

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET – 14.03.2019

Local Offer to Care Leavers

REPORT OF – Assistant Director, Children’s Safeguarding and Family Support

LEAD CABINET MEMBER – Councillor P Watling, Cabinet Member for Children & Adults Early Help & Support (Lead Member for CYP)



PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Following the ‘Children’s Social Care Reform – A Vision for Change’ document published in January 2016, the government produced the Children and Social Work Bill which subsequently received Royal Assent on 27 April 2017. Implicit in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 is the requirement to improve support for looked after children in England and Wales especially for those leaving care.

The Act introduces seven corporate parenting principles to which local authorities must have regard. These are:

- To act in the best interests and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing of relevant 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 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;
- To have regard to the need for those children and young people to be safe and have stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;

- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

By September 2018 local authorities in England were required to publish their Local Offer for care leavers, providing information about services which the local authority offers that may assist care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living. This includes services relating to health and well-being, relationships, education and training, employment, accommodation and participation in society.

Telford and Wrekin Children's Services have worked closely with internal and external partners, and with care leavers via the care leavers' forum to co-produce the Local Offer for care leavers. The Local Offer not only details the statutory requirements of support to care leavers, but also includes details of additional support and services available within the borough for care leavers who have been previously looked after by the Telford and Wrekin Council.

The purpose of the report is to provide details of Telford and Wrekin Council's Local Offer for care leavers and for Cabinet to endorse the Local Offer.

Further updates to the Local Offer following initial publication:

- The Leaving Care team are working with the Senior Engagement Advisor for the Care Leaver Covenant¹. This will provide the opportunity to be part of the development of a national initiative for care leavers which will enhance opportunities for care leavers on a national scale. It is also an opportunity to showcase the work that is currently being undertaken in Telford and Wrekin to ensure that the social value aspect of contracts awarded by the Council both address and benefit the needs of care leavers.
- Council tax exemption has been introduced for care leavers to the age of 21.
- Priority housing has been introduced for care leavers.
- As well as free Aspirations memberships for care leavers, concessionary Aspirations membership rates are now offered companions of care leavers.
- Free public swimming has been extended to care leavers.
- Marches Growth Hub are offering a 1:1 with care leavers to focus on individual career routes and learning, development and employment opportunities within the borough.

¹ <https://mycovenant.org.uk/about/>

- A tailor made ‘becoming an entrepreneur’ session is being offered at the Growth Hub along with the offer of a tailored ‘becoming an entrepreneur’ pack.
- We are piloting a Telford and Wrekin Corporate Parenting week later this year.
- A bi-annual wellbeing survey is being completed with care leavers (Bright Spots, Your Life beyond Care).
- We are building webpages on the Council’s corporate website to ensure that advice, guidance and contacts specific to and appropriate for care leavers is available.
- We are introducing a care leaver’s mentoring service.
- We are working with the Outdoor Education Support service. Initially, we have arranged a free care leaver forum (for up to 30) at Sky Reach in the town park where we will be holding a consultation session to look at what is available for care leavers to access through the service and what they would find most useful for inclusion in the offer.

We are continuing to work with care leavers and partner organisations on further enhancements to the Telford and Wrekin Local Offer for care leavers. As the Local Offer progresses, new actions will be identified and scrutiny of these will be passed to the Corporate Parenting Board and Senior Management Team.

In order for the Local Offer to be varied to enhance the support to care leavers within the annual review period, it is proposed that the Director of Children’s Services is delegated the necessary authority to agree any variation required.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet notes the progress made against the requirements of the Children and Social Care Act 2017 in relation to children in care and care leavers.

