

LOCAL OFFER FOR CARE LEAVERS

To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: 21 November 2018

From: Kate Knight
Lead Corporate Parenting Manager

Electoral division(s): All

Purpose: To brief the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee on the implementation of changes to Leaving Care Services arising from the Children and Social Work Act 2017, including the newly articulated 'Corporate Parenting Principles', the extension of Personal Adviser support to all under-25 year olds with Care Leaving status and specifically the requirement to develop a 'local offer' for care leavers.

Recommendation: The Sub-Committee is recommended to:

- a) note the development of Cambridgeshire's Local Offer to Care Leavers and support awareness of the offer within the Council.
- b) consider how Elected Members might wish to be involved and/or champion the offer for Cambridgeshire's care leavers.
- b) encourage partners to engage with the development of Cambridgeshire's Local Offer to 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 with Care Leaving status up until the age of 25 years old. This Act also requires Local Authorities to develop a 'Local Offer' for this cohort of young adults.

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 a vehicle to provide an added service to our care leavers, working across the Council and our partner agencies as well as business in order to provide additional opportunities, such as securing apprenticeship places, work experience placements or free gym membership.

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 for some time and the offer will continue to develop and evolve as times change and available services shift. However it is a statutory requirement to have an initial offer in place in 2018 and to support this, a representative from the Department of Education will review our preliminary offer in January 2019 and we aim to launch Cambridgeshire's Local Offer in February 2019.

1. BACKGROUND

Legislation including the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004 has successively strengthened the responsibility of public bodies to children in care and young adults with Care Leaver status. 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.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 states that Councils and partner organisations 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 and to all Care Leavers up to the age of 25 years. This legislation also applies to officers and Members alike.

Cambridgeshire currently has 330 young adults in the cohort aged eighteen to twenty one and we now have a duty to extend this support to an additional 350 young adults with Care Leaver status aged twenty two to twenty five who may request a service.

2. MAIN ISSUES

2.1 Corporate Parenting Principles

The Act introduces Corporate Parenting Principles which are intended to influence local authority culture so that all staff and departments within it consider the impact of their work for children and young people for whom the local authority is a Corporate Parent, as well as on those under twenty five years of age 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 partner
- 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 Council's local offer.

2.2 The Local Offer for Care Leavers

Under the Act, all Local Authorities are required to publish a 'Local Offer' for young adults with Leaving Care status, informing them about the services they provide including what they or partner agencies offer that may assist care leavers in preparing for adulthood and independent living including services related to:

health and well-being
relationships
employment, education and training
accommodation
participation in society

2.3 Personal Advisor up to the age of 25

A new provision is added to the Children Act 1989, extending the entitlement to a Personal Advisor (PA) beyond the age of 21 to this cohort of young adults up to the age of 25 years old, whether or not they are in education or training.

All Local Authorities now have a responsibility to make the offer of a PA at least once a year to Care Leavers, and for them to carry out a needs assessment and to prepare a Pathway Plan with them.

2.4 Developing Cambridgeshire's Local Offer

In considering the requirement to develop a Local Offer for Care Leavers, it is important to distinguish this from the well-established 'local offer' for children with educational needs (SEN) and Disability. Cambridgeshire's Local Offer is being developed with the full participation of young people and these discussions will include whether a more distinctive name would be helpful.

It is currently anticipated that the visual offer will primarily be web-based and hosted on the Council's 'Youthoria' website which is dedicated to providing young people with a wide range of information. The Local Offer would be located in a differentiated space and will have links to many existing aspects of Youthoria information and a link to the website will also be available on the County Council website. The offer will also link to other local and national information because, importantly, the offer is not simply that which the County Council provides but includes the services provided by statutory, voluntary and private sector partners as well. Using the Youthoria website does not incur any additional cost

There will also be an information leaflet outlining the scope and coverage of the Local Offer and how to access it.

Information will include:

- Who is eligible/ Being a care leaver
- Role of the Personal Adviser
- Health & Wellbeing
- Relationships
- Employment, Education & Training
- Participation and Engagement
- Participation in Society
- Accommodation
- Finances
- Key contacts

Work is underway to develop the County Council content and also to start engaging with partners on what information they would wish to see included to ensure maximum support to this cohort of young adults. Subsequent work will encourage recognition of the particular needs of Care Leavers and consider whether they might offer them a 'premium' service, differentiated from their universal offer. The participation of young people is key to ensuring that the content, presentation and accessibility of the Local Offer is relevant and user-friendly. They will continue to act as a 'reference group' as the Offer is refined.

It is anticipated that the website will be operational in its early form during November such that it can be shared more widely with young people and partners ('soft launch') to encourage further feedback. Following this Mark Riddell will critically review the Council's response to the new duties and it is

anticipated this will include advice on Cambridgeshire's Local Offer. It is therefore planned to refine the Offer in the light of any advice and a full launch will be scheduled for no later than February 2019.

2.5 Governance

There are two work streams currently in place working on the Care Leaver offer and the operational response to new statutory duties. Progress with these is scrutinised by the Leaving Care Steering Group chaired by the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting and Head of Service for Virtual School. Membership of the group is being reviewed and the service would welcome wider representation.

SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Resource Implications

Six additional PA posts have been created and are currently going through pre-employment checks.

3.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

None

3.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

None

3.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

None

3.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

None

3.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

None

3.7 Public Health Implications

None

Source Documents	Location
None	