



Care Leavers Forum Report

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Care Leavers Forum provides a regular opportunity for care leavers to meet and discuss important issues which are used to inform and improve the overall development of the service offer. The issues can be summarised into four key themes; sufficient financial security, adequate support networks including advice and guidance, well developed independent living skills and security of accommodation. This report highlights how the service is developing services and practices to support these areas and also report on suggestions for the future which were made by care leavers in their February 2018 meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To consider the issues and suggestions raised by the Care Leavers Forum (outlined in 4.1 and 4.2) and offer comment on how the service is responding to meet these.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 Care leavers face significant life changes as they make their transition into adulthood. It is important to seek their views on the services offered to enable them to shape and directly affect where improvements could be made in the future.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 The Care Leaver Forum was held on the 27th February 2018 and was attended by two care leavers. The challenge for the service is maintaining a meaningful and well attended forum so that membership is healthy, diverse and representative of the whole care leaver population.

The Forum commented favourably on the recent Cabinet decision regarding exemption of Council Tax and future approval for areas that will support financial security and support reduction of isolation. This was considered to be a great stride forward that will assist care leavers tremendously. Both attendees were pleased with

this outcome and wanted to know how this positive message was to be communicated.

Subject to Cabinet approval the following proposals were also discussed.

- Communications Allowance – This proposal was well received. The consensus from both Care Leavers was that an allowance would be preferred as it will contribute to choice for Care Leavers, additionally the suggested offer of Hardware should be based upon need.
- White Goods – The additional support in this area would be welcomed.

The Forum also suggested areas for future development. These are as follows;

- Tenancy security. This was in relation to when care leavers potentially go travelling and on occasions have to surrender their existing tenancies and belongings as there are no storage options.
- The post 21 support offer. The Forum considered there will be a high number of young adults choosing to stay involved with the care leaver service between the age of 21 and 25 years. Forum members spoke about their limited social networks, their loneliness and how not being able to contact people or access information significantly limits how they integrate with the world and become more independent. Care Leavers feel that the support pending with the Communication Allowance would assist in reducing their loneliness and help them to develop their own networks.
- Use of Social Media. The discussion centred on how consultation is undertaken with a wider range of care leavers, including those living outside of Derby. The Council's communications team have already been approached and agreed to support this work moving forward. They will form a project group which will be inclusive of a care leaver forum member.
- Befriending and respite options for care leavers.
- Driving lessons for care leavers.

4.2 In response to the areas suggested there are a number of initiatives already in development.

- Independent Living - Derby Homes have delivered a training course which addresses the key issues about having a tenancy and availability of this course this will be ongoing. Those care leavers approaching 18 or who are about to move into their first tenancy will be given the opportunity to attend the course. Two young men take up this opportunity and feedback has been positive. It is hoped that we be able to provide them with the confidence they will need to successfully secure their first tenancy.
- 4 Local Area Co-ordinators are currently being recruited to go live in April 2018 to work with twenty care leavers. Local Area Co-ordinators will be able to signpost and enable Care Leavers to local resources and networks, which will promote community engagement and reduce loneliness and isolation.
- Establishment and publication of a Care Leavers Local Offer. This charter will list all the services available to a care leaver in Derby from all relevant.

This will support the key theme of having access to advice and guidance.

- 4.3 The Forum's current structure and attendance was also discussed and agreement was made for this area to be improved. The Forum requires a more creative approach that will encourage more to attend and provide care leavers with the opportunity to socialise and reduce their isolation.

The agreed initial actions that the service intend to take are;

- Ask Personal Advisors to consult with current care leavers to understand any barriers to attending the existing Forum.
- Consider whether independence from the service in arranging and chairing the Forum would positively impact on increasing attendance.
- Review the venue and timing of meetings – for example, consider use of leisure venues as alternative.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 None

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Estates/Property officer Service Director(s) Other(s)	Suanne Lim, DMT Andrew Kaiser
For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices:	Gareth Dakin 01332 640302 - Gareth.dakin@derby.gov.uk None Appendix 1 - Implications

IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 Children and Social Work Act 2017 implementation will require additional resources.

Legal

- 2.1 The Leaving Care Service is a statutory service as outlined in the Children Act 1989, Leaving Care Act 200 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

Personnel

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Equalities Impact

- 5.1 N/A

Health and Safety

- 6.1 N/A

Environmental Sustainability

- 7.1 N/A

Property and Asset Management

- 8.1 N/A

Risk Management

- 9.1 N/A

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

10.1 Protecting Vulnerable Children and Adults