

Title of meeting: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 04 December 2018

Subject: Care Leavers Offer

Report by: Alison Jeffery, Director of Children, Families and Education

Wards affected:

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To update the Cabinet on **(a)** the Corporate Parenting principles outlined within The Children & Social Work Act 2017 and **(b)** the revised Care Leavers offer that has been developed with the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and with foster carers and staff.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the Corporate Parenting principles and consider how each Portfolio can contribute in order to promote the welfare and outcomes of our looked after children and care leavers.
- 2.2 To agree the content of the care leaver offer and consider if further improvements can be made in order to optimise opportunities and support for our looked after children and care leavers.
- 2.3 To agree that as Corporate Parents, it is appropriate that the Council contributes to the Care Leaver offer across its portfolios; and to agree, in particular, that the cost of the birthday / festivities allowance (c £15,000 per year) is met by a proportionate contribution from each Portfolio to be determined by the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

3. Background

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 received Royal Assent on 27 April 2017 and came into force in April 2018.

- 3.2 In particular, Local Authorities must have regard to a set of Corporate Parenting principles when exercising its functions in relation to looked after children and care leavers. These principles apply to the whole of the Local Authority, not just to Children's Services departments.

3.3 The Corporate Parenting principles set out 7 fundamental needs for Looked After Children and Care Leavers as follows:-

- To act in the best interests and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing of those children and young people.
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
- To help those children and young people gain access to and make the best use of services provided by the local authority and also relevant partners.
- To promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for those children and young people.
- For those children and young people to be safe and for stability in their home, lives, relationships and education or work.
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy has been updated in accordance with these principles. (See *appendix 1*)

3.4 In addition, the Act specifies that Local Authorities must publish information about:

- (a) Services which the local authority offer for care leavers
- (b) Other services, which the local authority offers, that may assist care leavers in, or in preparing them for, independence.

3.5 The local offer can include details of the services and support that the local authority provides in relation to:

- Health and well-being
- Relationships
- Education and training
- Employment
- Accommodation
- Participation in society

3.6 In consultation with our CICC and other care leavers they preferred to lay out the offer with the following structure:

- Participation and engagement:

- Money
- Accommodation
- Education, training and employment
- Health and well-being and relationships
- Important contacts

4. The offer is laid out in separate sections with guidance and information underpinning each section(see appendix 2). In summary the broad offer is:

Participation/Engagement	Accommodation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in Care Council (CiCC) involvement • Mentoring • Flying solo charity • Pathway planning • Role of Social Workers/Progression • Advisors • Support to Unaccompanied Asylum seeking Minors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staying put arrangements with carers • Staying close to residential care • Supported lodgings in a family • Shared living (if vulnerable) • Supported housing (hostels) • Shared housing • Boost project • Own tenancies (when evidence of ability to live independently)
Money	Employment, Education and Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaving care grant (£2,000) • 16-19 bursary (£1,200) • Transport to and from college • Universal credit • Birthday and celebration allowance (£50 for each) • Transitional support when in first month of employment • Support with student loans • Provisional driving licences/revision book or support with alternative transport such as bike. • Job Seeking support (suit, transport, development courses) • Council tax advice and support • Provision of passport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education support and opportunities • Care Leavers in the council are guaranteed an interview for Council jobs (if it fits job specification) • University advice, guidance and support • Work experience in the council and through Southern Co-op • Take over opportunities • Vacancies in the council and with contractors are considered for care leavers • Apprenticeships with libraries, Housing, Estates, Participation Team and Security
Health and Well-Being and Relationships	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaving care medical and health care plan as part of the health passport to independence. • Culture card with free theatre admissions across the country • Transition from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to adult services if a mental health need. Development of a more flexible approach is being co-produced • Talking Change • Well-being service/Solent Mind • Portsmouth Abuse and Rape Counselling Service (PARCS) - confidential counselling • Barnardos - 1 to 1 support for young people at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation • U Matter • Crisis Team 	

5. Priorities for strengthening the Offer

- 5.1 The offer will be subject to regular review. Young people are keen to see further strengthening in the opportunity for shared tenancies. Whilst the accommodation offer covers a broad spectrum, there is a growing dependency on the private rented sector for what appears to be limited shared housing options. This is variable in quality, availability and cost. Therefore it continues to be a challenge to offer any certainty to young people regards their housing pathway.
- 5.2 Council Tax exemptions for care leavers continue to be a stated preference for young people. It is clearly understood that our young people do not have access to any support from their families and this is the case for many other young people in the city. We are committed to ensuring care leavers will be heavily supported, but not face a sudden cliff-edge at 25. They will have immediate access to advice and support if getting into financial difficulties because of the Tax. They can rely on getting access to swift non-judgemental practical help to manage all the different demands on them, including Council Tax.
- 5.3 Apprenticeship and work opportunities within the council have been dramatically improved and we are expecting to further broaden the offer and co-ordination of the scheme.
- 5.4 More flexibility and choice around emotional and mental health support to support young people who are not emotionally resilient continues to be a priority for our young people. We are working on a model with Adult Mental Health colleagues which is accessible in different ways at different stages of transition to adulthood, and to respond flexibly to young people who may not be ready to engage with services until their mid-20s.

6. Reasons for recommendations

- 6.1 The recommendations implement a statutory duty of the council, as explained in the Legal implications section below.

7. Equality impact assessment

(See appendix 3,)

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 Publication of a Local offer for Care Leavers is a legal requirement under the Children and Social Work Act 2017.
- 8.2 Whilst the Act has a number of functions with respect to this report the Act engages the Local Authority within the construct of its Corporate Parenting obligation to:
- publish and from time to time and review the Local Offer for Leavers.

- to set out as per the 2017 Act the basis upon which engagement in accessing and providing services will occur.

- 8.3 The obligation to publish a Local Offer for Care Leavers arises by reason of the obligations placed upon the LA for children looked after by the LA by reason of sec 22(1) of the CA 1989, or a relevant child by reason of sec 23 A (2) of the CA 1989 and being a person under the age of 25 who was a formerly looked after child within sec 23 C (1) of the 1989 Children Act.
- 8.4 Given that qualification exists (the LA has a range of relevant children) the obligations as set out in the report are within the 2017 Act to publish information about services that:
- the LA provides by reason of its obligations under the Children Act 1989
 - other services that the LA offers that may assist care leavers in preparing for adulthood and independent living.
- 8.5 In dealing with the above the report is compliant and outlines the need to review and the basis upon which consultation is required within the context of any future review.
- 8.6 The report also outlines that services can be provided by others in the discharge of the Local Authority's primary obligations under the Children Act and that the 2017 Act obliges the Local Authority to provide that information about other potential agencies that may deliver such services.
- 8.7 The report sets out and addresses the relevant areas that must be considered in line with section 1(a-g) of the 2017 Act.

9. Director of Finance's comments

- 9.1 Financial comments and implications in are included in the body of the report.

Signed by: Alison Jeffery, Director of Children, Families and Education

Appendices:

- 1) Corporate Parenting Strategy

- 2) Proposed Care Leavers Offer

- 3). Equality impact assessment

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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Signed by: