

REPORT TO CABINET

Open		Would any decisions proposed :			
Any especially affected Wards	Mandatory/	Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide		YES	
	Discretionary /	Need to be recommendations to Council		NO	
	Operational	Is it a Key Decision		NO	
Lead Member: Cllr Jo Rust E-mail: <i>Cllr.Jo.Rust@west-norfolk.gov.uk</i>			Other Cabinet Members consulted: All Cabinet Members		
			Other Members consulted:		
Lead Officer: Becky Box E-mail: <i>becky.box@west-norfolk.gov.uk</i> Direct Dial: 01553 616502			Other Officers consulted: Management Team, Senior Leadership Team		
Financial Implications NO	Policy/ Personnel Implications NO	Statutory Implications NO	Equal Impact Assessment YES If YES: Pre-screening	Risk Management Implications NO	Environmental Considerations NO

Date of meeting: 31st October 2023

CARE LEAVERS COVENANT

Summary

Local Authorities have a legal obligation to support care leavers under the Children & Social Work Act 2017. The Care Leavers Covenant has been developed in response to the Government's 2016 policy document "Keep on Caring" to support young people from care to independence. Agreeing that the Council should undertake action to meet the requirements of the Care Leavers Covenant will provide a framework for developing the Council's offer to Care Leavers in west Norfolk and demonstrate our commitment to helping those leaving/having left care to live independently.

Recommendation

That the Council commits to taking action to meet the requirements of the Care Leavers Covenant.

Reason for Decision

To recognise the challenges faced by young people leaving/having left care and to take action which will have a positive impact on the quality of life for these residents in west Norfolk.

1 Background

- 1.1 The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 defines a Care Leaver is someone who has been in the care of the Local Authority for a period of 13 weeks or more spanning their 16th birthday. The term “care experience” is now commonly used to describe any adult who spent time in care as a child.
- 1.2 There are currently c.700,000 children in Care in England. Some key statistics are:
 - The majority of the children (75%) are fostered, and the rest are in residential care
 - Approximately 38% of children in care have more than one placement during a year (11% had three or more placements)
 - In 2016 40% of all care leavers aged 19, 20 and 21 were not in employment, education or training (compared to 14% of all 19, 20 and 21 year old's)
 - In 2016 only 7% of those entering in university were children in care
 - 20% of young homeless people have previously been in care
 - Children in care are four times more likely to have a mental health difficulty, often attributed to isolation and loneliness
- 1.3 Figures obtained from Norfolk Children's Services indicate that there are currently 41 young people in care in west Norfolk, and that 9 of these young people are aged 17. There are approximately 90 care leavers in west Norfolk aged 18-25.
- 1.4 Local authorities have a legal obligation to support care leavers. Under the Children & Social Work Act 2017 authorities are required to publish a 'local offer' setting out what services are available in their area to support care leavers. Under the Government's principles for corporate parenting all departments in local authorities are expected to recognize their role as corporate parents and to look at the support and services they provide to care leavers.

2 Care Leavers Covenant

- 2.1 In 2016 the Government published a major policy document “Keep on Caring” to support young people from care to independence. It is recognized that a large proportion of young people leave their care setting poorly prepared for independence, for example, lacking the appropriate skills to acquire and retain gainful employment, manage their financial affairs and manage domestic arrangements.
- 2.2 A key policy commitment in this paper was a strategic pledge to introduce a Care Leaver Covenant. By signing the Covenant an organization commits to providing additional practical support and/specific offers to those aged 16-25 to help them live independently.

- 2.3 The overarching ambition of the Covenant is for society – civic, civil and business – to be the lifelong ‘universal family’ for those who have been in care.
- 2.4 The mission of the Covenant is to promote five key outcomes, so that care leavers:
- are better prepared and supported to live independently
 - have improved access to employment, education and training
 - experience stability in their lives and feel safe and secure
 - have improved access to health and emotional support
 - achieve financial stability
- 2.5 Many of the issues identified for Care Leavers are the responsibility of Children’s Services. However, there are services provided by the Borough Council which could help address key issues/barriers faced by Care Leavers such as:
- Housing and homelessness
 - General rights and entitlements
 - Mental Health
 - Financial support/advice
 - Isolation/feeling alone
- 2.6 The Council has already taken some actions to support care leavers, including:
- Introducing a Council Tax discount scheme
 - Providing advice/guidance with regards to housing
 - Introducing a guaranteed interview scheme

However, information on these would benefit from being collated centrally and enhanced with additional information on the wider offer for Care Leavers within Norfolk.

- 2.7 A commitment to signing the Care Leavers Covenant would set a framework for the Council further developing its local offer to care leavers. Working towards and then signing the Covenant would also support our corporate parenting role and signal our commitment to improving the life chances of care leavers in west Norfolk.

3 Options Considered

3.1 Option 1

Make a commitment to meeting the requirements of the Care Leavers Covenant. This will involve:

1. Signing a ‘Statement of Intent’ form with the Care Leavers Covenant to indicate our interest in signing the Covenant.
2. Further developing links with Norfolk County Council’s corporate parenting team to obtain insights into the views of care leavers to

inform further work, share/promote information and help develop a joined up approach across the county.

