

LOCAL OFFER FOR CARE LEAVERS

To: **Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee**

Meeting Date: **30 January 2019**

From: **Kate Knight
Lead Manager Corporate Parenting**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Purpose: **This report provides the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee with an update on the on the implementation of the 'local offer' for care leavers. It also informs the Sub-Committee of our intention to secure funding through the Transformation fund for a one year fixed term post to oversee the implementation and development of the Local Offer.**

Recommendation: **The Sub-Committee is recommended to:**

- a) Continue to encourage partners to engage with the development of the Local Offer.**
- b) Note the progress in the development of the local offer and Elected Members continue raising awareness of the offer within the Council.**
- c) Reflect on their own networks and contacts and identify areas in which they might be able to support the creation of opportunities for our care leavers.**
- d) Invite Elected Members to champion one of the key areas contained in the Local Offer.**

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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. Including the provision of a 'local offer' for Care Leavers in Cambridgeshire.

The Local Offer is designed to provide all the information a Care Leaver might need in one easily accessible place as well as detail all available opportunities and services within Cambridgeshire. The Offer is now accessible online on the County Council Corporate website.

With this base-line offer in place, it now gives us a clear platform from which to build and develop an enhanced offer for our care leavers in order to properly fulfil our duty as Corporate Parents to these young people.

We have built a communication and engagement strategy with support from our Corporate Communication & Information Team to help identify our key stakeholder's, methods of communication and goals for building effective and sustainable relationships with our stakeholders.

A key aspect of this service provision is the proposed creation of a Local Offer Development Officer post. This role is currently being successfully fulfilled by a National Management Trainee, however it has been identified that in order to create an aspirational and sustainable offer, the preference is to create a dedicated role to expand on the work already started. Pending agreement, this position is envisioned to be a twelve month fixed-term post which will oversee the development and implementation of our Local Offer once our National Management Trainee ends his placement in March 2019. It is hoped the funding for this post will be secured through the Transformation Fund.

1. BACKGROUND

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 improves support for looked after children and strengthens the duty and responsibility of all Local Authorities, including District Councils, and organisations providing support and services for children and young people.

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 twenty five. This legislation also applies to Officers and Members alike.

This offer is in the early stages of development but it is designed and set out. We have approximately 330 young adults in this cohort of Care Leavers and efforts are being made to get back in touch with a number of Care Leavers aged twenty one to twenty five in line with our extended duty.

2. MAIN ISSUES

2.1 Corporate Parenting Principles

The Act introduces Corporate Parenting Principles which are intended to change Local Authority culture so that all staff and departments consider the impact of their work on children and young people for whom the Local Authority is the Corporate Parent, as well as on those under 25 who were previously in the care of a Local Authority.

The Principles state that local authorities (including county, district, borough and combined authorities) must 'have regard to the need' to take certain actions in their work for children in care and care leavers. These are:

- *To act in their best interests, and promote their physical and mental health and well-being;*
- *To encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings;*
- *To take into account their views, wishes and feelings;*
- *To help them gain access to, and make the 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 them;*
- *For them to be safe and have stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;*
- *To prepare them for adulthood and independent living.*

This reinforces the established understanding that 'corporate parenting' responsibilities extend beyond the County Council to its statutory partners and the Act seeks to further consolidate this through the formulation of the County's 'Local Offer'.

2.2 The Local Offer

We have consulted with various services across the authority to create a comprehensive Offer for our Care Leavers. The Offer is primarily information based; detailing our current commitments to Care Leavers and sign posting them to other available services, support and sources of information. Our aim has been to keep the Offer concise and useful for our Care Leavers and

rather than replicate information that can be found elsewhere on other trusted websites we have provided links and sign-posting so that our Care Leavers can access all available support independently should they wish.

