

Action Plan

Audit Follow-up Review of: Care Leavers' Service - Financial Payments
Date: March 2015
Action Plan Owner: Head of Children and Family Services

Corporate Risk/Issue Severity Key	
	Critical – Significant CET and Cabinet intervention
	Major – intervention by SLT and/or CET with Cabinet involvement
	Moderate – Containable at service level. Senior management and SLT may need to be kept informed

Risk/Issue No.	Risk/Issue	Agreed Action Responsibility & Timescale	Current Status	Further Action Needed
1.	There is a need to undertake a review of the process currently in place for making payments to care leavers.	<p>Set up a meeting with the Head of Revenues & Benefits (and other staff as required) to discuss alternative methods of procuring goods and / or making payments to care leavers Rhiain Morlle / Julie Lavin & Rod Urquhart – May 2014</p> <p>Progress at previous follow up RM to meet with Acting Strategic Procurement Manager and / or Head of Revenues & Benefits to consider other options that may be available in respect of procuring goods / services at discounted prices - Revised timescale – Dec. 2014</p>	<p>In progress This action was altered, as the issue was best dealt with by the Collaborative Procurement Service. A meeting has been held and a Senior Procurement Officer is looking into the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current arrangement of purchasing white goods for care leavers. • The proposal for the use credit union bank accounts and whether these offer best value. • Extending the use of bus passes across other services, and the saving that this would bring. 	Waiting for the advice and guidance from Collaborative Procurement Service regarding current arrangements. Following this advice, the procedures will be finalised.

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		<p>Following the above, to undertake a review of the current payment process and implement changes as appropriate / required. - Rhiain Morlle September 2014</p> <p>Progress at previous follow up Various providers of accounts/cards were explored. The Credit Union has cards that will meet the young people's needs with added controls, depending on their age (no overdraft, accepted in shops, used to withdraw cash). Credit Union will also accept one BACs payment and will split the money as we instruct them. JL has met with manager of the Credit Union to progress with this option.</p> <p>JL to meet the Financial Assessment Officer who processes payments for care leavers. Further meeting planned with manager of Credit Union to finalise agreement prior to implementation. Revised timescale - Dec. 2014</p>	In progress - see above	Once the report from the Collaborative Procurement Service is received, the outstanding action points from can be addressed.
	Objectives should be considered to achieve the following:			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Setting up a bank account or alternative for every care leaver as soon as possible following referral to the service to equip them to receive payments in this way and to learn about budget management. 	<p>Note: Bank accounts are set up for care leavers. There is a process to support some of those who are unable to manage budgeting matters. Training, support and advice is in place and bank accounts applied for when the service is confident that this best meets the assessed needs of the individual young person.</p> <p>Set up a process where six-weekly reviews of the bank account situation for each young person is monitored. Julie Lavin and other Social Workers - May 2014</p>	Complete at previous follow up	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising value for money through negotiating with third party suppliers, e.g. Arriva for bus passes or with white good suppliers, where greater discounts can be obtained through framework agreements. 	<p>To be factored into the overall review</p> <p>Progress at previous follow up Meeting to be held to discuss procurement matters (see note above)</p>	<p>Awaiting view of Collaborative Procurement Service</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore more modern and secure ways of making payments, such as using pre-paid cards where the level of spend can be easily monitored and controlled. This would replace the need to administer transactions through the petty cash account, which is costly and labour intensive. 	<p>To be factored into the overall review</p> <p>Progress at previous follow up Arrangements to be finalised (see note above)</p>	<p>In progress We have explored this and have a system that we can use; however, we are waiting for the view of the Collaborative Procurement Service as to the cost effectiveness of the identified scheme.</p>	
	<p>Additionally, there is a need to consider cross-service working on this project to take advantage of skill sets outside the social care environment, e.g. price negotiation and marketing.</p>	<p>To be factored into the overall review</p> <p>Progress at previous follow up Meeting to be held to discuss procurement matters (see note above)</p>	<p>Complete Meeting held, areas for exploration agreed.</p>	
2.	<p>The procedures currently in place for the Care Leavers service are in need of review but we accept that it may be practical to deal with this exercise after the previous issue has been addressed. Linked to this, associated areas of concern include the following:</p>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The schedule of allowances payable should be reviewed and approved by an appropriate senior manager on an annual basis. 	<p>Service Manager to review schedule Rhian Morlle – April 2014</p>	<p>Completed at previous follow up Review of payment for this financial year done and no changes were made. Payments for next financial year to be agreed following confirmation of budget position. - Completed</p>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The same should be followed for the leaving care first home grants (if they are to continue in the same way after the review). 	Service Manager to review schedule Rhiain Morlle – April 2014	Completed at previous follow up As above	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All social workers dealing with care leavers may require some refresher training to help raise awareness of the need to adhere to the procedures if the service is to ensure a fair and consistent process and that the financial framework is robust. 	Workshop within Practice Group meeting Julie Lavin – April 2014 Progress at previous follow up Put back until new team member in post. To be held in November as part of team day for 14+ team and Barnardo’s Personal Advisor staff. Revised timescale – Nov. 2014	Complete A development day for 14+ Practice Group and the Barnardo’s Personal Advisor Service has been arranged for April 2015.	
		Further revision to procedures to be made to reflect any changes to the payment process (resulting from the work in Issue 1 above) Rhiain Morlle – After the completion of the payment process review. Progress at previous follow up See Issue 1	In progress Awaiting view of Collaborative Procurement Service	

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3.	<p>Until legislation is provided in respect of the Council's duty and responsibility to young people who present themselves as homeless (under the Southwark Judgement agreement) there is a need for interim guidance on the financial support that is to be provided.</p> <p>All social workers dealing with the individuals will need to be aware of its content and to adhere to it when making payments.</p>	<p>Interim policy and guidance to be rewritten / updated and shared with all relevant staff. Rhiain Morlle – April 2014</p> <p>Progress at previous follow up Update of interim policy – Completed with exception of RM adding a policy position statement. To be discussed at Southwark Judgement implementation group and members of Housing Services. Revised timescale – December 2014</p>	<p>Completed</p>	
		<p>Further revision to procedures to be made to reflect any changes to the payment process (resulting from the work in Issue 1 above) Rhiain Morlle – After the completion of the payment process review.</p> <p>Progress at previous follow up See Issue 1</p>	<p>In progress Awaiting view of Collaborative Procurement</p>	
4.	<p>The service should consider setting up an agreement with the care leaver to ensure that they have a responsibility to declare a change of circumstances to their Personal Advisor or Social Worker as and when their circumstances change, e.g. when DWP benefits become payable, to mitigate the risk that the service may continue to make payments indefinitely</p>	<p>Work in progress - DCC, DWP and Barnardo's are currently working on a three-way confidentiality agreement that will allow certain information to be disclosed (i.e. benefit start dates). This will be followed by work on an agreement where the Care Leaver can apply for benefit six weeks prior to their 18th birthday and payment to be made soon after their 18th birthday. This will eradicate the need for a balance or a compromise in our corporate parenting 'moral' duties and ensure that we are more aware of a young person's change of circumstances. Julie Lavin, Debbie Rogers, Andrea Dixon – May 2014</p>	<p>Completed at previous follow up Agreement in place and in use.</p>	
		<p>A form for the care leaver will also be devised where they agree to inform of change of circumstances. Julie Lavin – May 2014</p>	<p>Completed at previous follow up Form in place and in use.</p>	