

SUPPORT TO CARE LEAVERS (INCLUDING STAYING PUT) AND THE ROLE OF THE PERSONAL ADVISOR

To: **Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee**

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Electoral division(s): **People and Communities**

Purpose: **To inform the Committee of services and support being provided to care leavers and detail the current state of this provision. The report also highlights planned development to services and support provided to care leavers as well as detailing the current provision in place for our care leavers.**

Recommendation: **a) Note the services and support being provided to our Care Leavers**

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Summary:

Following the Children and Social Work Act 2017 we are required to deliver a service to all qualifying young people up until the age of 25. This includes the provision of a 'local offer' for care leavers in Cambridgeshire.

The Role of the Personal Advisor (PA) is to provide guidance and assistance to our Care Leavers. The allocation of PA's to our young people, forms the mainstay of our service and support to Care Leavers.

The development and implementation of the Local Offer for Care Leavers forms the core of our support services for Care Leavers. Initially the Local Offer will provide all the information a Care Leaver might need without having to refer to their PA in the first instance. Building on this we plan to generate opportunities for our Care Leavers by engaging with our partners and so building an enhanced offer.

We are looking internally for potential apprenticeship opportunities within the County Council in order to use the apprenticeship levy. However, due to a number of factors, take up and interest in these opportunities has been relatively low.

Planning with our Care Leavers is critical. The plan and guidance for the young person will all be contained within their Pathway Plan. This details what they have been doing up to this point, what they are currently doing and what they plan to do in the future, in particular looking at how they will achieve their goals and aspirations.

Many of our young people are housed in semi-independent and supported accommodation. There are issues around securing suitable accommodation due to availability and affordability in certain areas of Cambridgeshire. To help combat this we have established a joint Homelessness Prevention Protocol with housing in order to prevent homelessness amongst our care leavers.

There are some challenges with our ability to stay in touch with our care leavers and we are currently carrying out a review with support from Business Intelligence and Information Governance in order to identify Care Leavers who were previously closed to us who now may be eligible for a service.

Likewise the focusing on the health needs of our Care Leavers and the service will be working closely with our health colleagues to provide robust support.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Legislation including the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004 have successively strengthened public bodies' responsibilities to Looked after Children and Care Leavers.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 further defines support for Looked after Children and strengthens the duty and responsibility of all Local Authorities including District Councils and organisations in their provision of support and services for children and young people.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 states that Councils and partners must have regard to a set of Corporate Parenting Principles when exercising their functions. This applies to the whole council and not just to children's services functions and all Looked after Children and Care Leavers up to the age of 25. This legislation also applies to Officers and Members alike.

2. MAIN ISSUES

2.1 Role the Personal Advisor (PA)

The Role of a PA is to provide support and guidance to our young people as they transition between being in Local Authority Care and into independent living once they turn 18 years old.

PA's are not necessarily Social Workers but some Social Workers might take on the role of a Personal Advisor. PA's can help young people with finances, accommodation, health problems, relationship breakdowns and all sorts of other problems that our Care Leavers might face on a day to day basis.

They will build strong relationships with our young people and our Care Leavers and feel able to rely on them as a source of support. Further to this, our PA's can help our young people access council resources designed to help them. For example if a young person is preparing to begin studying higher education, the PA might be able to provide financial assistance with stationary and other items necessary for studying.

The role of a PA is substantial and significant. The PA role is to provide an excellent service to our Care Leavers through what can be a very challenging period of their young adulthood.

2.1 Local Offer

We are developing a strong and sustainable service for our Care Leavers under the Local Offer. We have been working over the last year to develop our offer with the help of Senior Transformation Advisor Rebecca Pentelow and Graduate Management Trainee Christopher Sutton.

The Local Offer is designed to provide all the information a young adult with Care Leaver status might need in one easily accessible place. As we are

currently in the early stages of development, the offer is purely a source of information. However, Cambridgeshire would like to utilise this as our vehicle to provide an added service to our Care Leavers, working across the Council, our partner agencies as well as local businesses in order to provide additional opportunities, such as securing apprenticeship places, work experience and mentorship.

We have chosen to take an aspirational approach to Cambridgeshire's Local Offer and recognise that many of these services will not be in place immediately and so the offer will continue to develop and evolve as services develop further. Below is the link to the website detailing Cambridgeshire's Local Offer.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/children-s-social-care/care-leavers-local-offer/>

2.2 NEET (NOT IN EMPLOYMENT EDUCATION OR TRAINING)

We are working at improving and developing our dedicated Lead for Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)/Education, Employment and Training (EET) PA role which is now more closely aligned to the Care Leaver Teams. We are developing a number of initiatives to facilitate the right opportunities for our Care Leavers across all age ranges who are currently not in Education, Employment or Training.

