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| <b>Meeting title</b> | <b>CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE</b>                            |
| <b>Meeting date</b>  | 14 January 2014   |
| <b>Report title</b>  | <b>Care Leavers Report: Position Statement and Developments</b> |
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***Note:** Since the presentation of this report some updates have been included in order to provide some recent statistics and additional information regarding Children's Services Transformation*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 We are committed to fulfilling our statutory requirements and to ensuring care leavers are provided with comprehensive personal support so that they achieve their full potential as they make their transition to adulthood.
- 1.2 Research and practice shows that young people who have been looked after will have the best chance of success as adults if those providing transitional care and other support take the following principles into account in talking to the young person and when making any decision:
- Is this good enough for my own child?
  - Providing a second chance if things don't go as expected
  - Is this tailored to their individual needs, particularly if they are more vulnerable than other young people?
- 1.3 Responsibilities for providing continuing support applies to all care leavers until they reach the age of 21 or, if they are being helped with education or training, to the end of the agreed programme of education or training (which can take them beyond their 25th birthday). The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 includes provision so that, where a former relevant child (which means a child aged 18+ so no longer looked after) previously entitled to leaving care services wishes to take up additional education or training beyond the age of 21, but before the age of 25, then their responsible authority must ensure that they are allocated continuing Personal Advisor support.
- 1.4 This report outlines national developments which have come into force since the introduction of the revised Children Act (1989) Guidance and Regulations (Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers), refers to the performance relating to care leavers and provides detail into the development work currently being undertaken to improve the support provided to young care leavers in Southampton.

### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Members of this Committee support:
1. Ongoing developments to create a robust and effective Children in Care

Council;

2. The signing of the Care Leaver's Charter in Southampton before the end of this financial year;
3. The provision of a £2,000.00 grant for all care leavers to enable their smooth transition to adulthood;
4. The development of a care leavers Face Book page to promote ongoing contact, including beyond their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday;
5. With officers, actively promote a range of work experiences and apprenticeships within the City for children looked after and care leavers in order to improve the proportion of care leavers who access further and higher education and work opportunities.

### 3 DETAIL

#### 3.1 Background

There is a strong evidence base of the importance of focussing upon improving outcomes for care leavers and this is a key government priority. On 30 October 2012, in a letter from Edward Timpson, MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, to Directors of Children's Services, the Department set out the Government's expectations of local authorities:

1. **Sign up to the Charter for Care Leavers** and discuss what needs to be done to embed its principles in day-to-day practice. The Charter sets out a series of principles and promises, which care leavers, wanted central and local government to make. The care leavers involved in the preparation of the Charter urged local authorities to use these principles when they make decisions about young people's lives. It is designed to raise expectations, aspiration and understanding of what care leavers need and what the government and local authorities should do to be good corporate parents. (**see Appendix 1**).
2. Take an active part in schemes aimed at **increasing employment opportunities** for care leavers.
3. Prioritise **Staying Put arrangements**, particularly for young people in further or higher education
4. Pay **setting up home allowances** that are adequate to buy the essentials needed; increase Care Leavers Grants to at least £2000 and review the figure annually.

To date 124 local authorities have signed up to the Charter and committed to embedding the principles in practice. Of our comparator authorities, Portsmouth, Bristol, Plymouth, Peterborough, Sefton, Kent and Medway have signed up to the Charter. Telford and Wrekin and Southampton have not yet signed up.

The Care Leavers Data Pack (taken from local authority returns to the DfE) was published simultaneously and showed the following key findings<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The detailed analysis in this data pack uses data up to 31 March 2011

- The number of young people aged 16 and over leaving care had risen each year from 8,170 in 2007 to 10,000 in 2012.
- More than half of these young people (63%) were aged 18 and over at the time of leaving care. 19% were aged 16 and 18% were aged 17.
- The number of 19 year olds who were looked after aged 16 was 6,610 at 31 March 2012. This was a rise from 6,290 at 31 March 2011.
- 2,400 (36%) of young people in 2011-12 were not in education, employment or training. In 2010-11, this figure was 33%.