3. Establishing an officer working group and associated work programme with representatives from all relevant services/functions to develop our local offer which will in turn enable us to sign the Covenant.
4. Signing the 'Care Leaver Friendly Charter' for employers and progressing the various actions within this charter to demonstrate our commitment to employees who are Care Leavers.
5. Promoting the work the Council is undertaking to support the Care Leavers Covenant and our local offer to care leavers. To include development of a webpage which will bring our existing local offer together and promotes the wider Norfolk offer and Care Leaver Covenant generally.
6. Reporting back to Cabinet on the work of the officer group, and to agree the Council's offer to care leavers, prior to signing the Covenant.

3.2 Option 2

No change. Continue to support Care Leavers on a service by service basis.

4 Policy Implications

Commitment to the requirements of the Care Leavers Covenant will support the Council's corporate objectives to reduce potential inequality and increase inclusion for minority groups, and to have a positive impact on the quality of life for these residents.

The Corporate Policy team will be responsible for coordinating the Council's approach to Care Leavers and work towards the objectives of the Covenant.

5 Financial Implications

None at this stage. Work to develop the Council's local offer to Care Leavers will be undertaken within existing resources. Any proposals with financial implications would be subject to a future Cabinet report.

6 Personnel Implications

None.

7 Environmental Considerations

None.

8 Statutory Considerations

- 8.1 Signing the Care Leavers Covenant would help to promote the Council's local offer to Care Leavers as required by the Children & Social Work Act 2017.
- 8.2 Working towards and signing the Covenant would also support the Government's principles for corporate parenting, through which all departments in local authorities are expected to recognize their role as corporate parents and to look at the support and services they provide to care leavers.

9 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Completed pre-screening form attached. This highlights that further impact assessments may be required as the Councils' specific local offer is developed.

10 Risk Management Implications

The Council recognises the challenges which young people face when they leave care and understands that the provision of additional support/information will assist care leavers to secure the best possible outcomes for their future. Many existing and forthcoming care leavers will remain in west Norfolk and contribute to our local communities and the Council has a role in supporting residents to improve their quality of life.

11 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

None.

12 Background Papers

None.

Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

Borough Council of
King's Lynn & West Norfolk



Name of policy/service/function	Care Leavers Covenant				
Is this a new or existing policy/service/function?	New				
<p>Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened.</p> <p>Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations</p>	<p>The aim of this report is to obtain agreement to the Council committing to meet the requirements of the Care Leavers Covenant. This will support the council's corporate objectives to address inequalities within west Norfolk</p> <p>This will assist the Council in meeting it's obligations under the Children & Social Work Act 2017.</p>				
Question	Answer				
<p>1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups according to their different protected characteristic, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group.</p> <p>NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p>		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age	√			
	Disability			√	
	Gender			√	
	Gender Re-assignment			√	
	Marriage/civil partnership			√	
	Pregnancy & maternity			√	
	Race			√	
	Religion or belief			√	
	Sexual orientation			√	
	Other (eg low income)	√			

Question	Answer	Comments
<p>2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?</p>	No	<p>There are relatively low numbers of care leavers in west Norfolk and these will be individuals living within our existing communities who require additional support in order to live independently.</p>
<p>3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?</p>	Yes	<p>The Care Leavers Covenant commits an organisation to providing additional practice support and/or specific offers to those aged 16-25 leaving care to help them live independently.</p>
<p>4. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?</p>	Yes	<p>The Covenant, a national initiative, has been specifically developed to address the fact that a large proportion of young people leave their care setting poorly prepared for independence.</p>
<p>5. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions?</p> <p>If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section</p>	Yes / No	<p>Actions: The Care Leavers working group will be mindful of the potential impact of the work undertaken – both in terms of potential positive and negative impacts on different groups/communities within west Norfolk on an ongoing basis. Actual impacts will depend on the local offer developed by the Council. Elements of that offer will be subject to individual equality impact assessments as appropriate to ensure full consideration is given to proposals.</p> <p>Actions agreed by EWG member:</p> <p>.....</p>
<p>If ‘yes’ to questions 2 - 4 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:</p> <p>This report is seeking a commitment to working towards the Care Leavers Covenant, not agreement to the specifics of the local offer which will be developed to demonstrate the Council’s ability to meet the requirements of the Covenant. Care Leavers are not currently recognised as a protected group/care experienced in not currently a protected characteristic. However, within its Equality Policy the Council has made a commitment to remove identified barriers to participation and ensure access for all members of the community. It is recognised that Care Leavers face particular challenges/barriers and the work undertaken to support the Covenant will look at these issues and consider how Council services/information can be adapted to assist with removing/reducing any identified barriers. Any specific proposals developed will be subject to individual equality impact assessments as these are brought forward. Therefore a Full Impact Assessment is not felt necessary at this point in time.</p> <p>Decision agreed by EWG member:</p>		
<p>Assessment completed by:</p> <p>Name</p>	<p>Becky Box</p>	
<p>Job title</p>	<p>Assistant Director Central Services</p>	
<p>Date</p>	<p>1st September 2023</p>	

