

## CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**14 FEBRUARY 2019**

**REPORT OF SENIOR  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

### **CABINET DECISION**

**Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – Cllr Mrs McCoy**

#### **REPORTING-IN SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE CARE LEAVERS LOCAL OFFER**

1. Summary

This report on the progress of reporting in review of care leavers local offer. It includes detail of the new guidance and legislation outlining the duties for local authorities to support care leavers - to be known as the care leaver's local offer. It outline the current care leavers local offer and plans for the development of the care leaver's local offer.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to agree the recommendations:

1. Continue to engage with care leavers on the content of the local offer;
2. Continue to develop the format of the offer on the Stockton Information Directory;
3. Work towards publication of the full offer by April 2019.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

To ensure that the Council continues to prioritise the needs of care leavers whilst making the most effective and efficient use of resources.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or

- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

### **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code)

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**BACKGROUND**

1. This review was initiated to provide oversight of the proposals to develop the Stockton Care Leavers Local Offer.
2. It has been undertaken as a reporting-in review, via an initial report to Committee in November 2018 and a final report to be considered on 23 January.
3. The initial report set out the context for the work to develop the new care Leavers Offer, and an outline of the current position.
4. Members authorised further work on:
  - 1) Consultation and engagement with care leavers;
  - 2) The publication of the current offer as part of the refreshed Information Directory;
  - 3) Continued work to develop a new form of offer for publication in April 2019.

**LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT**

5. The main legislation in respect of care leavers includes the Leaving Care Act (2000), The Children and Young People Act (2008), the 2013 cross - Government care leaver strategy, the 2014 Children and Families Act and The Children and Social Work Act 2017, all of which have gradually expanded the responsibilities of local authorities in supporting children and young people in care.

6. Young people who have been 'looked after' by the local authority and are care leavers are entitled to access care leaving services. These service entitlements were initially available for young people between the ages of 16 to 21 or 25 if they were in further education however the new legislation has increased the upper age limit to 25 regardless of whether the young person is in further education or not.
7. The term 'Care Leaver' relates to:
  - **Eligible children** ( those children ages 16 or 17 who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and continue to be so)
  - **Relevant children** (those aged 16 or 17 who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 **and** who have left care)
  - **Former relevant children** ( those aged between 18 and 25 who were previously eligible or relevant)
  - **Qualifying children** (those who left care after the age of 16 but had been in care less than 13 weeks since their 14<sup>th</sup> birthday or those who are relevant children but returned home for 6 months or more)
8. Depending on the above status these care leavers are entitled to certain level of services.
9. In July 2016 the Government published the Policy Briefing 'Keep on Caring; supporting Young People from Care to Independence' which outlined proposals to better support Care Leavers as they transition into adulthood and it emphasised the role of local authorities as corporate parents responsible for ensuring positive outcomes for young people. It focused on 5 key outcomes:
  - Young People leaving care are better prepared and supported to live independently
  - Improved access to education, employment and training
  - Care leavers should experience stability in their lives, and feel safe and secure
  - Improved access to health support
  - Care leavers should achieve financial stability
10. Provisions within The Children and Social Work Act 2017 which enhance local authorities duties that apply to looked after children and care leavers more recently came into force and the Government has published statutory guidance which sets out how these new duties should be implemented and the aim is to further improve support for looked after children especially those leaving care.
11. Section 1 of this act requires local authorities to have regard to a set of corporate parenting principles when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and care leavers.
12. These 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 to gain access to and make best use of services provided by the local authority and its 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.
13. In Stockton these principles have been incorporated into the new Strategy for children in, and leaving, our care which was agreed by Cabinet in 2018.
14. Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires local authorities to consult on and publish a local offer for their care leavers. The local offer should provide information about all the services and support that is available to care leavers in the local area where they live. It should include information about their statutory entitlements as well as any discretionary support that the local authority might choose to provide.
15. Section 3 of this act has introduced a new duty on a local authorities which requires them to offer Personal Adviser support to all care leavers up to age 25.
16. This includes care leavers who return to the local authority at any point between the ages of 21 up to 25 and request Personal Adviser support even if they have previously indicated that they didn't want it.

