

## Cabinet

15 March 2017

### Care Leavers Support Update



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#### Report of Corporate Management Team

**Margaret Whellans, Corporate Director of Children & Young People's Services**

**Councillor Ossie Johnson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children & Young People's Services**

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#### Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Cabinet on the actions taken by Durham County Council to support Care Leavers as well as on the related policy developments, details of which are contained in Appendix 2. Appendix 3 contains Care Leaver performance data.

#### Background

- 2 Care Leavers are young people who have been in the care of the local authority for 13 weeks or more at any time. The Council is responsible for them as corporate parents. Durham County Council has recognised that this group of young people is particularly vulnerable and has taken a range of actions to improve their outcomes.
- 3 There are a number of recent national policy developments intended to improve care leavers' life chances to which the Council must respond.

#### Key actions

- 4 The new and emerging policy developments contained in the Children and Social Work Bill as well as the 'Keep on Caring' strategy require DCC to develop and improve some aspects of current provision. The following actions will be carried out.
  - (a) Extension of access to Personal Advisers to the age of 25. The Personal Adviser role has been recently reviewed and all Personal Advisers are trained to deliver financial advice to Care Leavers on efficient budget management. Personal Advisers employed by DCC will be completing further qualifications (NVQ Level 4) in order to increase their competence;
  - (b) Development of a Local Offer for Care Leavers. In order to provide information on services for this particular cohort, DCC will produce and regularly update a Local Offer for Care Leavers. The scope of

information included in the offer will need to be further determined by the Care Leavers Strategy Steering Group;

- (c) Further strengthening of the corporate parenting principles throughout the council with the governance review of the Corporate Parenting Panel. The process of wider implementation of this agenda has already been initiated by the Chief Executive through the “Opportunity for every Care Leaver” initiative, further explored in the education, employment and training section of this report;
- (d) Joint work between CYPS and DWP to establish the Universal Credit access pathway for Care Leavers before they reach 18 years of age as well as to identify training needs for Personal Advisers in relation to Universal Credit. In Durham a “pilot aide memoire” was implemented jointly with the DWP providing extra support to Care Leavers in making Jobseekers’ Allowance (JSA) claims a month prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and allowing them a smooth transition from Income Maintenance paid by local authority to JSA. Further work with DWP has been identified in relation to joint training on both the additional needs of Care Leavers and the need for Personal Advisers to understand the implications of Universal Credit. The Care Leaver marker developed nationally through the National Care Leavers Benchmarking Forum, currently used by DWP, will need to be developed and amended to match the new Universal Credit operational procedures. Provision of financial support to Care Leavers who engage in apprenticeship or other forms of employment via Care Leavers Support Plans.
- (e) Addressing the impact of changes to the immigration law announced in the Immigration Act 2016 on Care Leavers. This area of work is currently being considered by DCC. Further work in relation to the age profile of the current LAC population to inform the analysis of need will be undertaken. This will enable financial forecasting to inform future staffing level requirements and support provision. Continuation of the corporate focus on employment, education and training opportunities for Care Leavers throughout the council. Development of a consistent and coordinated approach to data collection and performance monitoring in relation to Care Leavers. Extension of data collection on Care Leavers to the age of 25. Addressing the health and wellbeing needs of Care Leavers amongst other vulnerable groups via the Integrated Needs Assessments and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy as per statutory guidance requirements.

5 DCC has already incorporated a number of other actions into its practice in order to provide comprehensive support to Care Leavers:

- (a) Completion of ‘Staying Close’ a requirement for young people leaving residential care on an individual care-planning basis. The Care Leaver Accommodation and Support Protocol (CLASP) to initiate the planning process including considering housing options when Looked After Children reach the age of 16. Incorporation of the ‘Staying Put’ duty for

young people leaving foster care into day-to-day practice and housing provision procedures. All Care Leavers in receipt of support from DCC who express their wish to stay put are given an opportunity to do so as part of their Pathway Plans and through their Looked After Reviews. Since the Ofsted Inspection a new process has been designed and implemented where 'Staying Put' is introduced into care planning when the young person reaches 15.5 years of age or sooner;

- (b) Provision of comprehensive education, employment and training support to Care Leavers via a project co-ordinator who works closely with the three Durham Works Transition Workers to maximise looked after young people and Care Leavers' employment opportunities;
- (c) Establishment and implementation of specialist mental health and substance misuse pathways for all young people including Care Leavers;
- (d) Development and implementation of a Care Leavers Strategy (2015-2018) and Care Leavers Action Plan (2015-2018) in accordance with the national Care Leavers Strategy. The DCC Strategy outlines eight key priorities to maximise outcomes for Care Leavers (please refer to Appendix 2 for more details).
- (e) The Chief Executive continues to champion the needs of Care Leavers and meets with them on a regular basis.

