

**Wiltshire Council**

**12 July 2018**

**Health and Wellbeing Board**

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**Subject: Wiltshire's Offer to Care Leavers**

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**Executive Summary**

Following the implementation of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 our duties and responsibilities to care leavers have been extended. Included in the Act is a requirement to publish a Local Offer for care leavers, providing information about services which the local authority offers that may assist care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living.

This reports provides an overview of our new responsibilities, identifies the level of need within our care leaver population and sets out our work to date.

While good engagement across Council services has helped to identify a wider and improved range of services, there is further work to be done to extend the principles of corporate parenting beyond Council services and into Wiltshire businesses and key strategic partners. In this way we intend to build upon this initial offer so that we provide every opportunity for our care leavers to excel and achieve in adulthood.

**Proposal(s)**

It is recommended that the Board:

- i) Endorses the outline offer to care leavers
- ii) Consider ways their organisation can assist in strengthening this offer

**Reason for Proposal**

It is a requirement of the Children and Social Work Act for each local authority to publish its offer to care leavers. A draft offer has been developed and as part of a broader consultation process we are seeking feedback from Board on this.

**Martin Davis**  
**Head of Service, Care and Placement**  
**Wiltshire Council**

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**Subject: Wiltshire Care Leaver Offer**

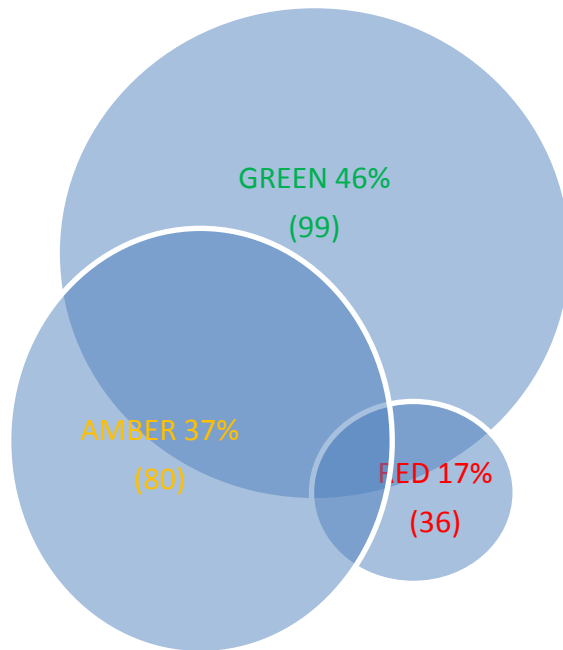
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### **Purpose of Report**

1. To seek the endorsement of the Health and Wellbeing Board for the new Wiltshire Offer to Care Leavers.

### **Background**

2. Following the implementation of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 our duties and responsibilities to care leavers have been extended. Included in the Act is a requirement to publish a Local Offer for care leavers, providing information about services which the local authority offers that may assist care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living. This includes services relating to health and well-being; relationships; education and training; employment; accommodation; participation in society.
3. This report summarises the local offer that we propose to make to Wiltshire care leavers. The offer will continue to be extended and improved over time. Corporate Parenting Panel and Children's Select have had oversight of the offer. Care leavers and the teams which work with them have contributed to the offer and will continue to be consulted as it is developed.
4. Currently in Wiltshire there are 215 care leavers, the majority of these (165) are aged between 19 and 21 years.
5. Services to care leavers are provided by the two Children in Care Teams. Children in Care are allocated a Personal Advisor (PA) when they reach 15 ½ years, the PA will work alongside the child's social worker to support the child and develop a Pathway Plan. From the age of 18 the social worker will generally stepdown, the PA then becomes the lead professional.
6. We undertake a regular screen of our care leaver population. The screen has been developed by Barnardos to support service development, it provides a RAG rating across domains including accommodation, mental health, education, employment and social inclusion. Findings from the last screen are summarised below:



Young people can move through each section / colour depending on their level of stability. Significant events have an impact on this, depending on the outcome for the young person. Crisis events tend to see them move into red, their ability to cope with crisis and significant events affects their stability. This impacts on a worker's priorities.

