

Cabinet

27<sup>th</sup> November 2018

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People - Councillor P Seaman

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Deputy Chief Executive (People)

**Ward(s) affected:**

All

**Title: Local Offer and extension of Personal Adviser support to Care Leavers**

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**Is this a key decision?**

Yes – the proposals in the report will affect the whole city and are underpinned by legislation that puts ownership for decisions on the whole Council.

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**Executive Summary:**

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires Councils to publish a Local Offer for care leavers. The Local Offer is a document that outlines the services and support that will be available to care leavers in the local area where they live when they leave care. It should include information about legal entitlements (rights) as well as any extra support that the Council might choose to give. Some of these will have direct cost implications to the Council.

Section one of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 lists the corporate parenting that local authorities must follow in supporting looked after children and care leavers. These are:

- 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
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

These principles underpin Sections two and three of the Act. Section two of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires local authorities to consult on and publish a Local Offer for their

care leavers. Coventry City Council has carried out a range of consultation activity with care leavers to gain feedback on what they would like to see in the Local Offer. This Local Offer must be published by the end of 2018.

Section three of the Children & Social Work Act 2017 has introduced a new duty on local authorities, which requires them to offer Personal Adviser support to all care leavers up to age 25. This report highlights the financial implications of this requirement.

**Recommendations:**

The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- (1) Approve the proposed Local Offer as set out in this report and attached at Appendix A
- (2) Agree to the principles which will form part of the review of the housing allocations policy and to any consultation if required to ensure care leavers are suitably supported
- (3) Identify additional resource £130K within the budget setting process to fund the recommended care leaver offer.

**List of Appendices included:**

Appendix A – Draft Local Offer

**Background papers:**

None

**Other useful documents:**

Local Offer guidance: Guidance for local authorities  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/683703/Local\\_offer\\_guidance\\_final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683703/Local_offer_guidance_final.pdf)

Illustrative Local Offer [https://consult.education.gov.uk/children-in-care/corporate-parenting-the-local-offer-and-personal-a/supporting\\_documents/Annex%20C%20%20Illustrative%20Local%20Offer.docx](https://consult.education.gov.uk/children-in-care/corporate-parenting-the-local-offer-and-personal-a/supporting_documents/Annex%20C%20%20Illustrative%20Local%20Offer.docx)

Extending the PA duty to age 25 [https://consult.education.gov.uk/children-in-care/corporate-parenting-the-local-offer-and-personal-a/supporting\\_documents/Annex%20D%20%20Extending%20the%20PA%20duty%20to%20age%2025.docx](https://consult.education.gov.uk/children-in-care/corporate-parenting-the-local-offer-and-personal-a/supporting_documents/Annex%20D%20%20Extending%20the%20PA%20duty%20to%20age%2025.docx)

**Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

No.

**Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?**

No – However, members of the Corporate Parenting Board have considered the contents of this report. As part of the implementation it has been agreed that the Corporate Parenting Board will receive updates on behalf of the Council on the Local Offer and this will be monitored by the Lead Member.

**Will this report go to Council?**

No.

**Report title: Local Offer and extension of Personal Adviser support to Care Leavers**

**1. Context (or background)**

1.1. When Children's Services were last inspected by Ofsted in March 2017 the experiences and progress of care leavers were rated as good. Coventry has a strong commitment to its care leavers which is shown through the prioritisation of care leavers for apprenticeships and the exemption of care leavers from paying Council Tax to the age of 21. The Children & Social Work Act 2017 increases the level of responsibility that local authorities have to care leavers both in terms of age range that support must be offered to and also the requirement to consult on and publish a Local Offer setting out support that the Council as a whole organisation will give to care leavers.

**2. Options considered and recommended proposal**

2.1. **Option 1** – Publish current offer to care leavers with no changes to what has previously been offered. This option would not meet with the legal requirement in terms of implementing the Children and Social Work Act which places requirement to consult with care leavers and review the Authority wide support being offered. Neither would it reflect the corporate parenting principles now enshrined in legislation.

2.2. **Option 2** – Approve recommended changes to local offer that do not have a direct financial implication. This would exclude paying Council Tax for care leavers outside of area, leaving the apprenticeship salary at current levels, and not pursuing free gym/sports activities. This option does not take into account a number of areas put forward from the consultation.

In addition, no changes to the capacity of Personal Adviser support would result in care leavers not getting the support they require and risk both a decrease in positive outcomes for care leavers and the reputation of the authority in future inspections.