## THE CARE LEAVERS LOCAL OFFER

17. The Government's statutory guidance sets out details of the services and support that should be included in a local offer. The support on offer should come from all local authority departments and partner agencies (not just children services ) and should detail the services that may assist care leavers in or moving to, adulthood and independent living in relation to the following:
- a. Health and wellbeing;** this will include services that teach about, support and enable good health and wellbeing. It should include links to, or information about, universal health services that might be particularly relevant to care leavers, as well as specific health and wellbeing services targeted at them.
  - b. Relationships;** having strong and supportive relationships is crucially important for care leavers as they move to independent adult life. Local authorities will want to consider the services and/ or support that is available to help care leavers develop and maintain positive social networks and to understand what positive relationships look like.
  - c. Education and training;** Care leavers should be supported to access appropriate education or training that will enable them to fulfil their goals. This will include the statutory support available to care leavers, such as the £2,000 bursary for care leavers in higher education, as well as any other support from the local authority; and signpost to universal information such as careers advice and financial support for young people.
  - d. Employment;** this will include information to care leavers about general employment support such as careers support and links to local Job Centre Plus. Local authorities should also include any other employment support that they or partners deliver that is specifically available for care leavers, for example, any apprenticeships that the local authority offers, in particular where such opportunities are ring fences for care leavers.
  - e. Accommodation;** care leavers should be supported to access appropriate and suitable accommodation. The local authority should include relevant information about their Staying put policy, the support available from housing services and any

other assistance that is available to care leavers, such as advice on maintaining a tenancy.

- f. **Participation in society**; this will include links to and information about activities, events or volunteering opportunities available in the local offer that care leavers can get involved in.

### **Developing consulting the format and publishing of the local offer**

- 18. The local offer should be developed and published in consultation with care leavers and should be easily available and accessible to all care leavers in the local authority area. It should be made available in a number of formats including printed hard copies, on line digital copies and in different languages as appropriate. It should be made available to and in a way that is easily understood by, care leavers with additional needs.
- 19. The precise arrangements for consulting care leavers and the format(s) that the local offer is available in are for local authorities to determine.

### **OUTCOMES FROM THE REVIEW**

- 20. In consultation with a group of care leavers we have reviewed our existing local offer to consider if the current services and support on offer meet the requirements of the Government's Statutory Guidance.
- 21. The existing local offer is compliant with the legislation.
- 22. During this exercise some additional ideas developed from the young people and staff involved that may need the support of other departments and partner agencies.
- 23. The current local offer was already available to care leavers in the form of an information booklet however it also needed to be published in digital format and with that in mind care leavers have been involved in developing a site on the Stockton Information Directory (SID) and this is now available to care leavers. (There is still some development work ongoing on the content).
- 24. Appendix 1 outlines the current local offer and some of the ideas that came up for development as a result of the consultation with care leavers and staff and progress to date.

### **Committee Response**

- 25. The Committee welcomed the opportunity to review the new guidance and legislation outlining the duties for local authorities to support care leavers to be known as the care leaver's Local Offer.
- 26. In September, Members were provided with the details of the current Offer, and the proposals to develop this further.
- 27. The Committee was pleased to see current offer was compliant with the legislation and the engagement with care leavers to seek their views on further improvements.
- 28. This work had generated a range of new ideas from young people. It is recognised that some of these may need the support from partner organisations. The Committee itself highlighted the importance of the following issues:
  - a. The Health and Wellbeing offer including a section on sexual health, and emotional and mental health and wellbeing;

- b. LGBT information;
- c. Support for those who are/have been in contact with the criminal justice system (through ongoing support from Personal Advisors);
- d. Money advice and financial awareness.

29. Members were reassured that care leavers who had initially declined ongoing support were reminded of their right to receive support should they wish to receive it.

30. It was noted that funding had been provided from central government but it was not clear whether this would fund all commitments to care leavers, and there had been national criticisms of the New Burdens assessment process in this regard.

31. Members noted the development of the online format of the Local Offer and welcomed the opportunity to receive a demonstration of the site when finalised.

32. The Committee endorsed the recommendations and ongoing work in the lead up to publication of the updated Offer in April 2019.

### **COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

33. There are no direct implications arising from this report.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

34. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Children's Services will continue to seek to manage demand, and ensure that children and young people receive support as detailed in assessments and in care plans.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

35. There are no specific legal implications from this report

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

36. The issues in this report are categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

### **COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES**

37. The issues in this report align closely with the Council Plan priority to protect the vulnerable through targeted intervention. Care leavers are a particularly vulnerable group of young people, and the local offer is designed to maximise the support available to them.

### **CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS**

38. There are clear implications for corporate parenting. The development of the offer is a key element in the Strategy for children in, and leaving, our care agreed at Cabinet in May 2018.

### **CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS**

39. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People has been consulted, and the recommendations have been endorsed by the Children and Young people Select Committee.

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Education related? No

Background Papers

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Property - no implications