

People and Health Overview Committee

9 November 2021

Update on the Care Leaver Offer

For Review and Consultation

Portfolio Holder: Cllr A Parry, Children, Education, Skills and Early Help

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director: T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

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Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

People and Health Overview Committee support the Care Leaver Offer update.

Reason for Recommendation:

The recommendations in this report support Dorset Council having a clear framework, which will set out the offer and entitlements for Care Leavers.

1. Executive Summary

In addition to the April 2021 paper submitted by Simon Fraiz-Brown on our Care Leaver Financial offer in April 2021, this paper is intended to update the People and Health Overview Committee on the current offer to Care Leavers. The update is from May 2021 to October 2021

2. Financial Implications

Financial modelling, based on our current cohort of Care Leavers shows the costs for birthdays and festivals as £15600, Ask Jan as £9000 and the Incentive To Work Project as £10000. This is provided within the S31 Extended Personal

Adviser duty Implementation Grant (£192,000) This total is due to a carryover from 2018-2020 of £106,000 and the current years grant of £86,000. The remainder of the grant funding is spent on the rest of the care leaver offer.

3. Well-being and Health Implications

The Care Leaver Offer supports our Care Leavers in key areas of their lives to support better health and wellbeing outcomes.

4. Climate implications

Not applicable.

5. Other Implications

Not Applicable.

6. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: low
Residual Risk: low

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

Although Care Leavers are a vulnerable group in and of themselves, the Care Leaver Offer will make additional provision for several groups of young adults with vulnerable characteristics. This includes additional support to young people with a disability, experience low emotional wellbeing and poor mental health.

8. Appendices

None

9. Background Papers

None

10. Context

- 10.1 Historically, many of our care leavers are children who come into our care and have remained in care beyond their 16th birthday. As a result of this, we are now seeing an increasing number of young

people with care leaver entitlements, and we expect these numbers to grow as responsibilities for care leavers were amended in the Children & Social Work Act 2017, extending corporate parenting responsibilities to all local authorities, and extending support to the age of 25.

- 10.2 Young people leaving care are one of the most vulnerable groups in our society. Research shows they face greater health problems, lower education attainment than their peers and higher levels of unemployment. In common with other leaving care services, we know that many young people struggle to access support for emotional wellbeing and mental health. The Care Leavers Team are listening to young people and working with the CCG and the Child in Care Health Service to provide a more responsive and earlier intervention to promote wellbeing and positive emotional health.
- 10.3 Dorset Council Care Leavers Team is currently supporting over 540 children in care and care leavers. The Care Leaver Offer will set out the importance of providing care leavers with access to the same level of care and support that other young people get from their parent, holding in mind our corporate parenting objectives to ensure services are; “good enough for my child.’

11. Care Leaver Offer Update

The Rees Foundation “Ask Jan Membership” for care leavers Implemented 1 June 2021.

- 11.1 The ‘Ask Jan Membership’ has been developed to assist care experienced people of all ages allowing them to access comprehensive, practical advice and support and additional benefits.
- 11.2 Dorset Council are the first Local Authority to have a service level agreement with the Rees Foundation - Ask Jan Membership for our care leavers. The membership is for up to 150 care leavers at £60 per membership costing a total of £9000 annually. The Ask Jan Membership is promoted via our Children’s hub and our Personal Advisors to the young people they are working with. The membership offers a wide variety of supports as detailed below:
- A 24-hour counselling helpline with access to a BACP accredited counsellor
 - Up to 8 face to face counselling sessions where assessed and agreed by the counsellor

- Personal finance advice – mortgages, pensions, insurance, debt, and savings
- Nutrition, exercise, stress and wellbeing advice
- Specialist advice helplines including housing, legal and citizens advice 8am to 8pm
- Access to an enhanced wellbeing App - My Possible Self
- Cognitive behavioural therapy – available online or via the App
- Discounts and special offers on days out and activities with The Max Card
- Access to all other Rees Foundation projects

12. Birthday and Festive Gifts Implemented 1 April 2021

12.1 We recognise that as corporate parents we should celebrate our Care Leavers' birthdays and festive events significant to them. Our offer now includes: Care leavers from the age of 16 + receiving a gift voucher on their birthday to the value of £50; Pre-18 and post-18 receive £25 with an additional £50 given on their 21st birthdays. All our care leavers will also receive a festive gift voucher of £50 pre-18 and £20 post-18.

13. Incentive payment for work experience / training / voluntary work / internship / traineeship Implemented 1 April 2021

13.1 We recognise the importance of our care leavers gaining experiences which will promote future employment opportunities. All our care leavers who remain in contact with us up to their 25 birthdays will receive up to £30 a week, if they are participating in 12 or more hours per week in training, voluntary work, internship or a traineeship. This is to support the financial incentivising of our care leavers and support with travel costs and suitable clothing needed for the given activity.

14. Engaging with the Care Leaver Covenant

14.1 The Care Leavers Service are working with the national Care Leaver Covenant on two fronts. Firstly, to expand the internal offer across all Council Departments to offer services and/or experiences to care leavers. This includes identifying a care leaver Champion in each Directorate. This work is being monitored and promoted by the Care Leaver Service Delivery Group chaired by Cllr Somper. Secondly, the Covenant are working with us to engage and encourage local business, charities and organisations to consider what they may be able to contribute to the development and opportunities for care leavers.

