

CABINET	AGENDA ITEM No. 5
22 MARCH 2024	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	John Gregg, Executive Director Children's Services	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Bisby, Cabinet Member for Children's Services	
Contact Officer(s):	Michaela Berry, Acting Head of Service for Corporate Parenting	Tel. 07930 832309

PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL LOCAL OFFER FOR CARE LEAVERS

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: The Executive Director of Children's Services	Deadline date: 31 st March 2024
<p>1. Cabinet is recommended to agree the Phase 1 proposal to improve and extend the Council's local offer to care leavers included at paragraph 4.35 of this report and that the Phase 1 proposal can be implemented with immediate effect.</p> <p>2. Cabinet is recommended to note that ta Phase 2 proposal to further extend and improve the Council's local offer to care leavers will be submitted for approval by Cabinet as soon as it is completed.</p> <p>3. Cabinet agrees to recommend to Council approval of the 100% Council Tax discount for care leavers. with effect from 1 April 2024.</p>	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is submitted to Cabinet in relation to the Care Leaver Motion submitted by Cllr Bond which was approved on 6 December 2023.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Cabinet on changes to the care leavers offer and approve funding for delivery.

2.2 This report is for Cabinet to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 3.2.1

To take collective responsibility for the delivery of all strategic Executive functions within the Council's Major Policy and Budget Framework and lead the Council's overall improvement programmes to deliver excellent services.

3.2.9 To promote the Council's corporate and key strategies and Peterborough's Community Strategy and approve strategies and cross-cutting programmes not included within the Council's major policy and budget framework.

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	22 March 2024
---	-----------	----------------------------------	---------------

4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

A good corporate parent regards their local care leavers as they would their own children. They have high aspirations and will provide a good standard of care, support, and encouragement, enabling care leavers to become independent and productive members of their community.

4.1 BACKGROUND

4.1.1 As corporate parents in Peterborough we know that our current local offer is not good enough to be assured that our care leavers have the best chances of achieving their potential. In part this is due to a lack of focus on our local young people. Officers had already identified that the local offer was lacking and falling behind that of other local authorities. Ofsted confirmed this assessment and raised concerns about the current situation during their recent inspection of children's services. As a result, the underdevelopment of our local offer contributed to Ofsted judging that the experience and progress of our care leavers is inadequate.

4.1.2 **Ofsted report January 2024:**

'Throughout the local authority, there has been a lack of ambition for care leavers.'
'The local offer for care leavers is underdeveloped.'
'Support for social and leisure needs is particularly limited.'
'Financial support to access Wi-Fi is not routinely provided.'
'Plans are only being developed now to offer gym passes.'
'Care leavers with relatively modest requests for support with leisure activities face difficulties accessing this support, even when it could make a significant difference to their emotional well-being.'

4.1.3 **Cllr Bond's Motion 6th December 2023:**

Responding to the motion submitted by Cllr Bond, Council resolved to;
Formally agree to work on a cross-party basis regarding improving outcomes for children, whilst discharging the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities.
Establish a cross-party working group with elected members, officers, and care leavers to develop a revised and fully costed set of proposals in the form of a revised care leaver local offer that reflects our aspiration to be the best corporate parent we can be.

4.1.4 **The importance of the Local Offer**

Young people leaving care constitute one of the most vulnerable groups in our society, their outcomes remain much worse than for their counterparts. This has already been recognised by the Council's agreement on 26 July 2023 that Care Experience is to be regarded as a protected characteristic.

The care leaver's local offer is a statutory requirement under the Children and Social Work Act (2017) it mandates local authorities to provide a range of services and support to care leavers up to the age of 25. The purpose is to ensure that care leavers receive consistent and comprehensive support as they transition into adulthood.

"Whilst we cannot mitigate the impact of all of the disadvantages that care leavers have experienced, we can ensure that as a society we do as much as we can to help care leavers overcome them." (Keep on Caring 2016)

The local offer should include information about what must be provided by law as well as any extra and/or discretionary support offered by a local authority. It is in the areas of extra and/or discretionary support that Peterborough has fallen behind other authorities.

4.2 Corporate Parenting

4.2.1 The Children and Social Work Act (2017) requires local authorities to have regard to seven corporate parenting principles when discharging their functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers. The local offer should set out what support all local authority departments will provide (not just Children’s Services), having regard to the corporate parenting principles detailed below.