Young people on Care Orders were found to be more likely to leave care at aged 18 than those who are voluntarily accommodated.

- 3.1.1 In May 2013 it was announced that a Single Framework for Inspection would be introduced. This framework has introduced a particular focus on the experiences and progress of care leavers and will examine the following outcomes:
- Care leavers are safe
  - Care leavers acquire the skills and emotional resilience to successfully move toward independence,
  - Care leavers access employment, education or training
  - Care leavers enjoy stable and enduring relationships with staff and carers who can meet their needs.
- 3.1.2 In October 2013 the government published a Care Leaver's Strategy which, in essence, has pulled together a range of developments into one coherent strategy for improving support to care leavers. **A copy is included as a separate document to this report.**
- 3.1.3 In November 2013 the Government proposed to extend accommodation provision under Staying Put<sup>2</sup> and released some funding which will enable all young people to stay with their foster carers until the age of 24 years, regardless of whether they are in employment, education or training. This will have ongoing financial and practical implications for the City if all those young people who are entitled to now "Stay Put" do so. The need for a continuation of payment to the carer in order to provide an incentive for them to continue to support the care leaver in their household (as opposed to fostering another child) will impact financially and in addition, for each care leaver in question, a fostering placement will be 'taken up' for each care leaver who 'Stays Put'.

## 3.2 Performance Against Key Indicators

- 3.2.1 The City's performance for looked after children compared with local authorities nationally and against statistical neighbours is presented to this Committee in a separate report today. The data relating to care leavers is extracted and can be seen below.
- 3.2.2 At the end of March 2013 63% of our care leavers who were in contact with us,

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<sup>2</sup>This provision previously allowed for young people to stay in their foster placements until the age of 21 where they were in employment, education or training.

were in suitable accommodation compared to 84% (SN) and 88% (England) which places Southampton at the bottom of the table. This is a slight improvement from 2011/12 when it was 61%, but up until end March 2013 there was a general downward trend over the last seven years. Addressing this has been a priority area for focus and further development, and as at the end of December, 88% of care leavers were in contact with us and in suitable accommodation. This is a much improved position and one which we will continue to build on.

The current position as at mid April, is that 90% of care leavers are in contact with us (in the preceding 8 weeks) and in suitable accommodation.

- 3.2.3 At the end of March 2013 41% of our care leavers were in education, employment or training compared to 56% (SN) and 58% (England) and 81% (all young people living in Southampton). Again, a downward trend can be seen over the past seven years and this is an additional area for urgent focus and development. There is clearly a correlation between these outcomes and those relating to achievement at KS4 whereby the City's performance in relation to the percentage of looked after children who achieve A\* - C including English and Maths is poor and has significantly deteriorated. Young people's aspirations are significantly impacted upon by poor educational outcomes which act as a barrier to access apprenticeships and entry to college. National research has shown that the achievement of good educational outcomes and good employment is seen as a "way out" for care leavers. At the end of December 2013 this had improved slightly and was 47%.

The current position as at mid April is that 43% of care leavers are in education, employment or training (but to further contextualize that figure another 11% of the cohort are unable to work due to pregnancy or parenting responsibilities, a further 6% are in custody and 2% more are medically unfit for work).

- 3.2.4 Southampton keeps in touch with 78% of this group compared to 88% (SN) and 92% (England). This has implications in terms of the ongoing support that can be provided. The position at the end of December 2013 was 77% so has remained relatively static. This is therefore a further area for ongoing focus.

The current position is much the same as at mid April, in that we have been in touch with 79% of our care leavers in the preceding 8 weeks.