2.3 Apprenticeships

There are opportunities within Cambridge County Council as part of the apprenticeships levy, but they are currently limited in their uptake. This is due to a range of reasons such as young people not being ready to take on an apprenticeship for a variety of reasons in order to participate fully. This is also being considered as part of the Local Offer.

The council currently has one Care Leaver apprentice working on the use and application of MOMO (Mind of My Own) a review and feedback tool.

2.4 Higher Education

All young people currently in higher education are supporting in a variety of ways through their Personal Advisors.

2.5 Suitable Accommodation

The Pathway Plan (PWP) is the key document which is set out in law as the gateway to support for all young people who are or have been looked after.

The PWP is owned by the young person and is written with the support of the Looked after Child's Social Worker and, as they become older and develop a greater degree of independence, will be reviewed by their PA.

This PWP determine the type of accommodation a young person requires and should match where possible the young person's needs, in terms of ethnic origin, any additional needs, risks or requirements.

The service is delivering training to all PA's in early February 2019 aimed at improving quality and consistency specifically to ensure the young person participates fully in their plan and their voice is reflected throughout.

2.6 Planning for Children in Care Post 16 and Post 18

All Children in Care in Cambridgeshire are allocated a social worker. This social worker, with support from the team around the child, will work with the individual to plan for independence. This will involve work that includes the Needs Led Assessment (NLA), The Pathway Plan (PWP) and The Independence Passport.

2.7 Staying Put

Staying Put is a service that Cambridgeshire County Council has a duty to provide. This is an arrangement between a former foster child and their former foster carer. The former foster child who will have turned 18, will continue to live with their foster carer but will have to pay a contribution towards their accommodation, bills and food. The local authority arranges and facilitates this agreement between the foster carer and the young person and this arrangement can continue until the young person is aged 21 years. Staying put is a very beneficial arrangement for former foster children as it allows them to maintain stability, feel valued and achieve their full potential. Appropriate planning for a staying put arrangement will take place in the Pathway Plan.

2.8 Supported Accommodation Providers

Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) and Peterborough City Council (PCC) are jointly commissioning the provision of supported accommodation services for looked after young people aged 16–18 years, for whom each authority has a statutory responsibility. The Councils are seeking to work with a number of providers who can demonstrate continual improvements in value for money achieved by deploying efficient and innovative ways of meeting both the accommodation and support needs of eligible young people. Access to accommodation in Cambridgeshire presents difficulties in some areas due to availability and affordability.

Cambridgeshire is a stake holder in the new 'Staying Close, Staying Connected' project with Break. This is an alternative to Staying Put for young people leaving residential care. It allows young people to live independently, but close to the children's home that they have lived in previously.

We are also working with Samad Nadimi, Specialist Adviser from Rough Sleeping Initiative and Sarah Ferguson, Assistant Director for Housing, Communities and Youth and our Commissioning Teams in Children and

Adults to look at a variety of factors impacting on the availability of suitable accommodation and how to ensure all our Care Leavers are placed in suitable accommodation. We will be mapping the service requirements using the St Basils / Barnardo's Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Network.

2.9 Keeping in touch

Cambridgeshire recognises that there are challenges with our methods of recording and reporting young people we are in touch with. However, we are looking to address this by working with Business Intelligence and Information Governance to discuss how we can establish who is currently closed to us but may be entitled to a service in accordance with new legislation. We recognise the timescales of this and the importance of getting this right in order to provide a service these young people are entitled to access services if they so wish.

2.10 Additional Plans for the Future

- Development and implementation of the Homelessness Prevention PA role funded by the Department for Education (DFE). This will be a specialist role within the Care Leaving teams dedicated to the prevention of homelessness with a particular focus on tenancy management and the prevention of tenancy breakdown.
- Mapping of Care Leavers to identify support needs on a Needs Led and geographical basis, considering the Barnardo's and St Basil's publication.
- Devise a Care Leavers Strategy to clearly set out and monitor progress with the project developments and activity being undertaken for our Care Leavers.

3. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Resource Implications N/A

3.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications N/A

3.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications



We have a statutory obligation to provide a service to Care Leavers up to the age of 25

3.4 Equality and Diversity Implications N/A

3.5 Engagement and Communications Implications N/A

3.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement N/A

3.7 Public Health Implications
N/A

Source Documents	Location
<i>Care Leaver Accommodation and Support Framework</i>	
<i>Joint Protocol to address the needs of Homeless 16 and 17 year olds in Cambridgeshire</i>	 Homelessness 1617 protocol.docx