

Action Plan

Audit Follow-up Review of: Care Leavers' Service - Financial Payments
Date: February 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 Morrle / 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>This action was altered as the issue was actually best dealt with from Collaborative Procurement Services. 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 if 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 Services regarding current arrangements. Following this advices 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 Morrille 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> | <p>Once the report from Collaborative Procurement is received the outstanding action points from can be addressed.</p> <p>April 2015 –Update</p> <p>Collaborative Procurement Service have offered the view that the current system in place for the purchase of white goods, given the small numbers and the need to undertake direct work with young people, offer the best value for money.</p> <p>It has been agreed to further the use of bus passes across Children and Family Services.</p> <p>Credit union accounts have been actioned.</p> | <p>April 2015 –Update</p> <p>Completed</p> |
| | <p>Objectives should be considered to achieve the following:</p> | | | |
| | <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> | <p>Complete at previous follow up</p> | |

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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</p> <p>April 2015 –Update Bus passes are in use across the Looked After Service, agreement has been given to extend their use across all services within Children and Family Services.</p> <p>Collaborative Procurement have offered the view that given the small numbers of white goods purchased, the issue of storage if bought in advance, and the direct work undertaken with the young person during whilst utilising their first home grant, that the current system is appropriate and offers good value for money.</p> | <p>April 2015 –Update Completed</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>We have explored this and have a system that we can use, however we are waiting for the view of Awaiting view of Collaborative Procurement as to the cost effectiveness of the identified scheme.</p> <p>April 2015 –Update</p> <p>Following the meetings held with Collaborative Procurement it has been agreed that The Credit union account is appropriate and will be used.</p> | <p>April 2015 –Update Completed</p> |

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| | 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. | To be factored into the overall review Progress at previous follow up Meeting to be held to discuss procurement matters (see note above) | Meeting held, areas for exploration agreed. | Completed |
| 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. • The same should be followed for the leaving care first home grants (if they are to continue in the same way after the review). • 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. | <p>Service Manager to review schedule Rhiain Morrille – April 2014</p> <p>Service Manager to review schedule Rhiain Morrille – April 2014</p> <p>Workshop within Practice Group meeting Julie Lavin – April 2014</p> <p>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</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> <p>Completed at previous follow up As above</p> <p>A development day for 14+ Practice Group and the Barnardo's Personal Advisor Service has been arranged for April 2015.</p> | <p>Completed</p> <p>April 2015 -Update Complete - Development day held on 22nd April 2015.</p> |

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| | | <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 Morrle – After the completion of the payment process review.</p> <p>Progress at previous follow up See Issue 1</p> | <p>Awaiting view of Collaborative Procurement</p> <p>April 2015 – update Completed.</p> | <p>Completed</p> |
| 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 Morrle – 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>Further revision to procedures to be made to reflect any changes to the payment process (resulting from the work in Issue 1 above) Rhiain Morrle – After the completion of the payment process review.</p> <p>Progress at previous follow up See Issue 1</p> | <p>Completed.</p> <p>Awaiting view of Collaborative Procurement</p> <p>April 2015 – update Completed.</p> | <p>Completed.</p> |

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| 4. | 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 | 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 | Completed at previous follow up Agreement in place and in use. | |
| | | A form for the care leaver will also be devised where they agree to inform of change of circumstances. Julie Lavin – May 2014 | Completed at previous follow up Form in place and in use. | |