3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Co-Operative Council priority objective(s)?	
	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and support our most vulnerable children and adults • Put our children and young people first • Improve local people's prospects through education and skills training • Support neighbourhoods most in need and work to ensure that local people have access to suitable housing • Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities and address health inequalities.
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	Children in Care and Care Leavers
TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE	Ongoing	
FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT	Yes	<p>The costs of increasing the support workers post to a full-time position will be covered by the increase in the 'new burdens' funding provided to the Council by the Government.</p> <p>(T.D 07.02.2019)</p>
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	<p>The Children & Social Work Act 2017 received Royal Assent on 27th April 2017.</p> <p>Sections 1 to 3 of the Act came into force on 1st April 2018.</p> <p>Section 1 of the Act applies to the whole local authority and establishes a set of corporate parenting principles applicable to children looked after</p>

	<p>under Section 22(1) Children Act [CA] 1989 , relevant children under Section 23A CA 1989 and young people under 25 who are relevant children under Section 23C(1) CA 1989.</p> <p>Section 2 of the Act provides that a local authority must publish information about the services that it offers to care leavers and any other services that it offers which may assist care leavers in preparing for adulthood and independent living. This includes services relating to health and well-being, relationships, education and training, employment, accommodation and participation in society.</p> <p>Section 3 of the 2017 Act inserts a new Section 23CZB into the CA 1989 ,which extends services to former relevant children up to the age of 25 years, even if they are not in education or training. If such a young person wishes to receive advice and support the local authority must provide a personal adviser and conduct an assessment of their needs and prepare a pathway plan, unless the young person does not wish to have a pathway plan.</p> <p>The Department for Education published statutory guidance for local authorities on 26th February 2018 relating to the duties under Sections 1- 3 of the 2017 Act. This guidance must be followed unless there are exceptional circumstances that justify departing from it.</p> <p>(KF 06.02.2019)</p>
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OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	Yes	<p>In order to be able to create outstanding care leavers services, consideration needs to be given as to how the local authority can meet the projected demands in caseload increase and ensure that young person receive the appropriate interventions and support.</p> <p>Children's Services are currently reviewing the team structure within the Leaving Care team and assessing the anticipated capacity required to meet future demand. This will need to be balanced with statutory demands in relation to safeguarding in the rest of the service.</p>
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	No	

PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The remainder of the report will contain any additional information needed to inform decision-making and is likely to include the following headings:

4. INFORMATION

(See Telford and Wrekin Local Offer to Care Leavers - Appendix 1)

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 set out new requirements for local authorities in relation to corporate parenting and care leavers. This report provides an update in relation to the progress made by Telford and Wrekin's Children's Services in meeting the new requirements.

The Children and Social Work Bill was introduced to the House of Lords in May 2016; all parliamentary stages were concluded early April 2017 and the Bill received Royal Assent becoming law in April 2017.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 is intended to improve support for children in care and care leavers, to promote the welfare and safeguarding of children and make provisions about the regulation of social workers.

Whilst the Act became law in April 2017, local authorities were given until 1st April 2018 to develop their local offer. Consultation, with local authorities and partner agencies, took place through January and February 2018 with guidance on this requirement provided to local authorities in December.

The Act sets corporate parenting principles for local authorities in terms of being the best corporate parents they can be to children in care and care leavers. These are largely a collation of existing duties local authorities have towards children in care and those leaving care. Local authorities are required to publish their support offer to care leavers and to promote the educational attainment of children, who have been adopted or placed in other long-term arrangements.

In October 2017 the Minister for Children and Families, Robert Goodwin, wrote to local authorities to advise of the appointment of a national implementation adviser for care leavers who has been tasked with supporting local authorities to introduce and embed the changes introduced through the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

Three key matters were identified within this letter:

- Local authorities will 'have regard' to seven corporate parenting principles, which frame how they deliver services to children in care and care leavers
- There will be a duty on local authorities to consult on and then publish their 'local offer' to care leavers, and
- Local authorities will be required to offer support from a personal adviser to all care leavers up to the age of 25. New burdens funding will be provided to support implementation of this change.

A response was provided to the children's minister, which identified progress and key actions required to ensure compliance across the three key areas identified.

Considerable work has been undertaken within the Telford and Wrekin Leaving Care Service to meet the new requirements and this report provides details on compliance with the new requirements.

Update against the key issues and actions

a) Local authorities will have to 'have regard' to seven corporate parenting principles, which frame how they deliver services to children in care and care leavers.

