

23rd March 2020**Agenda Item: 6****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND SOCIAL
WORK****UPDATE ON NOTTINGHAMSHIRE'S LOCAL OFFER FOR CARE LEAVERS****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report updates Committee on the previously agreed Nottinghamshire Local Offer for Care Leavers.

Information

2. Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 required each local authority (including seven districts/boroughs) to publish a Local Offer for its care leavers (18 – 24 years). It should provide information about all the services and support, statutory and discretionary, that is available to them from each local authority. It should be noted that this Act describes district councils as 'local authorities'. The Local Offer should include details of local authority services and support that could help care leavers' transition to adulthood and independent living in relation to health and wellbeing, positive relationships, education and training, employment, accommodation and participation in society.
3. Through Nottinghamshire Local Authorities Chief Executives' Group, the seven district authorities and Nottinghamshire County Council agreed to create one joint single Care Leaver Offer for Nottinghamshire. They also agreed that Nottinghamshire County Council would co-ordinate the development, writing and publication of the Offer.
4. The Nottinghamshire Local Offer was published in February 2019 through co-production with representatives from the County Council, district/borough councils, Nottinghamshire Leaving Care Service, Terry Galloway (care leaver champion), other public sector services, voluntary organisations and key stakeholders. These included representatives from housing, leisure, safeguarding, health improvement, community engagement, economic development and regeneration, transport and planning operations, partnerships, foster care services, leaving care services, former and current Nottinghamshire care leavers, care leaver apprentices, Children in Care Council, youth services, looked after children services, Mansfield Community & Voluntary Services, Prince's Trust, Children's Society, SOVA (providers of the Independent Visitor Service for Nottinghamshire's Looked After Children), Probation Service, We R Here, Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service, health care providers, health care commissioners, Achieve and Inspire Foundation, Futures, FE

colleges, Nottingham Trent University, University of Nottingham, Youth Offending Team, D2N2, Chamber of Commerce, Department of Work and Pensions and Groundwork.

5. Since publication, Nottinghamshire's Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers (CL) Strategic Partnership Board is identified as the body accountable for the performance management and continuous improvement of the Offer. This Board is currently attended by the Vice Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee and is chaired by the Service Director for Education, Learning and Skills. The Leaving Care Service has taken the lead in respect of the operational and implementation aspects of the Offer and updates the Council's partners at Nottinghamshire's Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers (CL) Strategic Partnership Board, the regional Youth Homelessness Forum and various other more specific partner meetings.
6. The Offer is a dynamic one which is presented and published in different formats, including IT platforms (Notts Help Yourself Website), full .pdf download, a shortened printed booklet (updated in February 2020) and it is due to be available on mobile phone/tablet devices 'care leaver application' called the "Notts Next Steps" App (due for launch by the end of March 2020).

Nottinghamshire's Local Offer for Care Leavers

7. Nottinghamshire's Local Offer contains the current services and support available for care leavers in Nottinghamshire and builds on the support and advice already available to Nottinghamshire's care leavers via the experienced and committed Leaving Care Service. However, by working collaboratively with other local authorities and partners, this offer continues to be significantly strengthened. The Council has committed to providing real opportunities that go beyond any statutory minimum requirements of the 2017 legislation, including offers for care leavers, such as:
 - a. Allocation to a personal adviser (PA) at the age of 16¼ years, so that the young person and PA can develop a supporting and positive relationship prior to their transition from 'looked after' to leaving care at 18 years of age.
 - b. Continuation of access to Achievement Advisers (AA) from 16 – 24 years to explore employment, education and training needs and identify individual plans to assist the young person with their educational/training pathway and into the world of work.
 - c. The Work Experience Readiness and Knowledge (WERK) programme will be a 2/3 day programme and will have a range of pre-employability and careers education information advice and guidance activities (CEIAG) to help ensure that the young people are ready for and able to get the most out of their work experience placement. Work experience will be arranged with businesses to occur within 8-weeks of attending the WERK programme and safeguarding training for businesses will be made available.
 - d. Notts Next Steps, the application (App) for care leavers has been entirely co-produced with care leavers. The App has been designed to work without an internet connection, meaning that care leavers have access to information on a 24/7 basis without needing to rely on wi-fi availability or using their phone data. Notts Next Steps will be used as an outreach tool to attract and encourage young people to apply for opportunities within the world of work including the WERK programme, work experience, apprenticeships, taster days, traineeships and mentoring activities.