## 4 YOUNG PEOPLES' VIEWS

- 4.1 The Pathways Team recently organised a care leavers lunch to celebrate their achievements, take the opportunity to seek their views about the Care Leavers Charter and relate their experiences of the City's performance against the stated principles. Their feedback is detailed at **Appendix 2**.
- 4.2 Youth Options are supporting the Children in Care Council (CICC) to ensure young people are enabled to express their views and engage in the co-design of a range of service developments. The project is also charged with securing engagement from a wider group of looked after children and assisting the Council in effectively reporting to Corporate Parents over key issues affecting them and their outcomes. There are also plans to develop further the current care leavers' Face Book page in

order to creatively elicit views of young people in terms of shaping the service.

The contract for provision of support to The Children in Care Council, currently provided by Youth Options, is nearing the end of a tendering process and a new contract will be awarded to take effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> April this year. Whilst it is planned to sign up to the Care Leaver's Charter this financial year, it is crucial that the CICC are actively prepared and involved in a formal launch and this will be a priority for early in the next financial year, in partnership with the provider and the CICC.

- 4.3 Young people are encouraged to take part in and lead on the review of their Pathway Plans. Care leavers are also encouraged to contribute to service planning, interviews of staff, social events, foster carer training and the review of foster carers' registration. The Service Manager for Children Looked After has recently visited care leavers in their housing accommodation and sought their views about their accommodation.

## **5 POSITION STATEMENT**

- 5.1 As at the end December 2013 there were 106 care leavers open to the Pathways Team with a further 38 young people becoming 18 over the next 12 months.

At the end of March, numbers of care leavers have increased further to 118 with 30 more young people becoming care leavers in the next 12 months.

### **5.2 Pathway Planning**

- 5.2.1 The City currently undertakes a pathway needs assessment at age 15yrs and 9 months in respect of each young person who will remain looked after and therefore become a care leaver. This needs assessment informs the Pathway Plan which builds on the Care Plan and incorporates what action is required, by whom and the timescales involved in order to set the scene for the level and type of support a care leaver may need as they move towards and beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The Pathway Plan needs to be robust and involve all appropriate partners in order to support each care leaver through their transition to adulthood. Ongoing audits are undertaken by managers to assess effectiveness of the Pathway Plans and to determine what action is required, both individually and strategically to improve support mechanisms and determine what developments are required.

- 5.2.2 **Practical and Emotional Support:** Care leavers are provided with deposits for accommodation, bus fares, advice on independent living through Next Steps (provided by Youth Options). They are also supported to access other organisations in line with their defined needs set out within their Pathway Plan.

A tendering process for provision of advocacy services is almost at its conclusion and will result in a designated contract in place for children looked after and care leavers from April 2014. Currently there is a spot purchase process in place which has not been suitably effective or equitable. At present there are 13 young people who are being supported by an advocate. A total of 18 young people have received advocacy support between April and end of September 2013. This is an improved position but a universal drive to ensure better take-up is required and an ongoing commitment to funding these support services is crucial to enable children and

young people to have a voice and contribute to service developments.

- 5.2.3 It is proposed to offer each care leaver a £2k grant, calculated on the basis that £500 could be provided for practical goods etc with the remaining £1.5k being allocated as a draw down budget, which would allow the young person to draw down from the amount as and when this was needed. A young person could use this to pay a deposit, pay the first month's rent, purchase goods, buy driving lessons etc. It would be expected that any spend would be linked to the care leavers pathway plan so very much needs-led and allocated on an incremental basis.

If this recommendation was accepted there are, of course, financial implications. It has been calculated that this will amount to a spending pressure of £52K in a three year period and remain at £52k per three year period thereafter. The calculation is based upon a set up fund of £500 for setting up of home and the further £1,500 per young person from which they can draw down to assist them in moving into adulthood.

The re-structuring of the children looked after services, as part of Phase 2 of Children's Services Transformation, would need to take into account this financial pressure.

