

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET
SUBJECT:	SOUTHAMPTON CARE LEAVER OFFER
DATE OF DECISION:	14 MARCH 2022
REPORT OF:	COUNCILLOR PETER BAILLIE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY
None

BRIEF SUMMARY
Local authorities have a duty to publish their care leaver offer for young people and adults who are leaving their care, or who have left their care. This is known as the local offer for care leavers. This is enshrined in the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The local offer should cover what services that it offers to prepare and support care leavers for adulthood and independent living. It should include services that relate to relationships, health, education, employment and training and accommodation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:	
(i)	That the proposed Draft Care Leavers offer as detailed in appendix 1 be adopted by the Council
(ii)	That the Offer be reviewed by the Executive Director of Childrens Services by 1 st September 2022 to consider further offers available to our young people leaving care from across the council developed through a task and finish group
(iii)	That the care leaver offer is published on 1st April 2022 and thereafter discussed and reviewed with the care leavers forum biannually to consider if there are any gaps in the offer and how, as corporate parents, Southampton City Council and partners can mitigate these.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS	
1.	The Local authority has a duty as corporate parent to provide services to children and young people who are leaving care. These services should be laid out in an offer which demonstrates how the local authority will support young people with issues around relationships, finance, housing, health and aspirations.

2.	This offer has been devised through discussions with young people and the pathways service to help consider any gaps in provision to our young people, but also to formalise offers that have developed over time to ensure a level playing field and equal access to all care leavers.
ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED	
3.	We have considered the option of not updating our care leavers offer. We cannot do this as we must ensure our offer is fresh, moves with the times and meets the changing needs of our care leaver population. In developing this offer, we have looked at offers from other local authorities that are judged 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted. This draft offer is positive for our young people who are leaving care.
4.	We are still working with all areas of the council and partners to go further where possible, for example by considering what practical offers they can make to our care leavers. We would of course return to Cabinet if there are additional resourcing implications as directed through our CMB interface.
DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)	
5	The detail below lays out recommendations for what should be included in our local offer for our care leavers. The recommendations are based on discussions with our care leavers and our Personal Advisors to ensure that we are focusing on what is current and needed for our young people. For ease I have broken these down into subsections covering different aspects of the offer.
<u>The offer – generic</u>	
6	The offer outlines the local authority's statutory duty to support young people who are leaving care and explains some of the technical issues relating to leaving care and leaving care status. The offer outlines what a young person who is allocated to a Personal Advisor can expect from them.
<u>The offer – housing</u>	
7	The housing and accommodation section is critical for our care leavers because suitable housing is the foundation for care leavers to be safe in their communities, build on their independence and build successful lives. If this essential need is not met, it is hard for other parts of a young person's world to be successful.
8	<p>The offer sets out the practical support that is available to Southampton care leavers around their housing needs, budgeting, claiming any relevant entitlements, and ensuring young people feel in their accommodation. It lays out the different forms of housing/accommodation that are available to our care leavers, and pledges that the local authority will support a joint goal with them, that they will receive a social housing tenancy from this local authority during the time that they are leaving our care.</p> <p>This is a 7-year window from age 18 years through to 25. At present the Council has a quota system where 10 social housing tenancies are available to the pathways team per annum when they feel that a young person is ready to maintain one. This is on top of another housing stream that is available to some of our young parents. Work is underway with our housing colleagues to consider a new system where any care leaver can be awarded a social</p>

