



Derby City Council

**Corporate Parenting Sub Board
3 December**

ITEM 6

Report of the Strategic Director of Children and Young People

Update on the Care Leavers Charter and support to Care leavers in higher education.

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report provides an update on the Care Leavers Charter in regard to how the principles are being implemented operationally in the Leaving Care Service.

The support available to Care Leavers in higher education is also detailed.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Charter as a driver ensures that Care Leavers are a visible priority group in relevant service areas.

That the principles of the Charter continue to be developed in the day to day operational practice of the Leaving Care Service.

To note the current arrangement for financially supporting care leavers in higher education.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To ensure that service development and the day to day practice of the Leaving Care Service is based on the underlying principles of the charter

To ensure that care leavers who are in higher education are appropriately financially supported by their corporate parent.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 The Care Leavers' Charter was launched during national care leavers' week on 29.10.12 and has been championed by Edward Timpson MP, Children's Minister, DfE in a letter dated 30.10.12 entitled Improving Outcomes of Care Leavers. It is underpinned by the Access all Areas report, published on 16.4.12.

A principal aim of the Charter is to encourage councils to identify care leavers

and their needs as a priority within wider council policies and service area plans. Such as employment and training opportunities within the Council and housing allocations for young people.

4.2 **Improving Outcomes for Care leavers**

The Government have introduced a number of new developments seeking to raise

Outcomes for care leavers to match those of the best performing authorities.

This is

driven by national performance data that indicates an overall reduction in the number of care leavers in employment, education and training and evidence that

fewer care leavers are living in suitable accommodation.

The Charter sets out broad principles designed to achieve good outcomes for care

leavers. It is underpinned by the 'Access all Areas' report published on 16.4.12.

This report identifies that many current government policies have seriously detrimental and unintended consequences and can hold back rather than incentivise care-leavers on their journey towards independent adulthood

Access All Areas is about extending corporate parenting by ensuring central government departments "care proof" and consider how their policies will impact on

looked after children and care leavers, with a specific focus on young people aged

18-25. This includes:

- Explicit recognition of care leavers in policy documents.
- Automatic entitlement for care leavers to provision addressing the needs of
- vulnerable adults.
- Priority for care leavers to access available discretionary support.
- Ensuring joint working protocols at a local and national level.
- Responsive personalised services for care leavers.

4.3 **Care Leavers' Charter**

The Charter for Care Leavers is the mission statement or headline document for improving the outcomes for care leavers. It sets out what they can expect from Local Authorities as good Corporate Parents. It is designed to raise expectation, aspiration and understanding of the needs of care leavers. It is based on six principles of support and was produced by care leavers themselves. It focuses on the following areas

- Identity and aspiration.
- Listening to care leavers' views.
- Support when needed.
- Information.

- Finding care leavers a home.
- Working together.

Derby City Council agreed to adopt the charter in December 2012.

Update in relation to Leaving Care Service

4.4 Operational embedding

- Staff briefing sessions have been held in staff meetings so all personal advisors are aware of the charter and the need to embed in practice.
- Individual staff performance measures (MIPs) have the principles of the charter as objectives' for practice. Performance is measured by both qualitative and quantitative information including feedback from young people.
- Two members of staff have attended the 'walking in my shoes' training and there are plans to offer similar training locally to the team which will be facilitated by members of the Children in Care Council.
- Pathway Plans need to focus on ensuring that the needs and ambitions of the young person are mapped out.

