

## Corporate Parenting Panel

19 March 2024

### Care Leavers Service Local Offer



## Report of Rachel Farnham, Head of Children's Social Care, Children and Young People's Services, DCC

### Electoral division(s) affected:

None

### Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide an update to Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) on changes to the Local Offer.
- 2 To ensure members of the CPP are aware of developments with the Care Leavers Covenant and the Regional Care Leavers Board.

### Executive summary

- 3 The Care Leavers Service feed into the Regional Care Leavers Board. The Board's vision is to develop a regional approach and consistency of offer for all Care Leavers across the North East twelve Local Authorities. The work currently is to drive learning and opportunities for outstanding services and support from all young people regardless of where they live in the region.
- 4 The Care Leavers Service take an active role in the National Benchmarking Forum and the Care Leavers Covenant to learn and continually develop the care leavers offer in Durham.
- 5 Durham County Council have a strong Local Offer and there have been a number of changes to improve this over the past year which are highlighted in the body of the report.

### Recommendations

- 6 Corporate Parenting Panel are recommended to:
  - (a) note the updated changes to the Local Offer; *and*
  - (b) be aware of future aspirations.

## Background

- 7 The Care Leavers Service attend national benchmarking and are therefore aware of national initiatives and we strive to build these into developing our Local Offer. An example of this which Corporate Parenting Panel will be aware of is the Positive Tree initiative where we are asking local businesses to support our care leaver offer.
- 8 As noted previously, the Care Leavers Service is part of the Regional Care Leaver Board, and the Care Leavers Service Manager sits on the Regional Care Leaver Board. At the most recent Board meeting - 18 March 2024 - the following regional priorities were set:
  - (a) The possible development of a regional care leavers app.
  - (b) Ensuring council tax exemption for all care leavers in every Local Authority regardless of which authority the young person accesses support from.
  - (c) Agreed regional support for any young person wishing to take driving lessons.
  - (d) Ensuring that no care leaver is intentionally homeless.
  - (e) A consistent offer for all care leavers attending further education or university.
  - (f) Leisure passes plus 1 for all care leavers.
  - (g) Developing a more proactive mental health support offer for young people to ensure support is available at any point up to crisis.
  - (h) To ensure young people have access to dental care regardless of which Local Authority they reside in.
- 9 The Care Leavers Service seeks to keep abreast of any developments with the Care Leavers Covenant. The most recent work has focused on the education and training offer and opportunities. Developments since the last update to Corporate Parenting Panel within the covenant include:
  - (a) Pure Gym access.
  - (b) Free driving theory tests with the AA.
  - (c) Some Local Authority's health trusts have adopted Care Leavers Employment Pathways. This has not yet progressed in County Durham.

## **Developments in relation to the Durham Care Leaver Offer**

- 10 The Care Leavers Service listens to the views of young people, taking into account the needs of young people as reflected within their Pathway Plans and does internal audits where we look at issues for particular groups of young people, recent examples being young people in custody and young parents. The recent OFSTED inspection which focussed on the experiences of Care Leavers reflected the strengths of the offer and the development of this in collaboration with young people.
- 11 The service has developed an offer for young people in custody where sessions with a Care Leavers Team Manager and YPA take place in Durham prison. This support is accessed by care leavers from outside of County Durham and collaboration is ongoing to extend this with other Local Authorities and to the wider secure estate to ensure our care leavers have the support they need in preparing to return to the community.
- 12 The service is building the offer to care leavers who are parents and now run groups at our Stanley Hub. This includes organising events such as an Easter party to engage young people and promote the support within the hubs.
- 13 The service now ensure that every care leaver has £3,000 setting up home allowance. The guidance for this is in line with all other Regional Authorities.
- 14 Every Care Leaver in Durham now has a free bus pass.
- 15 Care Leavers in Durham are entitled to either exemption from council tax or support with this.
- 16 The service has extended the offer to young people at university and will now consider providing support to care leavers undertaking a master's degree.
- 17 The service have extending the offer to young people not in education or training; this includes working to improve our apprenticeship offer and planning a summer event with local employers.
- 18 The Local Offer on the Durham County Council website has been updated.
- 19 We now have pocket cards for all care leavers which have a link to the Local Offer.
- 20 We have a text alert system where we ensure care leavers are informed of any changes to the Local Offer.

- 21 All Care Leaver who are not currently engaging with the Care Leavers Service receive all communication on the Local Offer and are contacted throughout the year to promote the support on offer and keep in touch with them to ensure they are aware of how to access support should they wish to access this.

## **Conclusion**

- 22 The Care Leavers Service has high aspirations to continue to grow and deliver a strong Local Offer to Care Leavers in County Durham and will continue to work with partners such as other regional Local Authorities to develop this in the coming year.
- 23 The Care Leavers Service will continue to work alongside young people to develop the Local Offer, including the Children in Care Council, the Connect group and our experts' group. We are also taking into account the outcome of the recent Care Leavers survey we have completed to learn from this from continued service improvement.

## **Author**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None.

### **Finance**

This increase of Setting up home allowance has been awarded Nationally and is funded from government finances.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

Young People are consulted by our Young People Advisors regally

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

There is equal access for all care leavers.

### **Climate Change**

None.

### **Human Rights**

The increase in Local Offer promotes human rights and ensures that any young person who need support receives it.

### **Crime and Disorder**

The development of the support into the secure estate has an aim of engaging and establishing support for young people with an aim of reducing reoffending.

### **Staffing**

None.

### **Accommodation**

There is no impact on accommodation.

### **Risk**

There is no risk to young people and staff.

### **Procurement**

No implications.