- 5.2.4 **Junior Individual Savings Accounts (JISAs):** To be eligible for a Junior ISA, a looked after child must be:

- Under 18
- Not born between 1 Sept 2002 and 2 Jan 2011 ( i.e. eligible for a Child Trust Fund)
- Resident in the UK
- Continuously looked after for one year or longer after 3 January 2011

The DfE has appointed The Share Foundation to establish Junior Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) for children and young people looked after and they are responsible for:

1. Opening their accounts with an initial Government contribution of £200;
2. Ensuring that their accounts are properly operated and invested appropriately with a range of Junior ISA providers;

Southampton has registered with The Share Foundation and on a monthly basis, shares data regarding children looked after who have become eligible. When each young person reaches 18 they are able to access the funds in their JISA.

## 5.3 Accommodation

- 5.3.1 In October 2013 of the 107<sup>3</sup> care leavers open to the City there were a range of types of home.
- 24 young people in supported housing (flats, shared living)

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<sup>3</sup> Of the 107 care leavers aged 18+ 6 young people aged 16/17 are included in this figure as they discharged themselves from care, having been looked after under Section 20 of the CA1989.

- 28 with family and friends
- 26 in council/private rented accommodation
- 3 in custody or secure home
- 6 other e.g. Army or adult placement (e.g. shared lives)
- 6 not known (not in touch with Pathways)
- 13 young people who are living with their foster carers in “Staying Put” arrangement
- 1 young person is living in a residential placement following a breakdown in a supported lodgings placement

At the end of February 2014 there were 112 care leavers and their accommodation was as follows

24 young people in supported housing  
 28 with family and friends  
 27 in council/private rented accommodation  
 11 other e.g. army/custody etc  
 4 not known (not in touch with Pathways)  
 18 young people in Staying Put arrangements with foster carers

- 5.3.2 The most common first step to independence for most care leavers is to go back to live with their family and friends. This often carries a level of risk as the family they are returning to often continue to present the risks which caused their admission to care in the first place. These placements tend to be less stable and often present support workers with challenges in terms of providing robust support. And enable them to reach their full potential.
- 5.3.3 The second most common route to independence is to enter a shared living arrangement via Chapter One or YMCA. Chapter One is a large house with single bedrooms which are secured by locks. The kitchen, lounge, toilets and a shower rooms are shared between the residents. The YMCA is made up of self contained flats with a shared larger kitchen. Shared living can bring challenges and risks for young people who can lack maturity, independence skills and self regulation. Often our care leavers are not able to comply with the types of expectations that other young people find easier and can be drawn into challenging behaviour or situations. Furthermore it is an expectation that all residents are engaged in education, employment or training.
- 5.3.1 The Council is currently undertaking a Strategic Review of the Housing Support Services for Young People and Young Parents aged 16 to 25 at risk of homelessness in Southampton. The current housing support service contracts end in summer/autumn of 2014 and new housing support services will be commissioned in 2014. Although the funding for the Supporting People programme is no longer ring fenced there is a commitment within the City to continue to improve outcomes for young people and young parents in the City who are at risk of homelessness. Housing support is an important part of achieving this aim and representatives from Children’s Social Care, including the Pathways Team, are involved in the review in order to ensure needs assessments are taking into account our care leavers.
- 5.3.2 Children looked after and care leavers are encouraged to remain with their foster carers until the age of 18 yrs and beyond. Currently there are 13 young people who

have remained with their carers beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and this trend is predicted to increase with the removal of the condition that these children need to be in employment, education or training for them to remain in placement. The predicted increase for 2014/15 for those Staying Put is 24 young people.

There is no question about the favourable impact staying put will have for young care leavers, and it must be seen as an absolute priority for most. However, strategies need to be planned to address the impact, both financially and practically. This includes the need to work collaboratively with the 11 authorities who, as part of a Framework Contract, have commissioned Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) to provide fostering placements. At present there is no provision within the schedule that address young people staying put beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. This results in a lack of consistency in rates charged and generally, some high tariffs.

