

TITLE OF REPORT: Local Care Leavers Offer

REPORT OF: Caroline O'Neill, Strategic Director Care, Wellbeing and Learning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide information on the Care Leavers Offer, highlighting what has been achieved, what else we need to do and how this is supporting care leavers

Background

1. Every local authority has a statutory duty under the Children Leaving Care Act 2000 to offer care leavers support, advice and guidance. The Council publishes its current offer on its website, which outlines the services and support offered to care leavers. The Local Offer was published in April 2018
2. Under the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Government introduced the requirement for local authorities to publish a 'Local Care Leaver Offer', which outlines the services for care leavers available within the local authority area. This offer is a combination of statutory entitlements as well as how the Council and its partners can support care leavers over and above their statutory duty.

Progress

3. Progress has been made since the introduction of the Care Leavers Offer and we now have:
 - Council tax exemption for care leavers up to the age of 25. This has not been without its problems and it has taken longer than anticipated for this to be embedded across the Council, which has caused some anxiety to a number of our Care Leavers
 - An end to end housing pathway with a range of options for young people which commenced July 2018. There were issues with one of the providers not being ready for the implementation date and transitional arrangements had to be agreed. Whilst these were in place the service was still provided but not as smoothly as it should have been. Accommodation and support

was still provided to our Care Leavers, however a small number of them found the temporary arrangements and an additional move difficult. We addressed the issues as they arose with the provider to ensure our Care Leavers received the support required

- Free leisure passes for all Care Leavers. This is being monitored by the service and within Pathway Plan reviews. Not all of our Care Leavers are utilising the free leisure passes and workers are encouraging young people to use them as they know this helps with their emotional wellbeing, social networks and general health.
- Improved employment, education and training offer from both within the Council and from partners. This is being monitored by the Corporate Parenting Workstream and the monthly Education, Employment and Training group.
- A commitment from a range of Council departments to offer shadowing days and mentoring. Uptake on this has not been as good as we had anticipated and continues to be an area that needs developing
- Practical support in helping young people move home. This has been positive for a few Care Leavers. The response from departments that can help has been excellent and they have worked with us within the required timescale.
- A greater understanding from partners about their role as corporate parents. This is something we will continue to promote on a regular basis to improve understanding, and also develop new opportunities and experiences for our care leavers which will enhance the local offer

Next Steps

4. In order to achieve the best possible outcomes for our care leavers we need to:
 - Work more closely with our partners and local businesses to get greater support from them to include not only employment or training but to broaden the offer to include free tickets to activities and events such as football matches, concerts, cinema and meals out. We have identified a lead within the service to take this forward. This will involve several of our Care Leavers to ensure we work with partners on what the Care Leavers aspire to
 - Launch the Care Leavers app which allows all Care Leavers access to the Local Offer on their phone. This will also enable them to get automatic updates and invitations to events being offered by the service. It is hoped the launch will take place in April 2019 as the app has now been developed and is ready to go live
 - To seek the views of our Care Leavers on the Local Offer and develop it accordingly. This is being done at the monthly drop-in as well as in Pathway Plan reviews and we will be able to utilise the app to get a greater response and understanding of who we need to target to get a better offer for our Care Leavers

Impact

5. The Care Leaver Offer has now been in place for 11 months and as already identified within the report it has taken time to embed and achieve the desired outcomes for our Care Leavers. There has been a positive impact in several areas, however we acknowledge that further work needs to be done and that the Care Leavers Offer will always be evolving.
6. It is important to get this right for our Care Leavers and having the right care leavers offer should offer our young people
 - A smooth, planned transition when leaving care
 - An understanding of their entitlements
 - A choice of appropriate accommodation when leaving care
 - A range of supported opportunities into employment and training
 - An understanding of how and where to seek support
 - Support up to the age of 25 by the Leaving Care Team
 - Support to gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Overview Scrutiny Committee

- (i) agrees to receive a further report regarding the Local Offer

For the following reasons:

- (i) To ensure the Council meets its statutory requirements.
- (ii) To ensure that Care Leavers are supported by both the Council and partners in their transition to independence.

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