2.3. **Option 3** –recommended option – approve recommended Local Offer and additional capacity to provide Personal Adviser support. The key additional changes are set out below:

- Ensure any changes to policy that could affect care leavers are evaluated for impact on care leavers
- Make sure that suppliers are directed to our equality, diversity and inclusion policy which promotes the importance of prioritising care leavers for opportunities and encourage them to sign up to the national care leavers covenant
- Provide mentoring opportunities for care leavers from Directors and senior managers within the Council
- Ensure suitable accommodation for care leavers is available. This will involve working closely with housing and the wider re-commissioning of supported accommodation and homelessness services
- Commit that no care leaver up to age of 21 will be placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation
- Review the housing allocations policy to ensure that it is fit for purpose to meet the needs of care leavers. Review the policy to determine if it is appropriate to give care leavers priority access to social housing. Offer care leavers a 'second chance' in housing if their first move to independence does not work out
- Subject to the above review, Coventry will not find any care leavers intentionally homeless, where they are working with us to resolve their situation

- Pay the Council Tax for those care leavers who have been placed out of Coventry up to the age of 21
- All care leavers doing apprenticeships within Coventry City Council will be paid the national living wage
- We will do all we can to ensure all apprentices secure a permanent role at the end of their apprenticeship
- Ensure our Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services service runs to 25 for care leavers
- Give care leavers and a friend free access to sports, gym and swimming facilities in the city to participate in healthy activities
- Ensure we discuss with all Looked After Children at 16 years of age whether they have needs that might need some ongoing support beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthdays and involve Adult Social Care if this might be needed.

2.4. In terms of Personal Adviser capacity, Through Care is currently staffed to work with 300 care leavers based on each Personal Adviser working with 25 care leavers. This is the recommended maximum caseload for Personal Advisers and was agreed as part of the Children's Services redesign. Coventry is receiving new burdens money to help meet the increased number of care leavers being supported past 21, but this does not currently meet the full cost based on projected numbers. As a result of this the staffing levels within Through Care are being considered as part of the review of the Children's Services redesign which is currently taking place.

### **3. Results of consultation undertaken**

3.1. Consultation has been undertaken via a national forum involving care leavers from Coventry who have indicated the support young people themselves feel they need. This has been followed up by both face to face consultation events and paper and online surveys with a broader section of Coventry young people which resulted in their desired support needs being identified as below:

- Care leavers not to be made homeless
- Providing quality accommodation
- Help our new place to feel homely
- Consistency with maintenance money for travel/support
- Exemption from Council Tax to age 21
- Coventry City Council establishing a link with a Bank/Building Society which would better enable us to open bank accounts etc.
- Social workers and Personal Advisers to be more assertive to get us in to education/learning/work
- Better communication between College staff/Personal Advisors/social workers
- Better grants if going to University
- Corporate parents should be able to offer/give more information about available jobs/apprenticeships
- Cross Council apprenticeships and work experience (not just Children's Services)
- More apprenticeships
- Making our mental health a priority
- Gym membership to help keep us healthy
- Mentoring group of Care Leavers Support Group to offer other care leavers support

Two care leavers have been part of the working group designing the draft Local Offer and worked with other care leavers to shape the final version of the Local Offer.

In addition to care leavers all Directors across the authority have been spoken to and committed to implement the Local Offer as relevant in their departments.

#### 4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 The Local Offer will be published in December 2018.
- 4.2 Any changes to staffing will be picked up as part of the annual review of Children's Services staffing to ensure that the staffing budget is deployed in line with activity.
- 4.3 Changes to Council Tax and pay for care leavers on apprenticeships will commence from the start of next financial year.

#### 5. Comments from Director of Finance and Corporate Services

##### 5.1 Financial implications

There are a number of areas within the recommended offer that do not have direct financial implications. The areas where there are financial implications are detailed below:

- Paying Council Tax for care leavers up to the age of 21 outside of the city (within the city care leavers up to the age of 21 are exempt from Council Tax). This has an estimated cost of up to £20K per annum. This will be picked up as part of the overall allowances for care leavers administered within Children's Services.
- Paying Council employed apprentice's national living wage. The current cost is £35K based on 7 Care Leavers currently in post. It is assumed that any future posts set up within service areas will need to be resourced at the higher level from within existing staffing budgets. This is consistent with the current process for setting up / creating apprentice posts.
- Required changes to the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service including financial implications will be captured as part of future re-commissioning work. Coventry City Council currently funds tier 2 services, whilst tier 3 and above are funded by the Clinical Commissioning Group.
- Work is ongoing to identify the best way to ensure that care leavers have free access to use gym / sports facilities. Officers will also explore how best to implement access for a friend in the short and medium term. Early indications suggest this could cost in the region of £75K per annum based on 300 care leavers.

