

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 9
25 NOVEMBER 2020	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Wendi Ogle-Welbourn Executive Director People and Communities	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Lynne Ayres Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education, Skills and the University	
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UPDATE ON THE LOCAL OFFER FOR CARE LEAVERS

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S	
FROM: Nicola Curley, Assistant Director	Deadline date:
<p>It is recommended that members of the Corporate Parenting Committee note the attached report and:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raise any queries with the lead officer and; 2. Make any recommendations as they find appropriate. 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is submitted to the Corporate Parenting Committee. The need for this report was identified as part of the Committee's work schedule for 2020/2021 and is in line with the work programme.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information requested by the Committee with regard the Local Offer for Care Leavers and updates on this within the last 6 months. This report considers the impact of Covid and what services have been put in place to mitigate this impact.
- 2.2 This report is for Corporate Parenting to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 2.4.4.3 Ensure that the needs of looked after children and care leavers are addressed through key plans, policies and strategies throughout the Council overseeing interagency working arrangements.
- 2.3 This links to all areas of the Children in Care Pledge.

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	
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4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

4.1 BACKGROUND TO THE LOCAL OFFER

- 4.1.1 Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires each local authority to consult on and publish a Local Offer for its Care Leavers.
- 4.1.2 The Local Offer is the support that is available for young people who are leaving or have left the care of Peterborough City Council.
- 4.1.3 The published Local Offer (online) has been updated as a result of COVID 19 with links to extra resources for mental health support necessitated by the Coronavirus pandemic.

4.2 SCOPE OF UPDATE

- 4.2.1 This report serves to update the Committee on the Local Offer specifically with regards to two significant changes in the last six months
 1. COVID 19
 2. Joining up the local offer with Cambridgeshire County Council

4.3 ACHIEVEMENTS WITH REGARD TO THE LOCAL OFFER IN RESPONSE TO COVID 19

- 4.3.1 The Leaving Care Service has been flexible and responsive to the needs of our Care Leavers over the last 6 months.
- 4.3.2 **Increased Contact from Personal Advisors and visits if needed.**
 - 4.3.2.1 The Local Offer states that a Personal Advisor (PA) will make contact a minimum of every 8 weeks. Contact has been significantly increased since the start of the pandemic. Due to risks presented by COVID 19, face to face visits were not routinely undertaken during the period of March to the beginning of July. Virtual visits and telephone calls increased as the alternative method of communication. PAs reported that the young people appreciated these calls and liked that they were often contacted with no purpose other than to see how they were doing. PAs had the time to increase contact as they were not spending time travelling between visits. Having the medium of Microsoft teams was an additional benefit to communication and welcomed by PA's and care leavers as it added a more personal touch.
 - 4.3.2.2 The PAs were able to respond effectively and efficiently to Care Leavers request for support or their identified needs. During lockdown, where visits were necessary to support young people, these still took place using personal protective equipment (PPE). Examples of visits undertaken include, helping a young person to move and supporting a young person with an emergency dental appointment.
 - 4.3.2.3 The Participation Team sent out a fortnightly newsletter to Care Leavers with useful information.
- 4.3.3 **Practical Support**
 - 4.3.3.1 If there were problems with bank accounts PAs delivered money to young people where required.
 - 4.3.3.2 Some Care Leavers had worries about being able to get food at the start of the pandemic as supermarket shelves were worryingly empty. PAs were able to quickly distribute foodbank vouchers. The need for foodbank vouchers was a 'one off' for many care leavers but subsequent vouchers have been available for those that have needed them.
 - 4.3.3.3 An extension was agreed to those entitled to clothing allowance in April until shops reopened in July even if they had turned 18 during this time.

4.3.4 **Other Agencies**

- 4.3.4.1 PAs have worked closely with other agencies to deliver the Local Offer, in particular Rights Resolution (a community interest company that supports young people leaving care) have been proactive in their approach to supporting Care Leavers. As soon as they were able, they organised social distancing BBQs and picnics to address social isolation.
- 4.3.4.2 Housing providers also provided support to Care Leavers during lock down e.g., maintaining risk assessed drop-in sessions for Care leavers and translating COVID 19 guidance for Care Leavers where needed.
- 4.3.4.3 Housing providers provided care leavers with face masks using a government funded scheme to support.

4.3.5 **Education**

- 4.3.5.1 Identified Government funds allowed purchase of laptops and WIFI for those attending college to enable young people to continue their studies remotely.

