

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES CABINET MEMBER

INCREASING OUR OFFER TO CARE LEAVERS TO PROVIDE SUPPORT AND ADVICE, WHATEVER THEIR AGE IN LINE WITH OUR CORPORATE PARENTING PROMISE TO CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS 2021

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 Care Leavers have been reliant upon North Lincolnshire Council to support, nurture and parent them at some stage during their childhood. They should expect and deserve the highest quality of parenting and support from their corporate family, and our responsibilities to these young people do not stop when they leave our care.
- 1.2 In line with our statutory duties we currently offer support to our care leavers up to the age of 25years.
- 1.3 The objectives of this report is to seek a decision to extend the offer of support and advice to all care leavers beyond the age of 25 years regardless of their age in line with our Corporate Parenting Promise to Children in Care and Care Leavers 2021

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 amended the Children Act 1989 and, along with The Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017 it has increased the powers and duties on Local Authorities to better support young people leaving care through support and accommodation arrangements to improve their life chances. This included extending the duties to support care leavers to the age of 21 to now 25.
- 2.2 The duty that extends Personal Adviser support (where requested) to all care leavers means that the local authority continues to exercise functions in respect of care leavers to age 25 and should therefore apply the corporate parenting principles when exercising those functions.
- 2.3 The duty therefore means that local authorities do not necessarily need to provide the same level of support to care leavers aged 21 to 25 as it does for those aged 18-20. The duty does, however, enable local authorities to respond positively to requests for support from care leavers aged 21-25 who may be continuing to struggle with the transition to independence and adult life.

2.4 In line with the above, at this current time we provide support as necessary to Care Leavers up to the age of 25.

2.5 Corporate parents have the same aspirations for a child in care or care leaver as any good parent would have for their own child. It means providing them with the stability and support they need to make progress; and helping them to access new opportunities and experiences that inspire them to set ambitious goals for themselves. It means celebrating their successes, but also recognising that they will sometimes make mistakes and need help to get back on track. It also means supporting them to gain the skills and confidence to live independent lives, while letting them know that they have someone to call on for help if the going gets tough. For most children support from their family never ends whether they are aged 18, 21 or 25 or beyond.

2.6 For our care leavers we are their family. In line with our corporate parenting promise we want to formally extend our support and advice offer to care leavers beyond the age of 25 years, recognising that a care leaver is a care leaver for life not just until the age of 25 years.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Option 1: To approve increasing our offer to Care Leavers to provide support and advice, whatever their age when they require it.

3.2 Option 2: No change to the existing service offer to our Care Leavers.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

Option 1

4.1 The recommended option is one that best meets the needs of our Care Leavers beyond the age of 25 years. It recognises that our Care Leavers continue to be Care Leavers beyond the age of 25 and that our corporate parenting role continues.

4.2 Overall the ultimate aim of our care leaving service is to support care leavers so that they can live successful independent lives. Each care leaver will reach that point at a different age and despite the adversity our care leavers have faced, with the right support, many of our care leavers do well after leaving care. However, there may be times that as Care Leavers progress within their adult lives they face difficult times, including inequalities in which they may need support and advice on. Increasing our offer to Care Leavers ensure that they have someone to offer support and advice, whatever their age will enable us to ensure someone is there to support and advice Care Leaver's beyond the age of 25.

4.3 To enable us to move forward with a service offer that meets the needs of Care Leavers regardless of their age we will undertake a piece of consultation work with our own Care Leavers (who are over the age of 25 years) to explore what support and advice they may have needed at certain times in their lives and how this can be best met from across the partnership, community and from within the

persons own network. This will help to shape what the offer will look like into the future.

Option 2

4.4 To continue with the existing service offer would not enable us to provide the open door service for support and advice that we have promised our care leavers.

5. FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (e.g. LEGAL, HR, PROPERTY, IT, COMMUNICATIONS etc.)

5.1 There will be a financial implication to increasing the offer to our care leavers as we will seek to increase capacity and resource in the service to meet the needs of our care leavers.

6. OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS (e.g. CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITIES, COUNCIL PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, RISK etc.)

6.1 In progressing with the objectives set out within this report there are no implications of any decisions on crime and disorder pursuant to section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

6.2 There are no equalities issues under the Equalities Act 2010 in pursuing the objectives of this report.

6.3 In progressing with the action proposed we will extend our offer to Care Leavers as effective and proactive Corporate Parents beyond the age of 25. We will look to support our care leavers to build upon their resilience, empowering them with support and advice ensuring that they are safe, well, connected and are prosperous.

6.4 There are no environmental implications or significant risks that have been identified arising from implementation of the recommendation.

7. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

7.1 Not applicable

8. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

8.1 Children in Care and Care Leavers were consulted as part of developing the Corporate Parenting Promise to Children in Care and Care Leavers 2021.

8.2 No conflicts of interest to declare.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families approve increasing our offer to Care Leavers to provide support and advice, whatever their age in line with our Corporate Parenting Promise to Children in Care and Care Leavers 2021 as set out in Option 1 above.

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