

COUNCIL	AGENDA ITEM No. 12b
20 MAY 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: 20 th May 2024
It is recommended that Council approve of the 100% Council Tax discount for care leavers with effect from 1 April 2024.	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is submitted to Council for approval of the proposal to introduce a 100% council tax discount. Cabinet approved a number of recommendations in respect of the care leavers report which at the meeting on 22 March 2024. A copy of the cabinet report which sets out the background is included at Appendix 1.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the 100% Council tax discount for care leavers with effect from 1 April 2024.

This report is for Council 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?		If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	22 March 2024
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4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

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 wellbeing

4.1.3 **Councillor Sandra Bond's Motion 6th December 2023:**

Responding to the motion submitted by Councillor Sandra 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

4.2.2 **Recommendations**

Council is recommended to approve of the 100% Council Tax discount for care leavers. with effect from 1 April 2024.

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 We have consulted with our Care Leavers, relevant elected members, and officers in other Local Authorities in the development of this report. A meeting with elected members took place on the 6th March 2024. Cabinet approved the recommendations on 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).

7.0 **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.

8.0 **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 **COMPLICATIONS**

10.1 **Financial Implications**

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.

10.2 **Legal Implications**

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 was only able to recommend the decision to Full Council rather than take the decision itself

10.3 **Equalities Implications**

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 Appendix 1 – Original Cabinet Report - Peterborough City Council Local Offer for Care Leavers