

## **POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**21 FEBRUARY 2019**

### **APPROVAL OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE'S LOCAL OFFER FOR CARE LEAVERS**

#### **1.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the District/Borough Council elements contained within the proposed Nottinghamshire Local Offer for Care Leavers, attached as **Appendix A**, which is recommended for approval.

#### **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 There are approximately 70,000 children in care in England at any one time. Many of these young people when they leave care face serious disadvantage in their lives, compared to their peers. While most young people continue to rely on their families long after they are 18, young people leaving care often do so without the support of a loving family. This is the context for Section 2 of the Children & Social Care Act 2017 which requires each local authority (including District Councils) to publish a Local Offer for its care leavers (18 – 25 years). It should provide information about all the services and support, statutory and discretionary that is available to them from each local authority.
- 2.2 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 well-being, positive relationships, education and training, employment, accommodation and participation in society.
- 2.3 Through the Nottinghamshire Local Authorities Chief Executives' Group, the County Council and District/Borough Councils agreed to create one joint single Care Leaver Offer for Nottinghamshire.
- 2.4 Representatives from the County Council, district/borough councils', other public sector services, voluntary organisations and key stakeholders including ex and current care leavers, have all been involved in developing the draft Local Offer. In addition, a Business Breakfast, hosted by Sir John Peece, has been organised for March to engage local businesses in the offer with particular emphasis on the employment and training aspect.
- 2.5 Various work streams were agreed and have been led by appropriate senior officers from the County and District Councils with Newark & Sherwood's Chief Executive providing the link with, and lead from, Nottinghamshire Chief Executives.

#### **3.0 Contributions from Borough/District Councils**

- 3.1 The Borough/District Councils' Chief Executives have expressed 'in principle' support for a number of proposals subject to the relevant approvals of their respective Councils. Set out below are those elements of the offer that are of particular relevance to Borough/District Councils.

### 3.2 Employment, Skills and Apprenticeships

- ❖ A number of Care Leavers are already employed in various apprenticeships by Nottinghamshire local authorities. It is the intention to more actively signpost care leavers to apprenticeships made available by Borough/District Councils and wherever possible, to prioritise care leavers for local authority apprenticeships, for example, guaranteeing care leavers an interview if they meet essential criteria. Ideally, individual Borough/District councils are encouraged to identify and support a specific number of care leaver apprentices per year, paid at the age-related national minimum wage and supported with a care leaver apprentice coaching and support programme, recognising the specific vulnerabilities and extra support that care leavers may need to apply for and succeed in these roles.

### 3.3 Housing

- ❖ Borough/District Councils' have been working together to secure a consistent offer that gives priority to care leavers within Housing Allocation Schemes, together with a commitment to help care leavers secure accommodation as quickly as possible (ideally within 8 weeks). However, if emergency accommodation is required, it is proposed that the statutory homelessness process would be triggered and homeless accommodation utilised, as a last resort.

### 3.4 Physical and Mental Health

- ❖ Across the County, some Borough/Districts offer free use and/or concessions for leisure facilities whereas others do not. In recognising the health and wider well-being benefits of physical activity, it is proposed that all Borough/District Councils consider providing free membership of their leisure centres to Care Leavers.

3.5 In addition to the above, all Nottinghamshire Borough/District Councils have previously agreed to exempt care leavers from council tax up to their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday as part of the development of this Local Offer. It is understood that Nottinghamshire is the first two-tier area to make this commitment but a number of others are now following, including Derbyshire and Lincolnshire.

3.6 At the time of preparing this report, the draft Local Offer is scheduled to be submitted for approval to Nottinghamshire County Council's Children & Young People's Committee on 11 February 2019 and to each respective Borough/District Council Cabinet and/or Committees in February/March 2019.

3.7 The current number of care leavers in Nottinghamshire (as at 9 January 2019) is provided below by district/borough areas:

	18-20 years	20years +
Ashfield	41	55
Bassetlaw	33	41
Broxtowe	4	9
Gedling	14	20
Mansfield	44	57
Newark & Sherwood	33	24
Rushcliffe	15	24

#### **4.0 Other Partnership Activities**

- 4.1 As mentioned above, a Business Breakfast will take place on Thursday, 7 March 2019, hosted by the Lord Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire. He will outline the Local Offer to business leaders from across Nottinghamshire and invite them to pledge their support to increase employment opportunities for care leavers.
- 4.2 Children's Services Directors from across D2N2 are discussing the development of a joint offer across the region, which has been promoted by the Care Leaver Ambassador who is also advocating for a stronger national offer for care leavers to be developed centrally by government.
- 4.3 Though positive progress is being made around the Care Leaver agenda, the objective of course has to be to reduce the number of children in care and better support those currently in care. Historically, in two tier areas, this has tended to be solely the domain of Children's Social Care but there are clearly opportunities for Borough and District Councils to make a more active contribution, supporting and incentivising fostering and adoption for example.

#### **5.0 Communicating the Local Offer**

- 5.1 Nottinghamshire County Council's Communications Team is co-ordinating a multi-channel media launch of the Local Offer from 4 March and will liaise with Borough/District Councils and other partners for this activity. This includes a conference for local authority officers and relevant practitioners delivering services and support across the 6 themes of the Local Offer (Summer 2019). The conference will inform them of the Offer as it relates to their service, raise awareness of how to adapt their practice to deliver an effective service for care leavers and to promote other areas of the Offer to the care leavers they support.
- 5.2 Subject to approval, the Local Offer will be available to all care leavers through their social worker or personal adviser, in a format that is appealing and accessible to young people. It will also be available on a dedicated area of 'Notts Help Yourself' ([www.nottshelpyourself.org.uk](http://www.nottshelpyourself.org.uk)) and on a mobile App. The use of IT platforms means that the current Offer will be updated as soon as new services and support become available from partners. The design of all formats will be informed by the feedback gained from consultation with care leavers on the Local Offer that was undertaken between 10 and 21 December 2018.

#### **6.0 Governance**

- 6.1 It is proposed that Nottinghamshire's Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers (CL) Strategic Partnership Board be the body accountable for the performance management and continuous improvement of the Offer.

#### **7.0 Other Options Considered**

- 7.1 That each local authority in Nottinghamshire develops and produces its own Local Offer for Care Leavers.

## **8.0 Financial Implications**

8.1 The costs associated with the proposed Local Offer for Care Leavers are contained within the Council's allocated revenue budgets and the County Council's existing Children's Social Care, Communications and HR budgets.

## **9.0 Equalities/Implications for Service Users**

9.1 The proposed Local Offer for Care Leavers has significant and positive benefits for services users, namely the County's care leavers, who are some of the most vulnerable residents in the County. This new Offer provides a comprehensive guide to all the services and support care leavers are already entitled to, as well as new entitlements that, together, will have a substantial impact on their lives.

## **10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that:**

- (a) Members express their commitment to, and support for, the proposed Nottinghamshire Local Offer for Care Leavers and refer approval of the various Borough/District Council elements to the relevant committees; and**
- (b) future consideration be given to how Borough/District Councils might work with Nottinghamshire County Council to support Looked After Children and those at risk/vulnerable of becoming so.**

## **Reason for Recommendations**

**To fulfil statutory Corporate Parenting duties, improve lifetime outcomes for Nottinghamshire's care leavers and to reduce lifetime local and national spend on care leavers.**

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

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](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-offer-guidance)

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