

Cabinet

19 October 2016

An Opportunity for Every Care Leaver



Report of Corporate Management Team

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Councillor Ossie Johnson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder of Children and Young People's Services

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on the action being taken by the Council to ensure all of our Care Leavers have the opportunity to achieve their aspirations and fulfil their potential and to highlight ongoing barriers to the successful progression into Apprenticeships (and employment) for some of our Care Leavers.

Background

- 2 In March 2016, Corporate Management Team agreed to the development of an Action Plan to identify and promote opportunities for Care Leavers within DCC and to clarify roles and responsibilities, this included:
 - The identification of Directorate Champions to support the sourcing and promotion of opportunities.
 - Briefings for Management Teams to include information on the support available to them when engaging with Care Leavers.
 - The establishment of a central brokerage function to match the identified opportunities with young people who could benefit from them.
 - Individual support and action planning with Care Leavers to include proactive identification and sourcing of opportunities within DCC.
 - Identifying opportunities to develop coaching and mentoring skills to support Care Leavers undertaking opportunities within DCC.
 - Celebrating success.
 - Reviewing innovative practice from other Local Authorities.
 - Establishing a baseline of current provision of opportunities for Care Leavers; monitoring progress and reporting on outcomes.

Current Position

- 3 An Action Plan was developed and is now being implemented. Key developments include:
- Identification of Directorate Champions to support the sourcing and promotion of opportunities (for Apprenticeships and Traineeships):
 - Profile of agenda raised with Strategic Managers via Management Teams and identification of possible opportunities for Care Leavers.
 - Establishment of a central brokerage function to support unemployed Care Leavers into education, employment or training and/or to benefit from the identified opportunities.
 - All unemployed Care Leavers (15-24) allocated a Transition Advisor (through DurhamWorks) to support them on their pathway to employment. The Advisors will continue to work with them until July 2018.
 - Celebration of Success of individual Care Leavers, e.g. Care Leavers undertaking a Traineeship with the Adult Learning and Skills Service recently received a Group award at an Awards evening on the 16th June. In addition, a Care Leavers Celebration of Achievement Event will be held on the 26 October 2016 as part of national Care Leavers Week.

Support Available for Care Leavers

- 4 There is considerable support now in place for unemployed Care Leavers which can be provided or sourced via their individual Transition Advisor/Young People's Service. This can include, for example:
- Mentoring
 - Financial management
 - Careers guidance
 - Childcare
 - Transport
 - Equipment (to access work or training)
 - Mental health
 - Sexual health
 - Emotional resilience
 - Homelessness
- 5 Many of our Care Leavers continue to face multiple barriers to progression. These include low confidence and self-esteem, a lack of stable relationships and associated emotional support, social isolation, previous negative experiences of education which can impact on motivation to progress into education, employment or training. Some of our Care Leavers are also teenage parents and their barriers to progression can be even greater, including coping with the responsibilities of being a parent, childcare

arrangements, transport, as well as concerns about their financial responsibilities.

- 6 As an example, a cohort of unemployed Care Leavers was engaged in September 2016 on a 26 week pilot Traineeship with the Adult Learning and Skills Service. The trainees received intensive one to one support from the Young People's Service and from their tutor. Each individual received support to:
 - Build resilience
 - Develop confidence
 - Develop English and Maths skills
 - Undertake a successful work placement
 - Enhance employability skills.
- 7 The evaluation of the programme demonstrated that all the trainees found the experience extremely positive. Their comments included:

‘I've got more ambition and more confidence’.

‘This course has helped me to prepare for work in the future’.

‘I feel I can get anything I want out of life and I know that I deserve it’.

‘I have a bigger understanding about myself, more confidence around people’.
- 8 Despite the success of the programme, it has been difficult to ensure they continue to develop their skills and experience.

Support Available for Employers

- 9 As well as providing tailored support to young people, DurhamWorks has a team of Business Advisors working with businesses across the county to encourage employers to create opportunities for young people including jobs, apprenticeships, traineeships, internships and work and volunteering placements. In addition, DurhamWorks has several Delivery Partners who support young people in developing the skills and knowledge that they need to start their own businesses or develop a social enterprise. The Business Advisors:
 - Identify aspirations, growth plans and recruitment needs
 - Explore potential for work experience, jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships
 - Identify and remove barriers to employing young people
 - Access funding and support to create opportunities for young people
 - Identify suitable candidates for vacancies
 - Coordinate interviews and support an employer's recruitment needs

- Provide in-work support and mentoring for the young person and the business.
- 10 In addition to existing Council funding available to support young people and adults access employment, employers (small and medium sized enterprises) will have access to the DurhamWorks Learning Working Earning Grant administered by County Durham Community Foundation which is solely for employers who wish to employ DurhamWorks participants, including Care Leavers. The grant can contribute 50% of a young person's salary once all other funding has been taken into consideration (in all cases the employer must contribute a minimum of £1000); uniform/workwear and equipment.

Barriers to Employment/Apprenticeships

- 11 In addition to the many personal barriers individual Care Leavers can face to progression, there continues to be a financial disincentive for many to progress onto an Apprenticeship or into employment.
- 12 For many, the first step into employment is an Apprenticeship. Table 1 illustrates the wage rates received by Apprentices.

Table 1: Apprenticeship minimum wage levels				
	Age			
	16-18	19-20	21-24	25 +
Year 1	£3.30 ph £6,349.20 pa	£3.30 ph £6,349.20 pa	£3.30 ph £6,349.20 pa	£3.30 ph £6,349.20 pa
Year 2	£3.30 ph £6,349.20 pa	£5.30 ph £10,197.20 pa	£6.70 ph £12,890.80 pa	£7.20 ph £13,852.80 pa

- 13 All Apprentices receive the Apprentice rate of the National Minimum Wage during year 1. From year 2 onwards, Apprentices aged 16-18 continue to receive the Apprentice rate of the National Minimum Wage. All other Apprentices are entitled to the appropriate rate of the National Living Wage / National Minimum Wage – depending on their age.
- 14 In year one of an Apprenticeship it is likely that an individual will receive £529 per month. Many Care Leavers, as a result of their individual circumstances, receive benefits far in excess of this and therefore continue to be caught in a benefits trap. Initial discussions with both Revenue and Benefits and Jobcentre Plus suggest there is no local flexibility to waiver national rules which dictate the support Care Leavers can receive when undertaking an Apprenticeship.

Proposal

- 15 It is therefore proposed that a small Task Group be established involving the Young People's Service, Adult Learning and Skills Service, Revenue and Benefits, Regeneration and Economic Development and Jobcentre Plus to develop a more detailed understanding of the level of financial support that would be required to support an estimated 10 Care Leavers each year with a two year income guarantee and a process by which this could be managed.
- 16 This work will model a solution that will enable best practice to be adopted by other businesses who are willing to support Care Leavers in the future and the Council's role as a Corporate Parent.

Recommendation

- 17 It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - Note the activity being undertaken to support Care Leavers address financial barriers to undertaking an Apprenticeship/access employment and ensure the Council meets its responsibilities as a Corporate Parent.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – It is anticipated that the Task Group will identify a level of funding to potentially be made available every year to support Care Leavers out of the benefit trap.

Staffing - None

Risk - None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – It is clear from this work the significant inequality for Care Leavers and young people who experience significant poverty of skills and positive networks.

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder - None

Human Rights - None

Consultation - None

Procurement - None

Disability Issues - None

Legal Implications - None