4.3.6 **Accommodation**

- 4.3.6.1 Care Leavers at university were enabled to return to their Staying Put accommodation, if they found themselves isolated or unable to return to university. Usually, this arrangement is only funded during university holiday time.
- 4.3.6.2 Where necessary university bursaries were paid early to prevent financial hardship.
- 4.3.6.3 Accommodation was extended if Covid 19 prevented move on plans happening within timescales.

4.4 **CHALLENGES FOR THE LOCAL OFFER DUE TO IMPACT OF COVID 19**

- 4.4.1 Those involved in service delivery are concerned that some very important aspects of the Local Offer are not currently being delivered due to COVID 19 restrictions.
- 4.4.2 Mental health and drug and alcohol support has not been as responsive due to restrictions and increased demand across the population at large.
- 4.4.3 'Drops ins' provide a key element of the support available to Care Leavers in Peterborough. These sessions had to stop at the start of the pandemic and the PA's want to get these up and running as soon as possible. Planning is at an early stage.
- 4.4.4 Two successful drop ins had been running:
 - Daily 'drop in' in the town hall, currently shut due to COVID 19, new location needed.
 - Monthly evening 'drop in', on hold due to restriction in numbers who can attend.

4.5 **Apprenticeships and Work Experiences**

- 4.5.1 Due to the current situation and the full lock down we had prior in the year, there is limited progress in apprenticeship opportunities or work experience opportunities across the City. This has impacted on the programme to support Care Leavers and Children in Care to move into apprenticeships and work experience.

- 4.5.2 However, the current position with Care Leavers and Children in Care at City College Peterborough is:

Study programmes provisions (which will include work experience) is:

Care Leavers - 3 learners
Children in Care - 8 Learners

4.5.3 This current cohort of learners are showing 74% attendance, with 100% of the learners being retained to date.

4.5.4 Now education is back delivering an offer to our young people, we will be focusing on restarting apprenticeships and the wider offer, however, the opportunities have reduced and therefore we will work to source new opportunities and alternatives to apprenticeships and link with PCC HR on this.

4.6 ALIGNMENT WITH CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

4.6.1 Created during initial Covid-19 restrictions, there has been a cross authority work stream set up between Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council Leaving Care services to work on issues relating to Care Leavers, this initially had a pandemic focus, looking to share support initiatives such as grant funding for food support packages or laptops for those unable to access college courses.

4.6.2 This has now evolved to a more general work stream sharing resources and initiatives within the local community to ensure we are working together to maximise our support for Care Leavers in both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This combined approach is beneficial due to the geographical nature of our Care Leavers. There are many Cambridgeshire County Council Care Leavers living in Peterborough and many Peterborough City Council Care Leavers living in Cambridgeshire, so it makes sense that any initiatives or support developed with local organisations can support both cohorts.

4.6.3 There is a planned business event to be hosted by both Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council Leaving Care and Fostering services "Care Leavers and Fostering 'Bridge the Gap' Event planned, with guest speakers Mark Riddell MBE, Department of Education National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers and Graham Daniels, Director of Cambridge United Football Club, scheduled for April 2021 to appeal to businesses across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to support our Fostering and Leaving Care services and ask them to pledge support, whether it be advertising for Fostering recruitment, a developed inclusion policy for Care Leavers in their Employment policy, or sponsoring an initiative through their Corporate Social Responsibility funding.

4.6.4 Many aspects of Peterborough City Councils Local Offer to Care Leavers are similar to Cambridgeshire County Councils Local Offer, but the work stream will have a focus for the next 6-12 months, to look to align the Local Offers further with the overall aim of strengthening both.

4.6.5 Some examples of the differences in Cambridgeshire County Councils Local Offer to Care Leavers that we would look to implement, one example would be a mentoring scheme. Cambridgeshire County Council are currently running a pilot mentoring scheme of 11 mentors sourced from businesses in Cambridge and elected councillors. They have been carefully matched with Care Leavers in Cambridge city and are working with them on their aspirations towards Education, Employment and Training and also their personal goals. This is based on the approach of "you can't be what you can't see", trying to ensure we have more positive role models in our young people's lives who may have a very limited support network or are at risk of not achieving their potential.

4.6.6 We have highlighted from this pilot that one of the main strengths is the voluntary nature and for many of our young people, it is the first time they have developed a relationship with a professional who is not being paid to do it. Also many of our mentors have had very successful careers and have a great understanding of the private sector and links within it to benefit our young people.

