



National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum

QUARTERLY MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER | Edition One | Summer 2008

Welcome to the first edition of the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum (NLCBF) Newsletter. Members of the Forum recently decided that a quarterly newsletter informing others of the work that we do would be both interesting and useful – we hope you enjoy our first edition!



The work of NLCBF

NLCBF is a national network of 44 local authorities from England and five Health and Social Services Trusts from Northern Ireland who work together to improve the quality of their services through benchmarking and shared learning. Our aim is to improve outcomes for young people in care as they make their transition to independence. The Forum is facilitated by the National Care Advisory Service (formerly NLCAS). Membership of NLCBF is open to any UK leaving care service provider. The Forum meets for two days, four times a year and works to benchmark services against national standards and assessment criteria within the framework of the five ECM outcomes as well as discussing current issues, policy issues, identifying good practice examples and useful tools. The Forum also informs policy development at national level. More recently the Forum has been a key partner in the What Makes the Difference? Project (WMTD) – an EU funded project working to identify ways to improve outcomes – as a way to bring additional added-value to members' involvement.

For more information about NLCBF see: www.leavingcare.org.

Our work in the last year

In the last year the Forum has achieved a great deal:

- Benchmarking and individual member action planning for all members on the theme of Accommodation. The three areas selected for more detailed work were: quality assurance in supported accommodation; supported lodgings; and housing protocols
- Implementation of work plans with WMTD in member authorities, under the headings of Education and Training, Employment, Preparation and Planning for Leaving Care and Empowerment
- Development of ECM compliant National Standards for Leaving Care and a self assessment system linked to them
- Development of a good practice example database and toolkit for leaving care
- Significant input (via NLCAS and WMTD) to the government consultation on Care Matters
- Policy work on specific subjects - unaccompanied asylum seekers' children and cases arising from high profile court cases such as the Sutton Judgement
- Involvement in trans-national events partner project in Poland – both in this country and in Lodz, Poland
- Involvement in the development of products, as partners in WMTD, such as the Education Skills Support Charts, a Peer Support Model, the Preparation and Planning for Adult Life Training Packs and the Guide to Corporate Parenting
- Involvement in WMTD's Peer Research project in which 265 young people were interviewed by other young people
- A base-lining exercise to give information about the shape and scope of service delivery in leaving care teams

Details of all the above are available on www.leavingcare.org.

Work for 2008/09

Members have decided that our benchmarking work for this year will focus upon 'Making a Positive Contribution'. Along with this focus we aim to use some of our benchmarking meeting time to identify and highlight good practice in this area of work; and to produce a good practice guide which will be disseminated through the website, through Keynotes and through the Government Offices and the regional leaving care forums. The guide will consist of the following elements:

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1. A template for local authorities completing their Pledges
2. A guide on setting up Children in Care Councils
3. A guide to employing young people in leaving care teams
4. How to involve young people in care planning and service planning.

Using the learning from the What Makes the Difference? Project, we will be modelling good practice in the way we approach the theme of making a Positive Contribution. So our approach to the work will be:

- Systematic self-assessment of current practice by members, linked to the national leaving care standards (endorsed by DCSF) and the ECM outcomes, on Making a Positive Contribution and followed by rigorous analysis of the results.
- The empowerment of staff and young people, especially through the meaningful involvement of young people in our discussions and the products we develop.
- A clear link to the Care Matters Implementation Plan (e.g. for the development of Pledges and Children in Care Councils) and the corporate parenting agenda.
- Using existing good practice examples and identifying more examples for inclusion in the good practice database on www.leavingcare.org.

There are three more full benchmarking meetings planned in the period until March 2009 (two in York and one in Belfast) and also a one-day meeting about the development of Pledges; and a two-day meeting, with young people, about the development of the products listed above. The involvement of young people is a significant development in the work of the Forum and the chosen theme gives us an ideal opportunity to embed this into the future work of the Forum. Visits will also be made to local authorities and trusts by NCAS staff, individually or regionally, to support the development of practice.

Enquiries

Enquiries about the work of the Benchmarking Forum should be addressed in the first instance to:
mike.sutcliffe@raineronline.org; Tel: 07793 365161.

Members as at July 2008

Barnsley	Hull	South Tyneside
Bath and North East	Islington	Staffordshire
Somerset	Kirklees	Stockton on Tees
Bexley LB	Lancashire	SunderlandSurrey
Birmingham	Leeds	Thurrock
Blackburn with Darwen	Medway	Tower Hamlets LB
Bournemouth	Middlesbrough	Walsall
Bradford	North Lincs	Wandsworth
Brighton and Hove	North East Lincs	West Berkshire
Cambridgeshire	North Somerset	West Sussex
Devon	Oxfordshire	Wiltshire
East Riding	Peterborough	Wolverhampton
Gloucestershire	Pool	
Hackney LB	Redcar and Cleveland	Health and Social Services
Hartlepool	Sheffield	Trusts in Northern Ireland:
Hillingdon	Southampton	Belfast, Northern, Southern,
Hounslow		South Eastern and Western

Other NLCBF work

Other work we are doing on an ongoing basis includes:

- Good practice presentations from members and visiting speakers.
- Discussion of collated responses to e-mail enquiries dealt with between Forum meetings.
- Discussions about identified 'hot spots' in policy or practice.
- Policy and legislative updates and responses to government consultations.
- The opportunity for 40+ local authorities to have an authoritative voice in identifying issues and potential solutions.
- Themes from 'JAR' inspections identified and discussed.
- Burning issues discussed – trouble shooting/problem solving/ practice sharing.
- Good practice identified and shared – also linked to updating the national database of good practice examples and tools on www.leavingcare.org.

Welcome to new Forum members

Welcome to the Forum for South Tyneside and all five Health Trusts from Northern Ireland – Northern, Western, Southern, South Eastern and Belfast. Our Forum meeting in December 2008 will be held in Belfast. We feel there is much to benefit from the involvement of NI members – sharing and developing good practice with other members.

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