- 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 the 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

4.3 2024 Revised Local Offer for Care Leavers

4.3.1 Cabinet is asked to make an early commitment (PHASE 1) to enable rapid improvement of the local offer and is asked to commit to supporting subsequent developments (PHASE 2).

4.3.2 **PHASE 1** - Early commitment, resourcing, and support to provide and improve aspects of the local offer that are singularly funded by Peterborough City Council. This initial phase begins now and will be completed within 2024.

4.3.3 **PHASE 2** - A city wide (non-council) commitment resourced by our statutory partners, local organisations, and businesses. This Phase will include, for example, developing and implementing training flats and developing specific health resources for our care leavers, Phase 2 will complete the support programme for our care leavers and will operate in conjunction with the provisions and services delivered by PCC. This phase will be defined and co-produced with our care leavers and city-wide representatives. A further report to Cabinet will then follow.

4.3.4 In order to demonstrate our commitment to becoming the best corporate parents we can be for care leavers in Peterborough and to provide a good quality and comprehensive local offer we propose the following table. Some of these items are universal, but others will be subject to need as identified as part of the pathway planning. This has been identified for each offer in column 3.

4.35

PHASE 1 2024				
Service or Provision	Proposed v current	Application approach	extra cost	Overview
100% Council Tax discount for Care Leavers until the age of 25 who live in Peterborough.	New	Universal	£90k	Discretionary discount currently in place as part of the Councils Council Tax hardship scheme (under s13a) however this scheme is not guaranteed

				<p>beyond the current allocation of funds and is a bureaucratic route for care leavers.</p> <p>The new process will be easier to follow and supported by the PA's. The discount will also be applied after any other exemptions or discounts have been applied. Eg Single Persons Discount or Local Council Tax Support.</p> <p>It is proposed that this will be effective from 1 April 2024.</p> <p>Phase 2 development to include consideration for our Care Leavers in other LA areas. It is likely there will be an additional cost associated with this.</p>
Gym/leisure passes	New	Universal	£5k	Provided via Vivacity.
Wi-Fi	New	Needs based	**	We do not expect this to be a need for many care leavers as most have access via their accommodation or current phone contracts.
Smartphone	Improved	Needs based	**	Subject to need, one handset per care leaver if needed (more in exceptional circumstances subject to need identified in pathway plan)
Bicycle, helmet and lock	Improved	Needs based	**	Current scheme is too limited, not sufficiently publicised and bikes are not of good quality.
A first shop of essential items	New	Universal	£2k	Essential items such as cleaning products, core food items when move into first fully independent accommodation.
Move of belongings to independent accommodation	New	Universal	**	May be a van or car hire.
Hardship/Flexible fund, to include; Activities Clothing Bills Food And items marked **	New	Needs based	£20k	<p>Access must be easy. Approach is to build social engagement and skills with positive activities such as sport, hobbies, community groups. Also accessible funds for Care Leavers in Need.</p> <p>Application for small one-off payments open to all via their PA as needed.</p> <p>All items marked with ** are included in this hardship fund allocation as it is unclear at this point the level of demand</p>

Setting up home allowance - £3,000	Already in place	Universal	N/A	The setting up home allowance is spent with the support of the PA.
Passport and provisional licence	Already in place	Universal	N/A	Two forms of ID are provided.
Deposit/first month rent	Already in place	Needs based	N/A	Subject to identification as need in pathway planning.
First TV licence	Already in place	Universal	N/A	
Further education bursary and discretionary support with travel	Already in place	Needs based	N/A	£300 toward course materials.
Up to £2000 higher education bursary	Already in place	Needs based	N/A	Paid in instalments throughout the course.
Travel to visit up to 5 universities/ 1 st year university accommodation/ vacation accommodation	Already in place	Needs based	N/A	
Uplift of birthday and festival allowances	Improved	Universal up to age 21	£20k	Current rates Birthday 18 th and 21 st £25 and 19 th and 20 th £10 each, Festival 18-21 £10. Proposed rates 18 th , 19 th and 20 th Birthday £50 and 21 st birthday £100. Festival allowances 18-21 £50
Driving lessons 10 lessons, one theory and one practical test.	New	Needs based	**	Individual must be positively engaged with Education/Employment/Training for at least 6 months. Must be identified in Pathway Plan.
Clothing allowance uplift.	Improved	Needs based	£5k	Linked to interviews, work circumstances, funeral of close relative etc.
Financial support for prescriptions	New	Needs based	**	Identified in Pathway Plan.
Suitcase	New	Needs based	**	To ensure that all care leavers have good quality bags to move their belongings.
A City Centre Premises for care leavers team and care leavers drop in/support	New	Universal	TBC	To provide access to advice, support, and practical facilities to support development of independence such as shower, washing machine and cooking facilities. This could be co located with premises for the House Project.
Total			£142k	