- e. Links with various businesses around Nottinghamshire and the East Midlands to explore work experience, apprenticeship or taster days for care leavers when considering their options around entering the world of work.
- f. A newly designed and bespoke Nottinghamshire Employability Assessment Tool to explore educational and employment need/actions for care leavers in entering the world of work, or for them to access/continue their educational pathway to achieve success. This tool also allows quantitative tracking of progression for young people who may be identified as not in employment, education or training (NEET) but can demonstrate any change in their skills and aspirations across their journey.
- g. Dedicated care leaver apprenticeships – there are five young people currently employed within the Youth Service, one of whom is working on the Local Offer project.
- h. The top-up of all care leavers living independently and undertaking apprenticeships to salaries at the age-related National Living Wage.
- i. Exemption from payment of Council Tax for those care leavers residing in a Nottinghamshire district authority up until their 25th birthday since April 2018.
- j. Free local leisure centre access for all care leavers residing in that district, between the ages of 18 and up to their 25th birthday. This allows access to swimming pools, gyms and classes within the leisure centre.
- k. A dedicated Homelessness Prevention Personal Advisor (funded via the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)) to help prevent care leavers being 'street' homeless (especially those 21 – 24 years, and those leaving custody).
- l. Links with care leaver 'champions' within the Prison Service, DWP and within each housing and homelessness district council so that prevention and resolution of housing issues can be achieved.
- m. Access to advice, guidance and support from a dedicated 21Plus Service for 400+ care leavers aged 21 years and up until their 25th birthday (including employment, education and training support and guidance for later life learning).
- n. Priority housing banding for care leavers wanting their own council accommodation and additional floating support for those requiring this, in order to sustain and maintain a tenancy.
- o. Attempts to avoid homelessness presentation for care leavers by early identification of risk of homelessness, and then by working together with the 'champions' identified in each district homelessness and housing teams to explore accommodation options, duty to refer processes, access to support under the Homelessness Reduction Act (as priority) and planned progression into their own tenancy.
- p. Avoidance of use of homelessness intentionality decisions by the district councils and fairer consideration around rent arrears and priority access to the Homelessness Reduction Fund or discretionary housing benefit payments.
- q. Monthly drop-in sessions around the County, identified as "coffee and cake" catch-ups, so that care leavers have access to previous secure and developed relationships with PAs and can access drop-in advice, guidance and support (open to all 18 – 24 year olds). These sessions have been held in Broxtowe, Mansfield, Bassetlaw (Worksop), Rushcliffe, Bassetlaw (Retford), and the next is planned to take place in Ashfield at the end of March 2020. Five young people have attended these sessions so far who previously did not engage much with Leaving Care. Of these, three young people have been prevented from being homeless, one young person's debt issues have been managed, and another young person has been supported around concerns of historical emotional abuse. These sessions are being held at various Youth Service venues at no charge, so that it will help encourage young people to access other services in their local area.

- r. A free annual residential or day trip to one of the Council's outdoor and environmental centres for care leavers who would like to go.
- s. Access to the You Know Your Mind (IPC Fund) to assist with addressing mental health challenges and needs for young people, outside of the usual CAMHS pathway.

Other Partnership Activities

- 8. A Business Breakfast took place on Thursday 7th March 2019, hosted by the Lord Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire. The Local Offer was presented and almost 40 business leaders from across Nottinghamshire pledged their support to increase employment opportunities for care leavers. Subsequent meetings have taken place with a number of the businesses that have pledged opportunities and these are being made available to young people through the Leaving Care Team Achievement Advisers.
- 9. A Business Directory is under development to capture the pledges and it will be made available to the Leaving Care Team to provide them with accurate and up-to-date information on local employability opportunities for young people.
- 10. A Business Newsletter will be developed to ensure that we are maintaining our relationship with businesses and continuing to maximise the employment, skills and apprenticeship opportunities for our young people to access. Where possible, these opportunities will also be advertised through the Notts Next Steps App so that young people are able to follow-up these opportunities with support from their Leaving Care Personal Advisor.
- 11. The Local Offer is being promoted to businesses as an ethos that they can easily support. By working closely with the Recruiting Talent Business networking events organised through D2N2 Building Better Opportunities programme, running workshops and having a presence in the marketplace. As such, we have been able to raise awareness with businesses of how our care leavers can provide them with a vital source of new talent for their own business growth. A number of events are scheduled to take place each month across the districts, with information available on the day for local businesses to pledge ways which together we can provide work experience, employment and apprenticeship opportunities for our young people who have experienced care.

Feedback from the Local Offer

- 12. Ofsted identified the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers as being **Good** following their inspection in October 2019. Specifically identifying the benefits of Nottinghamshire working together with our partners to deliver a comprehensive local offer for care leavers, and identifying the council tax exemption and leisure centre offer are good examples of this.
- 13. MHCLG has identified nationally that Nottinghamshire is one of the leading authorities on the quality of their care leaver offer as well as their homelessness and housing strategy for care leavers. As such, Nottinghamshire was asked to present and lead good practice discussions at two different events for MHCLG in November 2019 and January 2020.
- 14. Nottinghamshire Leaving Care Service has been approached by a variety of other local authorities to assist and guide them in their own development of their care leaver offer including Staffordshire, Cambridgeshire and other regional authorities.

