

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO  
CORPORATE  
PARENTING BOARD**

**9 February 2024**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR  
OF CHILDREN'S  
SERVICES**

**EMPLOYABILITY PLEDGE FOR CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 16-25**

**SUMMARY**

Leaving home is a challenge time for everyone, but young people leaving care often do so without the help, support and guidance of a loving family. As a Corporate Parent the Council's responsibility extends beyond in care, to all care experienced young people aged 16-25, to ensure they receive the help and support so they do not enter adulthood alone and in preparing the young person for life and ultimately thrive with independent living.

Through the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Government introduced the requirement for local authorities to publish a 'Care Leaver Offer', which outlines services which may assist care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living include services relating to health and well-being, relationships, education and training, employment, accommodation, and participation in society.

As the local authority, we have a statutory requirement to provide support with finding accommodation and with any costs of participating in education, training, and employment. We want to go beyond our statutory duty, offer over and above to help ensure our care experienced young people are better prepared and supported to live independently and achieve financial stability.

The Council have already developed a new scheme "No Limits: The Giving Of ..." to enable all our employees to play a role to ensure we are the best 'corporate parent' we can be and support children in our care or leaving our care to take part in the same activities and experiences that we would expect for our own children.

To help prepare and support care experienced young people into employment, the Council have committed to the following additional local offer for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council care experienced young people aged 16-25.

- Employability support - 1:2:1 discussion with Employment & Training Hub
- Up to 10 paid Work Placements within the Council: 1 week – 12 months duration
- Priority access to Council Apprenticeship Vacancies
- Guaranteed interview for Council Job Vacancies when they meet the essential criteria.

This support will be facilitated by the assigned Personal Advisors working in partnership with the Employment & Training Hub and the Learning & Development Team within Human Resources.

It is hoped that our pledge can be promoted wider to partners / local businesses who can be encouraged to develop their own specific offer and sign up to the national Care Leaver Covenant <https://mycovenant.org.uk/about/>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Note the Council's Employability Pledge commitment to support care experienced young people aged 16-25 in the transition to living independently
2. For a formal signing of the Employability Pledge to take place at the Council Meeting on 20th March 2024.

## DETAIL

1. Entering employment can be a daunting experience. Many young people who have a secure home environment have role models to support them in their transition from education to employment, but our care experienced young people do not always have the benefit of this.
2. The Council's Employability Pledge looks to help bridge the gap to help care experienced young people with employability support, work experience opportunities and longer-term employment prospects.
3. The aims of the Employability Pledge is to ensure our care experienced young people:
  - are better prepared and supported to live independently.
  - have improved access to employment, education and training.
  - experience stability in their lives and feel safe and secure.
  - achieve financial stability and independence.
4. The Council have pledged to offer the following Employability support (over and above our statutory responsibilities) to help ensure our Care Experienced Young People are better prepared and supported to live independently and achieve financial stability.

### 4.1 **Employability Skills Support** from the Employment & Training Hub

To assist the young person to become "work ready". Support with CV writing, Interview skills, and Job searches. Provide access to skills training – such as confidence building, communications skills and workplace behaviours. Advise on appropriate pathways into employment.

### 4.2 **Paid Work Experience Placements** within the Council

The Council will provide paid (national minimum wage for age) work placements for care experienced young people. The placement will be flexible in terms of hours of work (2-7.5 hours per day) and duration (1 week – 12months) to support the individual needs / circumstances. This could include:

- Short term placements (1 - 8weeks): to provide work experience to young people in education during holidays or to those who are work ready a short period of work experience to boost their CV before moving into employment.
- Medium term placements (2-6months): for those who require a longer work placement to develop work skills and determine career aspirations of the young person prior to an apprenticeship / employment
- Long term placement (6-12months): to support University 'sandwich' degree students requiring a one-year placement within a relevant industry or provide longer term support prior to an apprenticeship / employment.

It is envisaged that the Council would be able to accommodate up to 10 placements across Council services at any one point in time. Examples of work experience placements include: Adults & Children's Social Care work, Libraries, Administration, ICT and Care for your Area.

#### **4.3 Priority access to the Council's Apprenticeship Vacancies**

Apprenticeship vacancies will be made available for Care Experienced Young People to apply for in the first instance, and be interviewed for the vacancy (where they meet the essential criteria) before going out to external advert.

#### **4.4 Guaranteed interview for any council job vacancy.**

This offer has been in place for some time. The young person is required to make a self-declaration on the application form and meet the essential criteria for the role.

5. We are pleased to report that we have already placed one young person on an 8 month paid work experience placement with our HV&E service. Our Young Person is interested in a career in trade, and this opportunity will give them experience of a variety of trades to help determine where they wish to focus their career. Additional support will also be made available to assist with applying for an appropriate apprenticeship.
6. **Promotional Event:** We will be holding an event for our Young People called "Love your Future" on Wednesday 14th February 2024 at the No Limits Hub to promote the Employability Pledge and our work placement opportunities. The Employment & Training Hub will be present to discuss the Employability Support, and will have a number of work placement examples available to discuss and offer our young people.
7. **Care Leavers Covenant:** In July 2016, the Government published a major policy document "Keep on Caring" to support young people from care to independence. A key commitment in the paper is a strategic pledge to introduce a Care Leaver Covenant which organisations can commit to - <https://mycovenant.org.uk/>. Each organisation that commits to the Care Leaver Covenant outlines its specific "offer" setting out what support it is prepared to provide. The Council will sign up outlining our Employability Pledge.
8. Through our networks and partnerships, we also wish to encourage other organisations to pledge their own employability offer, and sign up to the National Care Leaver Covenant.
9. Signing up to the Employability Pledge / Care Leavers Covenant at Full Council: We would like the Council to formally sign up to the Care Experienced Young People's Employability Pledge / Care Leavers Covenant at the Council Meeting on 20th March 2024. If the board are in agreement arrangements will be made to sign up to the Pledge at this event

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

10. The financial costs of the work placements will be met from the Children's transformation fund as identified within the MTFP report to cabinet in December 2023.

£75,000 funding has been set aside for 2024-25 to cover the costs of the work placements within the Council with the ability to increase to £100,000 should the demand require. This funding will be kept under review throughout the financial year.

11. The cost of any apprenticeships is already covered through existing Service Area budgets and the apprenticeship salary support of 50% accounted for within the MTFP.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

12. There are no employment law implications associated with offering our Young People paid work experience or priority access to apprenticeship opportunities

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

13. The Employability Pledge is deemed as Low Risk

## **COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

14. We envisage a positive impact for our Young People as a result of this Employability offer.

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

15. Supporting our Care Experienced Young People is a Council priority.
16. Through the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Government introduced the requirement for local authorities to publish a 'Care Leaver Offer', which outlines services which may assist care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living include services relating to health and well-being, relationships, education and training, employment, accommodation, and participation in society.
17. As the local authority, we have a statutory requirement to provide support with finding accommodation and with any costs of participating in education, training, and employment. We want to go beyond our statutory duty, offer over and above to help ensure our care experienced young people are better prepared and supported to live independently and achieve financial stability.

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

18. N/A

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