

3 December 2012**Agenda Item: 9**

REPORT OF THE GROUP MANAGER, SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

CHARTER FOR CARE LEAVERS

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Children and Young People's Committee of the Care Leavers Charter and seek approval for Nottinghamshire County Council's sign up to it.

Information and Advice

2. On 30 November 2012 the Department for Education (DfE) wrote to all Directors of Children's Services informing them of a new Charter for Care Leavers and asking for their support for it (see **Appendix 1**).
3. The Charter for Care Leavers is a set of principles and promises and sets out promises care leavers want the central and local government to make. These include:
 - respect who they are, and remember that they are individuals
 - listen to them and place their views at the heart of decisions made about them. If you don't agree explain why.
 - provide them with practical help and support
 - value their strengths and help them learn from their mistakes
 - not forget them when they are no longer anybody's statutory responsibility
4. The DfE also sets out some key areas of service to care leavers which it wanted local authorities to improve. These were financial support to care leavers, accommodation and 'staying put' options; and education, training and employment opportunities. Nottinghamshire is well placed against the requested improvements and already has embedded practices in these areas.
5. In terms of financial support, local authorities are being tasked to ensure that care leavers receive an adequate grant to enable them to make the transition to independent living successfully. A mandatory minimum figure is not being proposed however £2000 per care leaver is given as a guide. In Nottinghamshire every care leaver is already entitled to a 'home establishment grant' of £2000 which is to assist them in setting up their own home. In addition we also provide their first year TV licence fee and home contents insurance. This is well established in Nottinghamshire and its use is monitored and supported closely by the After Care Service.

6. Nottinghamshire has a Staying Put policy, published in August 2012, which supports young people in the transition to adulthood and means that their living arrangements are not suddenly disrupted just because they turn 18 and enables them to remain with their foster carers post 18 years of age.
7. Each care leaver has his/her own Education, Employment and Training Advisor who sits within the After Care Service and works closely with the social worker/personal advisor for the young person. The statistical return to the DfE regarding the percentage of care leavers aged 19 years who are in education, employment or training for 2011/12 was 64% compared with 79% in 2010/11. The main reason for the decline in percentage performance is due to changes in Border Agency and Home Office processes which has resulted in a number of our young people who were 'Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers' being deported following failed asylum claims.
8. There is recognition in Nottinghamshire that there is a need for continual improvement and engagement with our care leavers. To this end a review of our leaving care services has been commissioned with the intention of building on the already good work taking place but recognising that the service needs to develop in line with the changing landscape (not least economically) we and our care leavers find ourselves in.

Other Options Considered

9. The alternative option is not to sign up to the Charter for Care Leavers. This option would send a negative message to the public about Nottinghamshire County Council's commitment to its care leavers and would undermine the good level of service currently afforded to this group of young people. For these reasons it is not felt that this is a viable option.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

10. The proposal to sign up to the Charter for Care Leavers set out in this report underlines Nottinghamshire County Council's commitment to young people who have been in its care and will assist in engagement with this group.

Statutory and Policy Implications

11. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Children and Young People's Committee approves sign up to the Charter for Care Leavers by Nottinghamshire County Council.

Dawn Godfrey

Group Manager, Social Work Services
For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Dawn Godfrey
Group Manager, Social Work Services
T: 01623 520223
E: dawn.godfrey@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (LM 08/11/12)

12. The Children and Young People's Committee has delegated authority within the Constitution to approve the recommendations in the report

Financial Comments (NDR 09/11/12)

13. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers

Staying Put Policy 2012

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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