15. As part of the recognition of the needs of care leavers, Nottinghamshire Leaving Care Service has advocated for some of our regional local authorities for council tax exemption for their care leavers who are living in a Nottinghamshire district but not identified as a Nottinghamshire care leaver. This resulted in one Derbyshire care leaver currently in full-time but low paid work and education receiving exemption until her 25th birthday and a refund of over £500 of Council Tax she had already paid.
16. The seven district councils continue to be signed up to developing and ensuring delivery of the care leaver offer and we are now reviewing and reflecting on the housing element with our district councils to see how this can be embedded further and continue to work together in the best interests of care leavers, as well as reviewing the council tax exemption to ensure its continuation and best practice.
17. The Notts Next Steps App will enable young people to have immediate access to opportunities within the world of work, including work taster days, apprenticeships, national internships, training and work experience events, as well as opportunities linked with the WERK programme.

Future Developments for the Care Leaver Offer

18. We are currently in consultation with 'Stagecoach' to explore the possibility of discounted public transport travel for care leavers in Nottinghamshire. If this is successful, then there will also be consideration of widening this with other transport companies and networks in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.
19. The Notts Next Steps App has been licensed until July 2021 and the aim is to introduce discounts and special offers available for care leavers to access. This is currently in consultation with 'UniDays' and being led by Terry Galloway.
20. Current exploration with the district councils around how best to support our former Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) care leavers, who are not able to access some of the same Local Offer provision (council housing etc.). This will ensure more parity to our care leavers across Nottinghamshire, as well as help to reduce the pressure and costs incurred on our own supported accommodation model.
21. Improvement of links with Adult Social Care and Adult Health partners around services, and transition planning at those critical stages of leaving care and post-25 years when the Local Offer entitlement ceases.

Other Options Considered

22. No other options have been considered

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

23. The report provides an opportunity for the Committee to consider whether there are any further actions it requires.

Statutory and Policy Implications

24. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

25. There are no new financial implications from this report.

Implications for Service Users

26. In Nottinghamshire we have over 400 care leavers aged 21 – 24 years with whom we have had contact with over 98%. This has been via post (care leaver offer letter and booklet, Christmas Cards and information flyers for drop-in sessions), telephone contact, email contact and face-to-face drop-in sessions. We have a number of young people who are able to continue their educational pathway at university and studying masters degree levels through support of the 21Plus service and Achievement Advisers identifying appropriate bursaries and financial support. One care leaver is also a single mother and is currently completing her LLB Law First Year Degree and with support from 21Plus is now able to go to Geneva in July 2020 as part of a research trip around Humanitarian and Human Rights Law.
27. The Leaving Care team has worked with key partner agencies under the ethos of the local offer to help safeguard young people. One example has been working with Women's Aid, the district council housing team, police, criminal justice and health in relation to 21Plus care leaver experiencing domestic abuse. We have been able to work together to help engage with them to ensure their safety. One comment from a Women's Aid professional was *"without the 21Plus team's involvement, we would not be able to put any of these safety plans in place, they've made such a difference"*.
28. As a result of the care leaver offer, we have been able to advocate better for care leavers around access to adult social care, mental health support and access to the You Know Your Mind fund, access to general health provision and responded as a multi-agency approach to concerns around criminal exploitation (CCE).
29. Looked after children are now being able to meet their Personal Adviser at an earlier stage of their transition into independence to help develop positive engagement and planning for their future. This will lead to smoother transitions at 18 years and has helped to prevent concerns around accommodation plans and staying put with foster carers post-18 years.
30. The links with business leaders in Nottinghamshire has led to work experience placements and job opportunities for some of our care leavers. One business in Broxtowe identified said about a young person linked with their business that *"he is a lovely guy and put in a lot of effort while he was here. Considering this was his first role, he did himself proud!"*

31. We have held three work taster days with Keep Moat Homes, East Midlands Airport and the RAF. We have had a number of young people attend these, including one young person who following the taster day in the building industry, decided that this was not his pathway and is now joining the Army and has been accepted. Another young person attended the RAF taster day and they were so impressed by him, they have offered him work experience. The feedback from the RAF was that the young people *“are a credit to Nottinghamshire County Council and a credit to themselves”*.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Committee considers whether there is any further action it requires arising from the information contained in the report.

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Constitutional Comments (AK 02/03/2020)

32. The report falls within the remit of Children and Young People’s Committee under its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SAS 02/03/20)

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

Background Papers and Published Documents

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.

Children and Social Care Act 2017 -
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/contents/enacted>

Local offer guidance: Guidance for local authorities (February 2018) –
www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-offer-guidance

Leaving Care Policy

http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_leaving_care.html

Financial arrangements for Care Leavers

http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_fin_arrang_leavers.html

Staying Put Policy

http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_staying_put.html

Nottinghamshire's Notts Help Yourself link to the Care Leaver Offer

<https://www.nottshelpyourself.org.uk/kb5/nottinghamshire/directory/landing.page?newdirectorychannel=12>

Local Offer for Care Leavers – short booklet

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All

C1362