## **6 ACTION PLANNING (INCLUDING ANY RESOURCES/JOINT COMMISSIONING IMPLICATIONS)**

6.1 There are a number of key actions related specifically to care leavers included within the Children Looked after Transformation Plan. These are as follows:

- To increase the advocacy take-up for children looked after (ongoing)
- To develop and implement a new Pathway Plan format that is more service user friendly (complete)
- To review educational attainment of children looked after and children leaving care and identify areas for improvement (underway with the Virtual School)
- To develop the Children in Care Council (underway)
- Review on a regular basis the existing procurement of out-of-city and IFA placements and work with other local authorities to ensure high quality cost effective options are available when needed (liaison with the Integrated Commissioning Unit is ongoing)
- Provision of Pathway Plan training to staff (complete but ongoing)
- To develop an Independence Training Pathway for care leavers (provided by No Limits currently – review to take place)
- To formulate a Staying Put Policy (complete)
- To work collaboratively with housing and supporting people colleagues to increase housing capacity and support (ongoing)
- To increase capacity for supported lodgings.

6.2 In addition to the actions currently included within the Transformation Plan, further actions, which ensure we meet the requirements referred to earlier in section 3.1, have been identified as follows and now need to be added to the Plan. There are as follows:

- To sign up to the Care Leavers Charter in Southampton before the end of this financial year
- To further develop the Face Book page for care leavers
- To work with partners within the City to develop opportunities for work experience and apprenticeships for children looked after and care leavers
- To forge closer links with local Jobcentre Plus



- To build links with local universities to provide opportunities for care leavers to access higher education
- To strengthen the partnership with the Youth Offending Service and ensure appropriate support and diversion strategies are adopted and offending levels reduced for this vulnerable group

## **7 IMPACT ON OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS**

- 7.1 Outcomes for care leavers within Southampton are poor. The focus for developments, as stated within this report, are urgent in order to provide better support to these vulnerable young people.
- 7.2 Phase 2 of the Children's Services Transformation Programme is in its early stages and specifically targets looked after children and care leavers amongst other key statutory parts of Children's Services. Work is underway to reconfigure how services are delivered in order to provide a dedicated and specialist care leaver's service. In terms of care leavers specifically, the aim of this reconfiguration is to focus attention on this vulnerable group and ensure their outcomes are improved and their journey through to adulthood successful.
- 7.3 Currently there is a Pathways Team which holds responsibility for all looked after children (once their plan is to remain looked after). This comprises 202 children. The team is also responsible for supporting all the City's care leavers aged 18+, currently 121 (as at end March 2014).
- 7.4 Given the high number of looked after children cared for by the Pathways Team, and the statutory nature of the service, the needs of the care leavers have tended to be marginalised which has resulted in their poor outcomes, despite the best intentions of the team to meet their needs.
- 7.5 The transformation will provide a dedicated care leaver's service with a team manager, social workers and personal advisors. Plans are underway to configure the team in such a way as to ensure there is active multi-agency involvement from other key partners, including health and housing.
- 7.6 It is intended that final draft structures will be in place within the next month, followed by a consultation period and implementation later this year.

## Care Leavers' Charter

A Charter is a set of principles and promises. This Charter sets out promises care leavers want the central and local government to make. Promises and principles help in decision making and do not replace laws; they give guidance to show how laws are designed to be interpreted.

The key principles in this Charter will remain constant through any changes in Legislation, Regulation and Guidance. Care leavers urge local authorities to use these principles when they make decisions about young people's lives. The Charter for Care Leavers is designed to raise expectation, aspiration and understanding of what care leavers need and what the government and local authorities should do to be good Corporate Parents.