	housing tenancy when the service believes he or she is ready to maintain this. The Cabinet Member is promoting this concept. When the detail around this is finalised it can be added to the published offer.
9	In terms of financial support relating to accommodation issues, care leavers receive a leaving care grant of £2000 which can be provided in stages, on the recommendation of their Personal Advisor. Our care leavers also currently receive council tax relief until the age of 25 if living in the city.
10	In this published offer we wish to add support with internet provision for young people in employment, education or training for the first six months of any tenancy to help them with their initial budgeting. This is estimated to cost approx. £6000/year in total across the whole care leaver group.
11	The offer also includes help with the first television licence for our care leavers. The cost of this is up to approx £7500/year in total.
12	The Council already provides both of these things for a number of care leavers; however this is about levelling the playing field for all our young people by publishing a clear offer to all of them.
	<u>The offer - Health and well-being</u>
13	The offer highlights the practical support that the Personal Advisor can provide support to our care leavers including support for both physical and (critically for this cohort of young people) emotional health needs.
14	Practically this includes how we work with health colleagues to ensure that our care leavers leave our care knowing their health history and that they receive relevant support with signposting. It also includes wellbeing support such as being able to attend our Supper Club for Care Leavers where they can meet with others, have a meal and share their views about the service they receive from the council.
15	The offer includes a discretionary fund being able to be accessed by Personal Advisors for individual Care Leavers of up to £300 towards specific need-led health or counselling appointments. This ensures the offer is transparent and equitable.
	<u>The offer - Managing money and financial supports</u>
16	Practically there is a range of support available to our care leavers and this is outlined in the offer. It also includes financial support for them to learn to drive. Being able to drive is a gateway to accessing learning and employment and also opens up driving-related job opportunities. As a service we already match fund the money that care leavers put into their driving lessons. Although we currently provide this for some young people, this offer promotes equity in us providing financial support for all carer leavers in a way that meets their individual needs.
	<u>The offer - Education, employment and training</u>
17	The offer highlights the practical supports available with finding employment, education and training, including the EET MEET (a regular multi-agency discussion about individual young people and their EET needs). This meeting is increasingly complemented with pre-apprenticeship level work experience offers as we develop these across the council and the City. The meeting problem solves barriers to young people accessing EET, for example in relation to their health needs etc.

18	The offer highlights the things we do to support care leavers with the funding of bus or train travel for the first month of employment until they receive their first salary payment, support to purchase work related clothing or tools of their chosen trade.
19	The offer outlines the support we will provide to young people who are at university or college, such as travel and accommodation, and ensuring that they have a base to return to in the city during holiday periods if this is what they choose to do.
<u>The Offer - Support with parenting</u>	
20	We know that becoming a parent can be a challenging and unsettling time for some of our care leavers, many of whom have experienced poor parenting themselves. The offer therefore highlights the practical supports that they can expect from us as they prepare for parenthood. This includes an offer of a 'Safe Family' through our early help partners in the voluntary sector to engage them outside of statutory services alongside financial support of £300 from the council as corporate grandparents to help them to purchase baby equipment.
<u>The offer - Participating in society</u>	
21	In this final part of the offer, we invite our young people to engage in participation activities so that they can socialise with other care leavers through attendance at our football club for care leavers, and our supper club. Importantly this gives us as a service a real opportunity to learn from them.
22	In terms of financial assistance, we reiterate our pledge from the previous offer to support £10/fortnight towards a positive activity to engage in a recognised activity that is good for their wellbeing.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Capital/Revenue</u>	
	<u>Revenue</u>
23	Whilst there is some additional spend highlighted throughout this report it must be stressed that much of this is essentially formally consolidating spend that the Council is making for some care leavers and ensuring equal access to all care leavers to what we are providing through the publication of this offer.
24	The overall spend attached to this offer would be approximately 35-45k/annum. Much of this is already being spent on some care leavers. The offer ensures that there is a transparent offer to all care leavers.
	<u>Capital</u>
25	There are no current capital costs associated with this offer
<u>Property/Other</u>	
26	As noted there is an ongoing discussion with housing colleagues about reaching agreement that rather than have a quota or any points based system to allocate Southampton City Council social housing to this cohort. This would mean that social housing would be available to all relevant care leavers at the time that it is recommended by the personal advisor (and signed off by the

	Head of Service) that they are 'tenancy ready'. It is hoped that this will then be added to the published offer.
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LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

27	The legal framework for the promotion of and the delivery of this offer is highlighted above in referring to the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The delivery of services to care leavers are a duty placed on local authorities under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
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Other Legal Implications:

28.	N/A
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RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

29.	There are no evident significant risks in adopting this proposal.
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POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

30.	None
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KEY DECISION?	no
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WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	none
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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices

1.	The Draft Care Leavers Offer
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Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	None
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Equality Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out.	No
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Data Protection Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out.	No
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Other Background Documents

Other Background documents available for inspection at:

Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
None	