To increase the in-house supported accommodation service from 6 to 10 units.

9.2 To reconsider the development of an apprentice Participation post and/or other means of improving consultation and participation with young people.

9.3 To work with ICTS to see if a secure electronic 'filing system' can be developed to provide care leavers with easy access and safe storage of their care/pathway plan

9.4 To work with Information services to ensure that more comprehensive and reliable management Information will be available

9.5 To work with steering group to develop materials for the corporate and children's web-site so that care leavers can readily access information about their entitlements and other useful information.

9.6 To explore ways to raise the aspirations of Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

9.7 To revise policies and procedures in accordance with action plan agreed to ensure that policies reflect changes in Children and Families Act 2014.

9.8 To undertake cross service briefings/training to ensure policies and procedures relating to older LAC and Care Leavers are consistently applied

Conclusion

Staff have continued to work hard throughout 2013-2014 to improve the services they provide and the outcomes for young people. The increased workload, given the rising numbers of looked after children has been challenging for managers and practitioners and has led to a delay in some areas of strategic development within the service. We do, however anticipate having the opportunity in the forthcoming year to complete some of actions which have eluded us this year.

We are looking forward in particular to the implementation of the restructure in June 2014 which does provide some additional resources for the team in key areas. The creation of the Senior Consultant role will provide additional capacity for strategic development.

Appendices

Appendix 1
Team

Staffing structure chart of LAC Transitions

- A business case has been agreed to cover the seconded full time worker on a part-time basis.

STAFFING OF LAC TRANSITIONS TEAM