## **Recommendations**

6 Cabinet is recommended to:

- (a) Note the content of this report;
- (b) Endorse the additional actions to be undertaken to ensure Care Leavers are provided with the skills and knowledge to maintain independent and fulfilling lives.

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## **Appendix 1 - Implications**

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**Finance** – Potential implications in relation to the introduction of the extension of the support of Personal Adviser to the age of 25 and Universal Credit changes.

**Staffing** – Implications in relation to the introduction of the extension of the support of Personal adviser to the age of 25 and the increasing Looked After Children population which will result in a higher number of future Care Leavers.

**Risk** – Changes need to be carefully managed to ensure that the protection of Care Leavers remains robust and the system is not de-stabilised during change implementation. The potential discontinuation of YEI funding for Durham Works will result in reduction of support with Education, Employment and Training for Care Leavers if a contingency plan is not developed.

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty** – The needs of vulnerable Care Leavers will be better met through implementation of the proposed changes.

**Accommodation** – None

**Crime and Disorder** – None

**Human Rights** – DCC needs to ensure that Care Leavers are afforded the same rights as any other young person who lives with their family making transition to the adulthood.

**Consultation** – Any changes to workforce will be subject to consultation with affected staff.

**Procurement** – None at this stage

**Disability Issues** – None additional

**Legal Implications** – All changes must be compliant with legal requirements

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## **Appendix 2: Policy Developments**

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### **National Context**

#### **Staying Put' duty (2014)**

The 'Staying Put' duty which requires local authorities to support young people to remain with their former foster carers to age 21 (provided both the young person and carer want the arrangement to continue) was introduced by The 2014 Children & Families Act. The 'Staying Put' duty has allowed young people a more gradual transition to adulthood.

#### **Children and Social Work Bill (2016 - 17)**

The Children and Social Care Bill's aim is to introduce a number of changes to regulations of social workers as well as regulations related to support for looked-after children and the welfare of children. The bill is currently at the report stage in the House of Lords. It introduces three legislative changes relevant to Care Leavers and support they receive from corporate parents:

- Corporate Parenting Principles:  
The bill sets out in law what it means for a local authority to be a good corporate parent. Local authorities will need to act in the best interest, promote high aspirations, health and wellbeing, take into account views, wishes and feelings of looked after, relevant and former relevant children as well as to prepare those Children and young people for adulthood and independent living while carrying out their functions.
- Local offer for Care Leavers:  
Local authorities must publish information about services they offer to Care Leavers which may assist in independent living or preparation to adulthood. This information must be updated as appropriate and consulted upon with relevant persons prior to publication.
- Access to Personal Adviser to the age of 25:  
Local authorities must provide Care Leavers with a personal adviser until they reach the age of 25.

#### **Immigration Act 2016**

The Immigration Act came into force on 12th May 2016 making a number of changes to the immigration law. For the former Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) who are now Care Leavers and for whom the courts agree that they do not need the government's protection which means they have no lawful basis to remain in the UK, the Immigration Act 2016 makes alternative provision for any accommodation, subsistence or other social care support the local authority considers they need prior to their departure from the UK. The Government have separately announced the introduction of National

Transfer Scheme, underpinned by powers in the Immigration Act 2016. Under the scheme, a child arriving in one local authority area already under strain caring for unaccompanied asylum seeking children may be transferred to another council with capacity. From 1 July 2016, the Home Office has also increased the funding local authorities will receive for caring for UASC and for supporting former UASC.

## **Keep on Caring. Supporting Young People from Care to Independence. (2016)**

In July 2016 a new cross-governmental strategy was published with a view to transform support for Care Leavers. The strategy lists a number of actions which the government will undertake to achieve five key outcomes:

- Better prepared and supported to live independently
- Improved access to education, training and employment
- Experiencing stability and feeling safe and secure
- Improved Access to Health Support
- Achieving Financial Stability

In addition to the three legislative changes introduced by the Children and Social Work Bill further actions include:

- reviewing the role of Personal Adviser
- reviewing and exploring new support models
- introducing 'Staying Close' duty and reviewing housing pathways
- producing new mental health pathways
- reviewing a number of benefit, training and apprenticeship-related rules to increase employment and education opportunities for Care Leavers
- continuing support provision to Care Leavers in prison
- creating a new Care Leaver covenant.

## **Local Policy Context**

### **Care Leavers Strategy April 2015 – March 2018**

Since the publication of Care Leaver Strategy by the government in 2013 Durham County Council (DCC) has undertaken a number of initiatives to support Care Leavers through the introduction of the local [Care Leavers Strategy](#) (2015-2018). In accordance with the national Care Leavers Strategy the DCC Strategy outlines eight key priorities over three years in order to maximise outcomes for Care Leavers:

- Corporate Parenting and Governance
- The Justice System
- Financial Assistance
- Education and Attainment
- Employment and Training
- Housing and Staying Put
- Physical Health and Mental Health

- Access to ongoing support and advice

The strategy lists a number of actions related to each priority recognising a need for an increased multi-agency and cross-departmental approach and setting specific objectives for each priority.