The recommended format for the Local Offer is a distinct online area hosted on the Council's corporate website. Although this is not ideal, as it may not be the most appealing site for our care leavers, we have endeavoured to make the site easy to navigate, visually appealing, and most importantly mobile friendly. Youthoria, was considered as an alternative because it was aimed at a younger audience and already had a dedicated Care Leavers area. However, consultation with our Care Leavers, revealed that generally they did not like the Youthoria site. It was aimed at 11-19 year olds cutting out a large portions of our target group, and the site is now over 10 years old, with a distinct lack of functionality. Furthermore, work to review and update the site which initially we hoped to capitalise on has stalled and no longer fits with our timescales. Should Youthoria be redesigned then we will review this decision at that point. At this stage we will have a small presence on Youthoria linking through to the corporate website.

The Local Offer can be broken down into several key areas:

- *Who is eligible/ Being a Care Leaver/Role of the personal Adviser*
- *Health & Wellbeing*
- *Relationships*
- *Education*
- *Employment & Training*
- *Participation and Engagement*
- *Participation in Society*
- *Accommodation*
- *Finances*

2.3 Communication & Engagement Strategy

We are also continuing our work with partners to develop an enhanced Local Offer to provide opportunities for our Care Leavers that cannot be delivered by the council alone. To achieve our aims regarding opportunity development, we have been working with the Corporate Communications & Information Team to develop a communication and engagement strategy that covers the promotion and launch of the Local Offer. The strategy looks at communication and interaction with community groups and businesses to aid in developing opportunities for our Care Leavers. It also demonstrates our plan for contacting eligible young people who are currently closed to us and with whom we have no contact with but, who are entitled to a service from us. It also lays out our marketing approach and plans for the Local Offer.

2.4 Member Champions

In order to promote and develop these opportunities we would like to create member champions for specific areas of our Local Offer. These champions will directly reflect the key sections of the Local Offer. The main responsibility of these champions will be to promote the Local Offer, both internally and externally, initially by increasing engagement across the authority to provide the best opportunities for Care Leavers across all directorates and services. Further to this, member's champions will work with Officers to ensure provision in their section is of the highest standard, contributing their own ideas and solutions to aid in this delivery. Externally, champions will look at their own networks to identify opportunities and potential partnerships to help facilitate the creation of new opportunities for our Care Leavers. Member champions will also promote the Local Offer more generally at events, engagements and other networking opportunities acting as a good corporate parent and as any good parent would do for their own children.

2.5 Department for Education Light Touch Meeting

Mark Riddell, National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers will be visiting the authority on January 31st to review our progress with the Local Offer and service provision for Care Leavers.

Following this meeting, Mark will likely provide suggestions for improvement and share some examples of best practice. This will give us a very clear focus on next steps as well as providing a broader picture of what could be achieved over the next year.

2.6 Local Offer Development Officer Post

A key objective of the Local Offer is sustainability and ensuring provision remains in place and develops, far into the future. In line with this objective, the Offer remains very much an active project and is not yet ready to transition into business as usual to be managed by the Leaving Care Teams. Therefore, to enable the continued development of the Local Offer and for it to reach its full potential, we are looking to recruit a Local Offer Development Officer to oversee and manage the Offer when our Graduate Trainee completes his placement with us in March 2019. The Local Offer Development Officer is planned to be a one-year fixed term post. We are also exploring the possibility of an apprenticeship to support the Local Offer Development Officer in their work. Ideally this apprenticeship would be filled by one of our own Care Leavers.

SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Resource Implications

Proposed creation of a Local Offer Development Officer post for a fixed-term of one year. It is proposed we secure this funding from the Transformation Fund, if the proposal is accepted.

3.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications NA

3.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications NA

3.4 Equality and Diversity Implications NA

3.5 Engagement and Communications Implications NA

3.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement NA

3.7 Public Health Implications NA

Source Documents	Location
Pathways4Us 'Cambridgeshire's Local Offer for Care Leavers'	https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/children-s-social-care/care-leavers-local-offer/