4.5 Identity and Aspiration

- All care leavers in training or education continue to be offered financial incentives and support with any associated costs to ensure they are financially better off. Care leavers are encouraged to remain in education or training and are made aware of the 16-19 year old bursary. Education bonuses are provided when a young person successfully completes a course of study or training. This reward is decided between young person and personal advisor and is used to celebrate and reward achievement at every level of success
- The Leaving Care Service no longer has a dedicated worker to advise and assist care leavers in accessing suitable education, training or employment. However the service is co-located with the national careers service and the Space@Connexions multi-agency team so young people who come into the centre can access some careers advice and guidance. A locality Connexions worker was also allocated to provide some support to care leavers who were NEET however the role was limited in terms of actual dedicated time and it is currently unclear whether this support will continue due to capacity issues.
- All care leavers continue to be offered financial support to meet their pathway needs. As well as training and education this includes financial assistance for leisure activities, to enable contact with key kin/support

networks, some travel costs, help with costs associated with additional needs, small holiday allowance, birthday allowances, religious festival allowances and cold weather payments during the winter period.

- The Leaving Care Service continues to offer annual day trips for those who would not have a holiday due to costs or having nobody to go with. This year approximately 40 young people were taken to Blackpool for the day. Young people chose the location and organised the trip. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive.
- Young peoples views about the service they receive have started to be collected to both improve the service and assess individual staff performance. Informal feedback continues to be gathered by the use of the drop in book and suggestion box. Young people's views are ascertained throughout the Pathway Plan.

4.6 Support when needed

- Research has shown that Leaving Care Services are popular with young people where they cultivate a clearly distinct identity from Looked After Children services. This can be achieved through presentation by staff that are able to build positive and relaxed relationships with young people. The Leaving Care Service aims to foster a culture where staff are available, efficient, friendly and welcoming.

4.7 Information

- The Leaving Care Service continues to offer support to young people when accessing their files. The Children in Care Council has recently produced a children in care rights leaflet which provides information about leaving care entitlements. The Care Leavers association has also produced a Care Leaver's Guide which has been written by people who have been through the care system themselves. All care leavers will be provided with a copy of both these documents. See Appendix.

4.8 Finding care leavers a home

- Ensuring care leavers have access to suitable accommodation is the duty of the council as a whole
- Nationally there has been a downturn in care leavers living in suitable accommodation. Local authorities are being encouraged to use and prioritise 'staying put' arrangements' to ensure that care leavers can continue to live and get support from former foster carers. The council does not have a formal 'staying put' policy however if a young person turns 18 while completing a course of study or training then the foster placement will continue to be funded but without the foster carers fees.

This only applies to Derby City foster placements.

- The primary legislation for the provision of accommodation for former relevant care leavers as a priority group is housing legislation. Duties under the 2002 Housing Act.
- In Derby City there is a well established Joint CYP and Housing Protocol which aims to ensure the support and accommodation needs of care leavers are met. Operationally monthly meetings with key housing providers are convened. Where a young person has the requisite life skills to manage a tenancy then they are given priority status for housing and referred for tenancy support. If they are not yet ready or do not wish to live independently then supported housing projects are considered.
- These projects were funded by supporting people however under the new contracts there is no provision for care leavers. CYP commissioning service is currently reviewing the accommodation requirements of young people in need, those looked after and ready for semi- independence and care leavers. The aim is to produce an accommodation framework by July 2014.
- This is likely to be an additional budget pressure as previously supported accommodation was funded by housing benefits for the accommodation element and the support was funded by supporting people budgets. In addition the range of providers is likely to be less as without the security of block contract funding many projects will no longer be viable.

4.9 Working Together

- The Leaving Care Service is co- located with a wide range of services for young people at Space@Connexions. This is effective in enabling and promoting access to a range of support from sexual health to help with CV's and advice about careers and employment opportunities.
- The Leaving Care Service works in partnership with CVS to provide mentors to care leavers. The individual costs are currently £2000 per mentor per year and includes recruitment, training and mentor support in addition to direct weekly mentoring of young people.
- The Leaving Care Service has well established relationships with a range of key agencies from JCP to Derby College.
- Some authorities have adopted the concept of LAC champions and have designated champions within the wider council such as in leisure and youth services.

4.10 Support available to care leavers in higher education

- Care leavers entering higher education before the age of 25 are entitled

to a one off bursary of £2000. This will normally be paid in three instalments over three years, usually during the first academic term of each academic year of a three year degree course.