### **Care Leavers Action Plan (April 2015 – March 2018)**

The Care Leavers Action Plan (2014-2017) produced by CYPS outlines how the priorities listed within the DCC Care Leavers Strategy will be delivered. It further disseminates DCC's strategic objectives related to Care Leavers into specific actions with timescales.

## Appendix 3: Performance data and analysis

### National, regional and local data

**Table 1** Care Leavers and all Children and young people by activity and accommodation (for more detailed breakdown of data please refer to **Appendix 2**). This shows performance to the end of March 2016

	Durham				Benchmarking (Published Data)					
	Care Leavers (aged 19-21)		All Children and young people (aged 16-18)		Care Leavers (aged 19-21)			All Children and young people (aged 16-18)		
	2015	2016	2015	2016	North East 2016	Statistical neighbour 2016	National 2016	North East 2016	Statistical neighbour 2016	National 2016
In Suitable Accommodation	82.7% (148/179)	94.1% (174/189)			85.0%	83.7%	83.0%			
In Education, Employment or Training	52.5% (94/179)	48.1% (91/189)	89.0% (15451/17366)	90.3% (15326/16976)	45.0%	46.1%	49.0%			
In Learning			83.6% (14526/17366)	84.8% (14391/16976)				86.1%	85.6%	82.5%
In Higher Education	5.0% (9/179)	5.3% (10/189)	8.4% (1458/17366)	9.2% (1559/16976)	7.0%	11.0%	7.0%			
Not in Education, Employment or Training	35.2% (63/179)	48.7% (92/189)	6.7%	5.9%	43.0%		40%	5.7%	5.3%	4.2%
Status Not Known	12.3% (22/179)	3.2% (6/189)	4.6% (792/17366)	4.0% (682/16976)	12.0%	12.7%	13.0%	3.6%	3.8%	8.4%

Better Than All 3 Comparator Groups	Worse Than All 3 Comparator Groups
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Overall, more Care Leavers in Durham were in employment, education or training in 2016 than in the Statistical neighbour local authorities or in the region on the similar level to the national average. The percentage of Care Leavers in employment, education or training has however decreased from 2015 which is likely to be attributed to a significant decrease of the percentage of Care Leavers with whom DCC is not in contact (from 12.3% to 3.2%). Durham was in contact with a greater proportion of Care Leavers than all three comparator groups in 2016 and this trend is likely to continue given a significant decrease in this particular area from 2015.

Based on 2016 data, of all Care Leavers in England aged 19, 20 or 21, 40% were not in education, employment or training (NEET) whilst in Durham the figure was 48.7%. This has increased from 35.2% in 2015, however the increase is also likely to be attributed to the decrease of the percentage of Care Leavers with whom DCC is not in contact.

It must be noted that no data on Care Leavers aged 21 - 25 is published as currently there is no requirement to collect it, but certain data is collected locally. At present Children and young people's Services (CYPS) are required to provide quarterly data in relation to Care Leavers accommodation, education, training and employment up to the age of 21. CYPS also track the progress of those young people at university who remain open to the service beyond the age of 21 until they have completed their education.

The available data therefore shows that Care Leavers in Durham achieve more positive outcomes than Care Leavers elsewhere, especially in a wider context of general population outcomes. In Durham a higher percentage of all Children and young people are not in employment education or training than all Children and young people in all 3 comparator groups. Durham is in contact with a similar proportion of all Children and young people as statistical neighbours and regional averages, but our performance in this particular area is better than the national average. The percentage of all 16-18 year olds in learning is similar to regional and statistical neighbour averages and is better than the national average.

The number of Care Leavers in Durham who are in Higher Education is higher than it has ever been. As of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016, 20 Care Leavers have been supported by YPS into Higher Education (HE). This is an area of focus as fewer Care Leavers in Durham in 2015 progressed into Higher Education than in all three comparator groups. This trend reflects a wider trend of all Children and young people in Durham being less likely to progress to higher education than their peers nationally, regionally or in statistical neighbours' areas. The most recent data from the operational teams suggests that there has been an increase in the number of Care Leavers in Durham who are in Higher Education to the average of 7% (based on data between April and September 2016), however it is not possible to project at this point whether this trend will continue.

Available data suggest that Care Leavers are generally less likely to progress to higher education than all children and young people. Nationally 6% of Care Leavers aged 19,20 and 21 were in higher education in comparison to 26% of their peers who enter higher education at the age of 18. Both local and national data provides clear evidence that Care Leavers continue to attain poorer educational opportunities and outcomes.

In 2016 the percentage of Care Leavers in suitable accommodation has increased from 2015 and is higher than the latest published data (2015) for all our nearest neighbour groups and third highest of the regional authorities.