The following table summarises the estimated overall cost to the council of the recommended care leaver offer

Item	Cost	Comments
Council tax exemption for care leavers out of city	£20K	Up to age 21
Apprenticeship national living wage for care leavers	£35K	Existing LAC apprenticeship posts
Changes to the CAMHS Service	NYQ	
Access for care leavers and friend to gym and sports	£75K	

activities in the city (estimate based on 300 care leavers)		
<b>Total</b>	<b>£130K</b>	

The recent extension of offer for all care leavers to have a Personal Adviser up to the age of 25, if required, has additional resourcing implications. The DfE has made a grant available for this new burden of £26K in 18/19 rising to £51K in 19/20. There are currently 12 PA posts, with the ability to take on a further 1-2 posts funded by grant. Assuming the stay on rate is consistent with the position since April 2018, the grant will be insufficient to cover the additional costs if caseloads remain at 25. This will be reviewed as part of an annual exercise to be undertaken in Children's Services to ensure that staffing budgetary resource is aligned with activity. We will also be reporting back to DfE in relation to this new burden to ensure they are aware that the resource allocated is insufficient.

## 5.2 Legal implications

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 has set out the need for a Local Offer to be made available for care leavers by the Local Authority. This is in line with the 'corporate parenting' obligations set out within the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

To ensure compliance with the new obligations, the Local Authority has carried out a consultation process, so as to seek approval and the subsequent publication of a Local Offer for care leavers.

To ensure compliance with the Children and Social Work Act 2017, there would need to be offered Personal Adviser support to all care leavers up to age 25. The Local Authority has evaluated the financial implications and expectations in providing this service.

With regards to allocations, the Localism Act 2011 gives local authorities the power to determine who qualifies for an allocation of housing, subject to certain specified classes of people. The Council is not legally required to prioritise care leavers; however it does have the power to include them in its allocation scheme. The care leaver must be eligible in relation to their immigration status as an allocation of housing cannot be made to anyone who is ineligible (s160ZA(1) HA 1996). Coventry City Council may only allocate accommodation in accordance with the provisions of the HA 1996 and its own allocation scheme. All allocations must be made in accordance with the allocation scheme. The Local Offer proposes changes to the scheme and therefore there is the requirement to consult under s166A(13) HA 1996. All registered providers of social housing and registered social landlords with whom the Council has nomination arrangements must be given the opportunity to comment on an allocation scheme before is altered in a way that reflects a change of policy. This should be for a reasonable period in order to allow for comment on the proposals. This report does not prejudice any future decision on the allocation policy as this will be subject to a wider review.

## 6. Other implications

### 6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's Plan?

This proposal would make proactive contributions in a number of areas for Council priority. At a direct level, the newly configured arrangements will have immediate and sustainable impact to outcomes for care leavers. The new offer would ensure that care leavers have

the support they need to successfully transition to adulthood. This will enable our children to be in a better position to make positive contributions to both their own lives and the wider neighbourhood in which they live.

Additionally, there would be long term benefits in the reduction in number of care leavers needing to access services into adulthood and therefore potential cost savings.

## **6.2 How is risk being managed?**

A Transformation Programme Delivery Board meets on a monthly basis with representation from all Children's Services teams. The Project Team Manager reports to the Transformation Board at each monthly meeting sharing a Highlight Report which give updates on progress, identified risks and mitigation. Risks will continue to be identified through the implementation phase of the project, mitigations sought and impact managed through this process.

## **6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?**

There are limited impacts for the organisation, the proposal would increase the whole Council's ownership of corporate parenting and therefore demonstrate strong leadership in this area.

## **6.4 Equalities / ECA**

Consultation has taken place with all our care leavers. The outcomes of this consultation are being used to identify the support requested by the care leavers.

Care leavers have confirmed the offer they have received is a good offer for them and for future care leavers. In the consultation care leavers reported that they receive a good and supportive service.

No formal ECA has been undertaken. However, by publishing the Local Offer for care leavers the offer is open and transparent to all, with improved positive outcomes for care leavers

Whilst no formal consultation has taken place for the Local Offer to be finalised it has been communicated to staff and partners through a variety of ways to gather thoughts and feedback to gain their commitment.

## **6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment**

None.

## **6.6 Implications for partner organisations?**

Any impact on partner agencies as a result of these proposals will be minimal and is expected to be positive.

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## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Draft Local Offer