

From: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Children,
Young People and Education

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To: Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet
Committee – 8 May 2018

Decision No: TBC

Subject: Kent's Local Offer to Care Leavers

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral Division: All

Summary: As part of the implementation of the Children and Social Work Act (2017), this report provides an overview as to why Kent County Council are required to produce a Local Offer for Care Leavers and the steps that are being taken to ensure that this is developed in close collaboration with care leavers, partner organisations and key providers. The final version of the offer will be brought back to Cabinet Committee in December 2018 for a formal decision on the change of policy.

Recommendation:

The Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS** on the proposal to prepare a revised Local Offer for care leavers up to the age of 25, in accordance with the requirements of The Children and Social Work Act 2017.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 From 1 April 2018, Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires each local authority (LA) to consult on and publish a local offer for its care leavers. The local offer should provide information about all the services and support that is available to care leavers from the local authority, including information about both their statutory entitlements as well as any discretionary support that a local authority chooses to provide. The fundamental change in the implementation of the CSW Act (2017) is the extension in the age range to provide an offer of support to care leavers aged 21-25 years; currently support is provided between the ages of 18-21 years.

2. Background

- 2.1 Statutory guidelines have been provided, detailing what the local offer should include, with details of the services and support that may assist care leavers in, or moving to, adulthood and independent living that the local authority provides in relation to the following:

- 2.1.2 **Health and wellbeing:** This will include services that teach about, support and enable good health and wellbeing. It should include links to, or information about, universal health services that might be particularly relevant to care leavers, as well as specific health and wellbeing services targeted at them.
- 2.1.3 **Relationships:** having strong and supportive relationships is crucially important for care leavers as they move to independent adult life. Local authorities will want to consider the services and/ or support that is available to help care leavers develop and maintain positive social networks and to understand what positive relationships look like.
- 2.1.4 **Education and training:** care leavers should be supported to access appropriate education or training that will enable them to fulfil their goals. This will include the statutory support available to care leavers, such as the £2,000 bursary for care leavers in Higher Education, as well as any other support from the local authority; and signpost to universal information such as careers advice and financial support for young people.
- 2.1.5 **Employment:** this will include information to care leavers about general employment support, such as careers support and links to local Job Centre Plus. Local authorities should also include any other employment support that they or partners deliver that is specifically available to care leavers, for example, any apprenticeships that the local authority offers where such opportunities are ring-fenced for care leavers.
- 2.1.6 **Accommodation:** care leavers should be supported to access appropriate and suitable accommodation. The local authority should include relevant information about their Staying Put policy, the support available from District Housing Services and any other assistance that is available to care leavers, such as advice on maintaining a tenancy. The Accommodation Team, located within the Care Leavers Service, will liaise and consult with the District Councils and will ensure each District Council has a copy of the final version of the Local Offer.
- 2.1.7 **Participation in society:** this will include links to and information about activities, events or volunteering opportunities available in the local area that care leavers can get involved in.

3. Developing the local offer with relevant persons

- 3.1 When developing their local offer, local authorities are required to consult with relevant persons, which means young people and organisations or people that represent or support care leavers. In Kent, these organisations will include our key providers and partner agencies, including Members via Corporate Parenting Panel, Catch 22, Young Lives Foundation, District Councils, health and further/higher education providers, alongside our own services for care leavers including Early Help and Youth Justice.
- 3.2 KCC is currently in consultation with as many of our care leavers as possible, through the Young Adults Council, in order to ensure that a local offer is co-produced that is meaningful and reflects the needs, views and wishes of the

care leavers we are responsible for. Personal Advisers will also seek the views and ideas of the care leavers that they currently support and work with on a regular basis.

4. Publishing and updating the local offer

- 4.1 The Children and Social Work Act does not specify how soon after commencement of the duty the local offer should be published. However, the Government's expectation is that the local offer should be available within six to nine months of commencement of the duty. This will allow time for local authorities to undertake a wide consultation before publishing their local offer. Once local authorities have consulted on and published their local offer it should be reviewed regularly to ensure that the services on offer reflect what care leavers need most. Local authorities can choose how regularly they review their local offer, but, following ongoing consultation with care leavers, the expectation within Kent would be to update it every two years. Our target date to publish the KCC offer is December 2018.

5. Format of the local offer

- 5.1 The local offer should be easily available and accessible to all care leavers in the local authority area. This may mean that we need to make it available in several formats including printed hard copies, online digital copies and in different languages as appropriate. Our Personal Advisers will share and promote the local offer with the care leavers they work with in order to ensure they are aware of it and the services they are entitled to. Further consideration is being given as to how the local offer can be made available to, and easily understood by, care leavers with additional needs.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The local offer will aim to be aspirational for our young people, to enable them the best possible opportunities to develop into their independent adult life. As Corporate Parents we want to aim high for our care leavers, to support them to function independently and make positive contributions within their local Kent community. The primary audience for the care leaver offer should therefore be young people about to leave care and those who have left care. The document format should be both aspirational alongside being focused, free of jargon and easy-to-read.
- 6.2 Councils should not just consider the role they can provide, but also the role that statutory and non-statutory partners are able to provide as part of a Corporate family. Care leavers and children in care are not the sole responsibility of councils' children's services departments. While such departments might discharge most of the direct services and support, all council departments hold corporate parenting responsibilities. As per the Care Leaver's Strategy, council departments must consider the support or services they can also provide to care leavers through the focus of their corporate parenting responsibilities. The individual departmental offers should be included within the wider corporate offer and updated when relevant.

- 6.3 Responsibility of the offer should ultimately sit with the council's Head of Paid Service and Leader, both to ensure the document fully reflects the breadth of the services the council offers, but also to demonstrate Corporate Parenting leadership.
- 6.4 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 extends the role of support provided to our Care Leavers to include those aged 21 to 25 years; this is effective from 1 April 2018. The Care Leavers Service is reviewing the potential impact of this change to ensure staff capacity will be sufficient to meet the demand. The offer will detail what this support will include, for example the allocation of a Personal Advisor, regular "drop in" events, signposting to partner agencies and community resources.
- 6.5 The final version of the offer will be brought back to Cabinet Committee in December 2018 for a formal decision on the change of policy.

7. Recommendation(s):

The Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS** on the proposal to prepare a revised Local Offer for Care Leavers up to the age of 25, in accordance with the requirements of The Children and Social Work Act 2017.

8. Contact details

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