### **We Promise:**

#### **To respect and honour your identity**

We will support you to discover and to be who you are and honour your unique identity. We will help you develop your own personal beliefs and values and accept your culture and heritage. We will celebrate your identity as an individual, as a member of identity groups and as a valued member of your community. We will value and support important relationships, and help you manage changing relationships or come to terms with loss, trauma or other significant life events. We will support you to express your identity positively to others.

#### **To believe in you**

We will value your strengths, gifts and talents and encourage your aspirations. We will hold a belief in your potential and a vision for your future even if you have lost sight of these yourself. We will help you push aside limiting barriers and encourage and support you to pursue your goals in whatever ways we can. We will believe in you, celebrate you and affirm you.

#### **To listen to you**

We will take time to listen to you, respect, and strive to understand your point of view. We will place your needs, thoughts and feelings at the heart of all decisions about you, negotiate with you, and show how we have taken these into account. If we don't agree with you we will fully explain why. We will provide easy access to complaint and appeals processes and promote and encourage access to independent advocacy whenever you need it.

#### **To inform you**

We will give you information that you need at every point in your journey, from care to adulthood, presented in a way that you want including information on legal entitlements and the service you can expect to receive from us at different stages in the journey. We will keep information up to date and accurate. We will ensure you know where to get current information once you are no longer in regular touch with leaving care services. We will make clear to you what information about yourself and your time in care you are entitled to see. We will support you to access this when you want it, to manage any feelings that you might have about the information, and to put on record any disagreement with factual content.

#### **To support you**

We will provide any support set out in current Regulations and Guidance and will not unreasonably withhold advice when you are no longer legally entitled to this service. As well as information, advice, practical and financial help we will provide emotional support. We will make sure you do not have to fight for support you are entitled to and we will fight for you if

other agencies let you down. We will not punish you if you change your mind about what you want to do. We will continue to care about you even when we are no longer caring for you. We will make it our responsibility to understand your needs. If we can't meet those needs we will try and help you find a service that can. We will help you learn from your mistakes; we will not judge you and we will be here for you no matter how many times you come back for support.

### **To find you a home**

We will work alongside you to prepare you for your move into independent living only when you are ready. We will help you think about the choices available and to find accommodation that is right for you. We will do everything we can to ensure you are happy and feel safe when you move to independent living. We recognise that at different times you may need to take a step back and start over again. We will do our best to support you until you are settled in your independent life; we will not judge you for your mistakes or refuse to advise you because you did not listen to us before. We will work proactively with other agencies to help you sustain your home.

### **To be a lifelong champion**

We will do our best to help you break down barriers encountered when dealing with other agencies. We will work together with the services you need, including housing, benefits, colleges and universities, employment providers and health services to help you establish yourself as an independent individual. We will treat you with courtesy and humanity whatever your age when you return to us for advice or support. We will help you to be the driver of your life and not the passenger. We will point you in a positive direction and journey alongside you at your pace. We will trust and respect you. We will not forget about you. We will remain your supporters in whatever way we can, even when our formal relationship with you has ended.

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## **Feedback on Charter Principles from Young People**

### ***To respect and honour your identity***

What our care leavers said:

- This is ok but could be improved by rewarding achievements – GCSE's etc in YR 11
- To use Pathway Plan to discuss getting resources such as driving lessons to help to gain employment and increase personal challenges and changes.

### ***To believe in you***

What our care leavers said:

- Mixed views
- 'Only person that believes in me is my social worker'.

### ***To listen to you***

What our care leavers said:

- Yes and no
- Actions speak louder than words.

### ***To support you***

What our care leavers said:

We are supported through

- Bus fares
- Travelling costs
- Decent social worker
- Independent living – moving on

But we need:

- House deposits
- Housing – need more support – tailoring to individual needs –we need someone to advocate for us when things get hard in housing

### ***To find you a home***

What our care leavers said:

- We need you to be guarantor sometimes.

### ***To be a lifelong champion***

What our care leavers said:

- You've got a lifelong champion if have a good social worker – not good if keep changing social worker.