4.6.7 Another example is the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. Cambridgeshire County Council have

developed links with Cambridge Rugby Union Football Club (CRUFC) Foundation Trust who have agreed to sponsor a Duke of Edinburgh scheme for Cambridgeshire Care Leavers and pay for all associated costs. This is a great example of developing 'Corporate Aunts and Uncles' to help our young people with employability and confidence building exercise that are outside of our statutory responsibilities. The Duke of Edinburgh scheme has many benefits for our young people with accreditation, confidence building, team building skills and a focus on personal aspirations. We would look to approach organisations for a similar initiative in partnership to ensure it could apply to both Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council Care Leavers.

4.7 KICKSTART SCHEME

- 4.7.1 The Government has created an employment package called the Kickstart Scheme to provide funding to employers to create job placements for 16-24 year olds on Universal Credit. This will cover 100% of salaries for 25 hours a week, for a 6 month placement, for young people identified as at risk of long term unemployed. It has been specified that these should be accompanied by suitable training offered by the employer, to ensure this offers young people employability skills. We have identified that this scheme is very beneficial for our Care experienced young people, for whom a full time position may be overwhelming, or may need a 'stepping stone' to the working world. We have taken a combined approach between Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council to ensure that as Corporate Parents we are taking advantage of this opportunity and prioritising our young people in these roles.
- 4.7.2 We would like to ensure that we remove as many obstacles as possible for our care experienced young people and support them into these roles. We are working with HR to implement our proposals which are as follows but not confirmed yet.
- 4.7.3
- A. All services across CCC and PCC encouraged to create new opportunities using Kickstart Scheme funding.
 - B. Care experienced young people encouraged to apply and supported through a reduced application form and the removal of an interview, replaced with an informal 'Come and See Us' appointment.
 - C. Successful Care experienced applicants to undertake Workplace Rights training, supplemented with involvement in recruitment panels to give interview experience, followed by more specific role based training sessions.
 - D. Unsuccessful applicants to be given thorough feedback.
 - E. Successful Care experienced applicants to be offered the chance to have a 'Work Buddy', volunteer from the Local Authority, with the match being led by the young person. Work Buddies to get a basic overview of Care Leavers before being matched, but to largely interact with them as they would interact with their peers.
 - F. All services taking part to be encouraged to look to make the role into an Apprenticeship or full-time role to ensure there is continuation and not an abrupt ending.
- 4.7.4 This is still in development and both Corporate Parenting Services of CCC and PCC are working closely with HR to focus on this. We are currently looking to run 30 placements across both Local Authorities throughout 2021 and hope Care Leavers are prioritised. We would look to supplement this with training at the start and end of the placement with regards to workplace rights and responsibilities and job hunting and during the placement their training would relate to their job role.
- 4.7.5 We are supplementing this by carrying out an 'Aspirational Audit', to identify our young people's employment aspirations, and match it with location, to give us a map of where we can offer the most suitable opportunities to try to ensure that the placements we offer are relevant for our young people and we are also looking to encourage other employers to prioritise our Care Leavers in their Kickstart Schemes.
- 4.7.6 We have identified two risks with this, the first would be that after these placements there is no progression into Apprenticeships or Full Time employment opportunities in the Council.

We would urge that all services taking part in this, to think about a planned progression for the young people on Kickstart placements.

- 4.7.7 Secondly due to many of our Care Leavers unconventional accommodation circumstances, they can struggle to financially support themselves on lower incomes whilst paying for their accommodation. There is a gap in support from Universal Credit to an aspirational role that upskills or improves their employability such as Apprenticeships or Internships. This is a national issue, but many of our young people may find that they cannot sustain the Kickstart wage whilst paying their accommodation costs.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Consultation with the Children in Council as part of the work stream to produce a seamless Care Leaver Offer across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire.

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

- 6.1 The anticipated outcome of the report focuses on the closer working between the combined authorities, maximising finite resources.

7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 The purpose of the report is to update the committee on the work undertaken during COVID 19 to deliver services, and the learning from this as a result.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 Not to provide the service would mean not fulfilling statutory requirements.

9. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 9.1 There may be limited financial implications of a joint Care Leaver Offer with Cambridgeshire in some areas, but this will be scoped in more detail as work progresses.

Legal Implications

- 9.2 Not to provide the service would mean not fulfilling statutory requirements.

Equalities Implications

- 9.3 To ensure care leavers have the same opportunities as their peers.

9.4 Carbon Impact Assessment

The plan to combine resources and services across PCC and CCC for care leavers will over time support a neutral impact on the consumption of energy.

9.5 Implications for Care Leavers

This report considers implications for Care Leavers.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 10.1 N/A

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 https://fis.peterborough.gov.uk/kb5/peterborough/directory/lo_youth_tiles.page?id=my4c4rcTeYS

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