The Children and Social Care Act 2017 outlines seven corporate parenting principles, these are:-

- 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 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 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, and;
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Telford and Wrekin Council is compliant with regard to the seven corporate parenting principles. The principles are embedded in the council's approach to

working with children in care and care leavers and can be evidenced through the service's performance management and quality assurance processes undertaken internally, including case file auditing, practice observation and looked after child reviews and the council's Corporate Parenting Board.

b) There will be a duty on local authorities to consult on and then publish their 'local offer' to care leavers.

Telford and Wrekin Council is compliant with regard to consulting on and publishing their 'Local Offer'.

The Local Offer was informed by consultation with the care leaver's forum and Corporate Parenting Board and was developed through a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary task and finish group. The Local Offer will continue to evolve, through regular consultation with the care leavers' forum and monitoring through the Corporate Parenting Board.

The publication of the online Local Offer took place in September 2018. The Local Offer task and focus group will continue to meet a minimum of bi-annually to ensure that the offer evolves in response to the needs of care leavers and that all links are current and resources relevant.

Personal Advisers are sharing and promoting the Local Offer with the care leavers they work with in order to ensure they are aware of it and the services they are entitled to. Further consideration is being given as to how the local offer can be made available to, and easily understood by, care leavers with additional needs and those where English is not their first language.

The Local Offer can be accessed via the [Telford and Wrekin Children's Service online manual](#).

c) Local authorities will be required to offer support from a Personal Adviser to all care leavers to age 25. New burdens funding will be provided to support implementation of this change.

Telford and Wrekin Council is compliant with regard to offering support to all care leavers, who qualify under the changes in legislation.

All eligible young people were communicated to regarding the extended support offer and a number have responded requesting additional support.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 extends the role of support provided to our Care Leavers to include those aged 21 to 25 years; this has been effective from 1 April 2018. The Care Leavers Service is reviewing the

potential impact of this change to ensure staff capacity will be sufficient to meet the demand. The offer will detail what this support will include, for example the allocation of a Personal Advisor, regular “drop in” events, participation work, signposting to partner agencies and community resources.

The government stated that 'new burdens funding' would be available to local authorities to support meeting the new requirements. New burdens funding relates to any new policy or initiative by government which increases the cost of providing local authority services and could lead to an increase in council tax if it was not additionally funded by central Government.

£12,000 was awarded to Telford and Wrekin Council in 2018/19. This funding was been utilised to employ a NEET support worker to support and manage employment and training opportunities for care leavers. £24,000 has been awarded to Telford and Wrekin Council for 2019/20. The funding of the NEET support worker is being continued and will now extend to the post being full time. A volunteer mentoring scheme is also in the early stages of being developed.

The number of cases currently open to the care leavers team is 111 with a complement of 8.6 personal assistants. This case load is currently manageable, however it is anticipated that this will increase further over the next 18 months due to the number of children in care between 16-18 years and care leaver's being able to access further support post 21 years of age.

Conclusion

The Telford and Wrekin Local Offer for care leavers aims to be aspirational for our young people, to enable them the best possible opportunities to develop into their independent adult life. As Corporate Parents we want to aim high for our children in care and care leavers, to support them to function independently and make positive contributions within the borough.

Whilst continuing to consider the role that the Council can provide, it is important for us to also consider the role that statutory and non-statutory partners are able to provide as part of a broader corporate family. Care leavers and children in care are not the sole responsibility of councils' children's services departments. While children's services might deliver most of the direct services and support, all council departments hold corporate parenting responsibilities. As such, we will continue to consider further support and services that can be provided to care leavers through broader council departments and their own delivery of corporate parenting responsibilities.

Responsibility of the Local Offer sits with the council's Managing Director and Leader, both to ensure the document fully reflects the breadth of the services the council offers, but also to demonstrate Corporate Parenting leadership.

5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Local Offer supports the ambition to improve opportunities and reduce disadvantages that care leavers face within society.

6. PREVIOUS MINUTES

N/A

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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