15. Co-production with Care Leavers

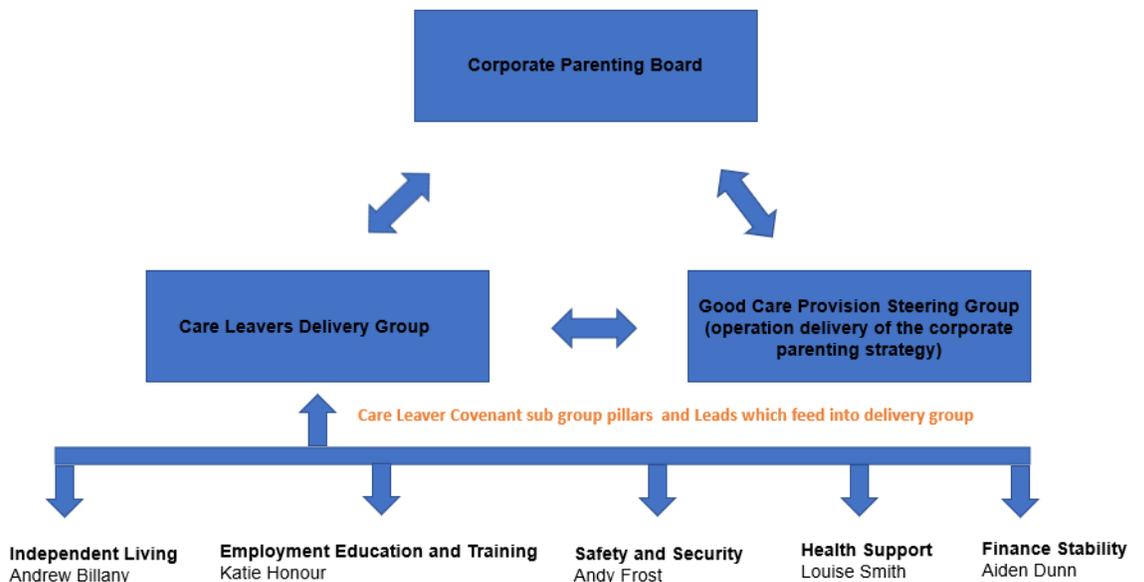
15.1 Through the New Belongings program care leavers have been invited to work with staff to recognise 'bright spots' in our current delivery and to work with us on areas that could be improved. This has seen a number of initiatives including ensuring that the Local Offer is published in a way that meets accessibility code of practice but also is user friendly and attractive to the care leavers who are the primary audience.

16. Care Leaver Delivery Group

16.1 The Care Leaver Delivery Group was formed on the 21st June 2021 and includes of representation from Dorset Council and key partner stakeholders such as Housing, Human resources and care leaver apprentice once in post.

16.2 The delivery group is chaired by Cllr Jane Somper and is held a minimum of seven times a year. The group holds Dorset Council and its partners to account in delivery of services and dispensing of their duties, promises and commitments to our care leavers.

16.3 The delivery group, as detailed below, feeds into the Good Care Provision steering group and feeds up into the Corporate Parenting Board which drives the priorities of Dorset Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy.



16.4 The Care Leavers Delivery Group has outlined the following five outcomes which anchor all of our activity:

- Independent Living – Care leavers are better prepared and supported to live independently
- Employment Education, Training – Care leavers have improved access to employment education and training
- Safety and Security – Care Leavers experience stability in life and feeling safe and secure
- Health Support – Care Leavers have improved access to health and emotional support
- Financial Stability - Care leavers achieve financial stability.

16.5 Work to achieve these outcomes is being undertaken within task and finish groups and progress reported to the Care Leaver Delivery Group.

17. Improving housing options for care leavers

17.1 The development of a joint protocol with Housing colleagues is nearing completion. This sets out the arrangements for our care leavers to ensure that they have access to the full range of accommodation at the appropriate time for them. All care leavers living in Dorset are placed on 'Gold Banding' and are supported by the local authority as a guarantor to secure accommodation for those seeking private rented accommodation. The impact of this will see our care leavers being able to access a greater range of better quality accommodation in the private sector.

17.2 As a council we are pushing to get more affordable housing, however, we have a planned roundtable discussion facilitated by Theresa Leavy to also explore what else is possible for our care leavers – including access to the private rented sector, use of capital, assets or borrowing capacity, new partnerships with providers.

18. National Care Leavers' Week

18.1 National Care Leavers' week was started in 2002 by an independent charity which aimed to bring together other charities and interest groups working with our care leavers campaign.

- 18.2 The week provides an opportunity for Dorset Council and its care leavers to raise awareness, challenge negative perceptions and shine a bright light on our care leavers.
- 18.3 Dorset Council is celebrating National Care Leaver Week from the 21st – 28th October 2021 Over the course of the week there will be a series of workshops and events that have been co-produced with our care leavers. Examples of the workshops and events that will be covered include a Business Event – co-hosted with the Care Leaver Covenant - and a co-produced workshop of recognising care leavers achievements

19. Next steps

- 19.1 To embed the principles of services being designed by young people for young people, through the recruitment, training and recognition of the time and expertise that our young people can give.
- 19.2 Development of clear pathways for care leavers to access timely help with Mental Health and low emotional wellbeing – providing a clear direction for our young people to walk towards.
- 19.3 To ensure that on publication, The Care Leaver Offer is available digitally in an accessible and inviting web page.

20. Recommendations

- 20.1 People and Health Overview Committee support the updated offer as detailed above.

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.