7. Green / stable cases have a strong correlation with a long term stable placement through their care career or towards the end. These young people enjoyed good attachments and relationships with carers, they are particularly well engaged in education or training. Common features include:
  - integrated family life in an excellent foster placement
  - doing very well in GCSEs or at collage
  - continues to make excellent progress and is working at or above expected progress
  - SATS better than expected
  - higher education an ambition
  - employed
  - has her own tenancy
  - described as gifted and talented
  
8. Amber cases have likely experienced several temporary placements, are less likely be in education or employment, are more difficult to engage and more likely to have mental health issues. Emotional and behavioural development is of concern. Common features include
  - history of self-harm
  - exclusions
  - NEET
  - SEND
  - hasn't received any formal education (UASC – unaccompanied asylum seeking children)
  - disengaged
  
9. Red cases have a strong correlation with those who have had several placements in different areas, including out of county placements, complex mental health needs, NEET, traumatic childhoods and journey through care. Common features include
  - history of domestic abuse, affecting self esteem

- inability to form attachments and have meaningful relationships
- at risk of CSE
- sexualised behaviour
- delayed development
- homeless
- suicidal tendencies and self-harm and ongoing emotional concerns

## **Main Considerations**

10. In response to identified need and to fulfil our obligations under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 we will include in our offer to our care leavers the following.

### **Personal Advisors**

11. Support from PA's currently ends when a care leaver turns 21 unless certain criteria apply, for example if they are in fulltime education. Under the new Act this provision is extended. Our offer is to continue PA support at the level which is required until the care leaver's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. To help achieve this we will recruit an additional two PA's. The level of support will be flexed to meet individual need, at any one time we anticipate providing significant support to an additional 43 care leavers.

### **Accommodation**

12. Through the LAC budget we will continue to fund a designated young person's and care leavers accommodation officer. The post holder will continue to act as the initial point of contact and 'trouble shooter' for care leavers who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Wiltshire care leavers will automatically receive priority banding under the Homes for Wiltshire Scheme.
13. A pilot supported housing partnership has been implemented between Families and Children's Services and Housing. One, two-bedroom flat has been pulled from existing council stock in the Salisbury area and made available for the pilot, two care leavers are now living in this flat. The flat is only available to care leavers, support is provided by a dedicated PA. Rent is capped at or near to Housing Benefit levels, this includes maintenance costs. A second and subsequent flats will be made available depending upon the success of the pilot. We will use this pilot to demonstrate to housing associations and other providers that this shared housing model can work successfully and look to develop this scheme across Wiltshire.
14. Local connection has been agreed for Wiltshire's care leavers who are currently living outside of the county. This enables any Wiltshire care leaver to bid on properties through Homes for Wiltshire or to access the supported housing pilot. We believe that we can better support our care leavers where they live in county and so want to give them the opportunity to return to live in Wiltshire.
15. Rent Guarantee scheme. We will offer to act as a rent guarantor to care leavers where they have a sufficient income to cover rent and associated living expenses but where landlords perceive them to be 'high risk'

tenants. Legal services will review each agreement to ensure Council liability is limited. Currently we act as rent guarantors to 10 care leavers, the majority are attending university.

### **Work/Independence**

16. Dedicated support will be provided through the Building Bridges programme. Building Bridges work with people over the age of 15 and support them into education or employment. Opportunities include volunteering, work experience and support to secure employment, with continued 'in work' support. Financial support and legal advice can also be accessed. Key workers liaise and work with other partners for any other activities appropriate for their participant to access. Applications to Building Bridges will be made via the PA, referral rates will be scrutinised by the LAC and Care Leavers Employment Pathway Steering Group. As a result we expect to see employment rates improve for all care leavers.
  
17. We will introduce a Grantmentor Scheme within Wiltshire. Grandmentors mobilise older volunteers (age 50+) to use their life experience to support young people leaving care and to help them reach their full potential. The programme works with young people from the ages of 16-24 and provides them with a mentor who is not motivated by pay. Each volunteer supports a young person for a minimum of six months, working towards agreed personal goals. The programme works in partnership with social workers and leaving care teams. It is this combination of skills, experience and effective team working that has made the programme a success elsewhere. Volunteering Matters have supported over 250 care leavers to date, and currently operate the Grandmentors programme in the London Boroughs of: Islington and Hounslow, Ipswich in Suffolk and Folkstone, Kent. In these areas care leavers have benefitted from
  - Improved employability skills, readiness for, and progression in education, employment or training.
  - Improved relationships and a wider social network.
  - Better mental and emotional wellbeing, greater self-confidence, self-worth and resilience.
  - Improved independent living skills, including budgeting, maintaining their accommodation and accessing health services such as GP and dentist.

Under this scheme a Volunteering Matters Co-ordinator will be co-located within Children-in-Care South.