- The Leaving Care Service also provides education bonuses at the end of each academic year. Current level of payment is £500 at the end of the first and second year and £1000 when the degree course has been completed to assist with any gaps between leaving University and finding employment.
- Most young people in higher education are not entitled to claim benefits. There are some circumstances in which some young people are entitled to claim benefits, such as:
 - a) young people with disabilities
 - b) young people with children.
- As a general rule, young people planning to attend an HE institution will be expected to apply for the maximum amount of financial assistance available through universal grants, loans and bursaries available for the course that they are intending to study. Tuition fee loans are paid directly to the University by Student Finance, however maintenance loans are paid direct to students and affordable accommodation will need to be sought. Maintenance grants are also paid directly to students, in three parts at the beginning of each academic term, so young people are provided with support and advise to ensure they are aware of their weekly budget
- In this academic year the maximum maintenance grants and maintenance loans that can be paid is £7260 which covers costs over the academic year and excludes the 12 week summer vacation period.
- Young people planning on attending or in higher education complete an income/expenditure calculation form with their Leaving Care Personal Advisor.
- A clearly informed estimate of the level of funding available should be made at the earliest opportunity. Young People's accommodation options are also explored and costs ascertained. Income from grants and loans are included in calculations for term time only.
- During term-time the principal that a young person should have a minimum of £86.54 to live on after reasonable accommodation and travel costs have been taken into consideration are applied to all young people in higher education using the income/expenditure calculation form to determine any shortfalls.
- The £2000 bursary over three years and the education bonuses are also paid. Further financial support is provided based on pathway needs such as funding for leisure activities or costs associated with the course such

as equipment or trips.

4.11 **Vacation period**

- Accommodation and maintenance costs during the summer vacation period are met by the Leaving Care Service.
- Arrangements for the young person's accommodation and maintenance during holidays and vacations should be planned.
- In some circumstances young people return to stay with former foster-carers during these periods. Some Institutions offer care leavers 52 week accommodation (for example, Staffordshire University). Creative options, such as providing young people with the opportunity to travel, or engage in planned activities should be considered where appropriate. The Leaving Care Training house is also an option.
- Young people are encouraged to supplement their income whilst in higher education through appropriate part-time employment.
- A financial plan should be drawn up with the young person covering at least the period of the first academic year (including the summer vacation). The plan should include all sources of income and essential outgoings, including the young persons living and accommodation costs and should be in 2 parts covering term-time and academic holidays/vacations.

4.12 **Additional Support for Young People in Further/Higher Education**

- Help with clothes for interviews, work placements.
- Fares to get to interviews, work placements.
- Special equipment/clothing not provided by the college/university.
- IT equipment.
- Help with transport costs.
- Help with special needs or health issues.

The list is not exhaustive and Pathway Plans should take account of individual circumstances and need when detailing support to be provided.

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)	Jane Parfremment
For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices:	Bev Fearn – beverley.fearn@derby.gov.uk 01332 643932 A Leaving Care Care Guide, Children's Rights leaflet. Expenditure sheet Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Summary of education funding available to care leavers Appendix 3 – Budget Sheet/Aspire Appendix 4 – Children in Care Rights Appendix 5 – Leaving Care

IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

1.1

Legal

- 2.1 The Children Act (1989)
- Section 17, Provision of Services for children in need, their families and others;
 - Section 20, Provision of accommodation for children
 - Section 24, Advice and assistance for children (leaving care practice);
 - Section 27, Co-operation between authorities.
 - Volume 3 : Planning to Adulthood for care leavers
- The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
The Housing Act (1996) (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002)
The Homelessness Act (2002)
The Homelessness Code Of Guidance for Local Authorities (2006)

Personnel

3.1 None arising from this report.

Equalities Impact

4.1 N/A

Health and Safety

5.1 N/A

Environmental Sustainability

6.1 None arising from this report.

Property and Asset Management

7.1 None arising from this report.

Risk Management

8.1

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

9.1 All children are safe and healthy.