4.36 **Recommendations**

Cabinet is recommended to approve the PHASE 1 proposal to improve and extend our local offer to care leavers and that this can be implemented with immediate effect. There is urgency in the need to evidence an improvement to our local offer. Ofsted will return to Peterborough in July 2024 for their first post inspection monitoring visits. The entire focus of the visit will be the quality and effectiveness of our services to care leavers. An agreed and improved local offer will evidence our commitment to remedy the deficits and prioritise the welfare and experiences of our care leavers

Cabinet is recommended to note that the PHASE 2 proposal to further extend and improve our local offer to care leavers can be submitted for consideration as soon as it is completed.

5. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5.1 This recommendation specifically links to:

Corporate Priority 2 - particularly that we want our care leavers to benefit from early intervention by mental health and wellbeing services and that as potentially vulnerable residents they are protected from harm, are self-reliant and live in a protective community.

Corporate Priority 3 – specifically refers to care leavers being able to access a good, enhanced local offer that meets their health, education, housing and employment needs. Further, that young people are safe from harm and lead healthy lives.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 Within the last month we have consulted with our Care Leavers, relevant elected members, and officers in other Local Authorities in the development of this report. A further meeting with elected members took place on the 6th March 2024.

6.2 We will be consulting with other Local Authorities on an ongoing basis to learn about best practice throughout the development of the Local Offer. We will continue to consult with our Care Leavers about the design and implementation of the Local Offer, at each stage. A lead officer will be consulting with member of the National Leaving Care Bench Marking Forum.

6.3 *Has this recommendation been considered by the below? If not, please provide reasoning.*

- Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) - Yes
- Cabinet Policy Forum (CPF) – Yes
- Cross party agreement to further consideration of this revised local offer is in place (Motion 6/12/23).

7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

7.1 The anticipated outcome is to address issues acknowledged by senior leaders and officers and to address concerns identified by Ofsted in the November 2023 inspection. Ofsted's finding is that our current services for Care Leavers are inadequate. The anticipated outcome of implementing the recommendations within this report are that we can address significant objectives within the Children's Services improvement plan and improve the lives and experiences of our Care Leavers.

8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

8.1 To address the findings of the November 2023 Ofsted inspection and improve the local offer for care leavers.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The status quo is an alternative but there are significant implications for the council in terms of potential action by the Department for Education if we do not act to make improvements without delay.

10. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 10.1 With the time that has been available to look at the financial implications of all the options above and the cohort has been difficult to quantify therefore the financial implications are based on best estimate. A monitoring process will be put in place to quantify going forward what has been requested from each category so that budgets can be adjusted in future rounds budget setting.

At this stage the report identifies additional unbudgeted cost of £142k. In 2024/25 this will either need to be funded within the current service budget or reserves. It will be incorporated within the budget from 2025/26 onwards.

Legal Implications

- 10.2 The Care Leaver's Local Offer is a statutory requirement under the Children and Social Work Act 2017, This requires local authorities to provide a range of services and support to care leavers up to the age of 25. The purpose is to ensure that care leavers receive consistent and comprehensive support as they transition into adulthood.

The decision to introduce a 100% Council Tax discount for care leaver is a non-executive decision which is the reason why Cabinet is only able to recommend the decision to Full Council rather than take the decision itself.

Equalities Implications

- 10.3 Consideration of Equalities implications will be considered as each of the proposed changes to the care leaver offer proposals are implemented.
- 10.4 This report has direct and significant implications for Children in Care and Care Leavers.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

- 11.1 [Care Leavers Local Offer - Peterborough City Council](#)
[Local Offer for Care Leavers: Overview | Essex County Council](#)
[Supporting Young People from Care to Independence \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
[50238583 \(ofsted.gov.uk\)](#)
[Local offer guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
[Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 None.

This page is intentionally left blank