18. Care leavers will have favourable access to Council apprenticeships. We have agreement to implement a guaranteed interview scheme for care leavers to all Council apprenticeships where they meet any eligibility criteria. Through the LAC & CL Steering Grp we will publicize vacancies and track applications. A dedicated care leaver apprenticeship will be trialled within the Fostering Service, if a success we will look to provide similar opportunities across the council. The post within Fostering Services will be recruited to over the summer.

19. Work placements (Council & Business). Through the LAC &CL Pathway to Employment Steering Group we will introduce a range of work placements for care leavers within the Council. We will use the learning gained through this before looking to extend opportunities into local businesses. This work is currently led by an Employment and Skills Officer.
20. Transport costs. We have considered a number of ways to support young people to travel across rural Wiltshire. Young people have said that cost makes this prohibitive, as a result it increases the sense of isolation and limits ambition. In response we have agreed to implement a discretionary buss pass scheme for all care leavers. Cost and impact will be monitored on a quarterly basis. This will compliment the offer we currently make to support care leavers to learn to drive; we fund five driving lessons.

### **Stability & Security**

21. Senior Officers to act as mentors to care leavers. We have a wealth of talented and skilled officers working within the council and it would be a positive extension of our corporate parenting responsibilities to ask senior officers from across all departments to act as a mentor for a care leaver. We have operated similar in the past with some officers continuing to mentor a young person today. We will introduce this scheme during the year and extend the offer of a mentor to all care leavers within a 12-month period.
22. Mandatory Training for all officers. We will develop and deliver training to all staff in relation to their corporate parenting responsibilities. This will help underpin the cultural shift that is required if care leavers are to be provided with the opportunities we would want them to have.
23. Legal advice. Legal services will provide free legal advice to care leavers. The range and scope has yet to be fully agreed but will not include criminal law.
24. Care Leaver Champions embedded in each Council Dept. Agreement at Head of Service level to identify an individual to act as single point of contact for PA's within their department who will commit to identify solutions where care leavers are receiving or requesting a service.

### **Health**

25. Free leisure centre passes. An annual leisure pass will be offered to every care leaver. Offering free access to leisure centres provides a positive message to young people about how they are viewed and gives them the opportunity to become more active and engaged in their local community.
26. CAMHS will provide a continuation of support beyond the 18th birthday to all care leavers, with CAMHS interventions tailored around a young person's emotional development, rather than their chronological age. This support, whilst having a mental health focus, also incorporates life skills, employment and / or education opportunities, and generally building emotional resilience for young people who would otherwise struggle to maintain their wellbeing during the transition to adulthood. The flexible

transition offer will be explored with those young people whose emotional development would continue to benefit from a CAMHS intervention post 18, who do not require an adult mental health service. Where adult mental health services are required CAMHS will remain engaged to ensure an effective handover.

### **Finance**

27. Revenue & Benefits workshop and surgeries. Colleagues within the Council R&B service will host surgeries for care leavers and PA's to ensure they are in receipt of all relevant benefits. The service will also include personal budgeting/money management support where appropriate.
28. Financial entitlement leaflet. The same team will develop an entitlement leaflet to help inform care leavers and those working with them. Clarity regarding the complexities of the Universal Benefit scheme will be explained in full.
29. Council Tax exemption. Legislation set out statutory exemptions which the Council must apply but also permits the local authority to introduce its own exemptions under discretionary powers provided by Regulation 13a of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. We intend to create a new local exemption which will be awarded as 25%, 75% or 100% of the council tax due, and awarded either to the care leaver liable for the council tax whether occupying the dwelling either as a single person or part of a couple or to the liable person who would otherwise lose their entitlement to a single person discount. By creating a new local exemption there will be the ability to both monitor the award and removal of the exemption and accurately report and the exact cost of the scheme. On introduction the scheme will be backdated to the start of the new financial year.
30. Contribution towards WiFi payments. Care leavers have said that access to the internet is a real priority for them; while many can do this via mobile phones the cost of access in this way is high. Other LA's have agreed to pay a contribution towards WiFi. We will provide a similar offer to Wiltshire care leavers

### **Next Steps**

31. Our aim is to publish our care leaver offer by September 2018. There is much more that we would like to include in this and work continues to develop the offer. For example, we are looking to establish a charitable foundation with an overarching aim to inspire care leavers to achieve; care leavers would be able to apply for small grants to help them reach a goal or realise their ambition. We will be seeking funds to launch the charity and looking for members to join the committee and help set priorities from point of inception.
32. While we have good engagement across the Council we do need to do more to secure positive and meaningful engagement from local businesses and partner agencies. In doing this we are seeking to extend

the principles of corporate parenting beyond the council so that our offer to care leavers is as broad and as ambitious as possible.

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