

TITLE OF REPORT: Care Leavers Covenant

REPORT OF: Caroline O'Neill, Strategic Director, Children, Adults and Families

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek agreement from Cabinet and Council for the Care Leavers Covenant and to further develop our work with Spectra First, to benefit Gateshead's Care Leavers by becoming a trailblazer Local Authority.

Background

2. The Care Leavers Covenant (CLC) is funded by the Department for Education and delivered by Spectra First. It is part of the Government's Keep on Caring Strategy, to support young people leaving care to become independent and improve their outcomes, so they go on to lead happy and successful lives.
3. CLC is a national government scheme that complements the offers that local authorities make to care leavers.

Proposal

4. We have an opportunity to join the fifty other local authorities who are already working with CLC and are trailblazers. To be a trailblazer organisation, we will need to show a whole council approach and commitment to:

#1 Awareness raising of the covenant – ensuring staff and young people know what is available.

#2 Council tax exemption – care leaver proofing policy and governance (we already offer this)

#3 Ring fenced training and employment opportunities – Opportunities within the Council – leading by example.

#4 Social value policy – Transforming our social value action plan, to improve the outcomes for care leavers.

#5 Economic development – Taking advantage of the Council's local partnerships and connections.

Recommendations

5. Cabinet is asked to recommend Council to:

- (i) Endorse the Care Leavers Covenant.
- (ii) Agree that the Council signs up to be a trailblazer organisation.

For the following reasons:

- (i) To strengthen our offer to Care Leavers.
- (ii) Improve our local offer by promoting the Covenant.

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Policy Context

1. This proposal supports the Council's strategic approach of Making Gateshead a Place Where Everyone Thrives as well as the Gateshead Children and Young People in Care and Care Leavers Strategy (2018-2023) and the Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Background

2. The Care Leavers Covenant allows public, private and voluntary sector organisations to pledge support, including, apprenticeships, work experience and free or discounted goods and services. So far over 250 signatories have created offers, including Amazon, ITV and Dunelm.
3. CLC has five core outcomes:
 1. Independent Living - Care leavers are better prepared to live independently.
 2. EET – Care leavers have improved access to employment, education and training.
 3. Safety and Security – Care leavers feel safe, secure and stable in their living situation.
 4. Health – Care leavers have improved access to health and emotional health support.
 5. Finance – Care Leavers are financially capable and independent.
4. The CLC complements the local Care Leaver offers that local authorities make to care leavers. In Gateshead this offer is "Gateshead has Your Back".
5. All local authorities can 'buy in' to the Care Leavers Covenant as a mechanism for enhancing their 'local offer'. Local authorities are strongly encouraged to engage with the Covenant. Currently, only a few have done so. Unlike the 'local offer', buying in to the Covenant is not a statutory requirement. Rather, it is a voluntary indication of a desire to do their utmost to fulfil their role as a corporate parent to care leavers. The Covenant encourages local authorities to follow good practice in offering additional discretionary services in line with the recommendations of the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers.
6. We have made good progress implementing schemes to improve the outcome of care leavers in Gateshead, such as our Council tax exemption and access to leisure facilities. Working with the CLC will strengthen our existing local offer to young people.
7. CLC have worked with Local Authorities to identify what areas they want to develop for care leavers. Examples from other local authorities have included: -
 - Prescription Charges - CLC worked with a Clinical Commissioning Group to exempt Care Leavers from prescription charges.
 - Transport Costs – working with local transport operators, to offer care leavers a discount.

- Discounts and Freebies – working to identify local businesses who may offer discounted services or free tickets in the boundaries of the authority.
- Apprenticeships – working with all council departments to create a guaranteed offer of ringfenced apprenticeships in each directorate.

8. This will help us meet our duties under the following national legislation and government strategies:

- Children (Leaving Care) Act, 2000
- Children and Young Person's Act, 2008
- Care Leaver Strategy – A cross-departmental strategy for children leaving care, 2013
- Children and Families Act, 2014
- Keep On Caring, Supporting Young People from Care to Independence, July 2016

Consultation

9. Consultation has taken place with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

Alternative Options

10. We can continue to develop our offer to Care Leavers in isolation, without the benefits of attracting offers from larger and national organisations.

Implications of Recommended Option

11. **Resources:**

a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms that as the government fund Spectra First to deliver the CLC, there is no cost to the Council to become a trailblazer organisation. However, we would need to fund any specific pieces of work that the authority wanted to develop, as we did when the authority started to offer a council tax exemption and offering free leisure membership.

b) **Human Resources Implications** – One of the main commitments we have to make as an organisation is to create ring fenced opportunities for our children and young people. We have already committed to a limited number of ringfenced opportunities; however these have not been new posts.

c) **Property Implications** - there are no implications.

12. **Risk Management Implication** – there are no implications.

13. **Equality and Diversity Implications** - an Integrated impact assessment has been completed so that we understand the impact for our care leavers and is attached.

14. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – there are no implications.

15. **Health Implications** – Any offers made from relevant departments or partner organisation may have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Gateshead's Care Leavers.
16. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** - there are no implications.
17. **Human Rights Implications** - there are no implications.
18. **Ward Implications** - there are no implications.

Background Information

[Care Leavers Local Offer Cabinet Report - March 2019](#)

[Children and Young People in Care and Care Leavers Strategy 2018 -2023](#)