

Report for scrutiny: progress in implementing the national 'Keep on Caring' Strategy and development of a Local Offer for Care Leavers

This report highlights the key implications of new statutory guidance relating to care leavers, specifically

- Local Offer Guidance
- Extending Personal Advisor Support to all care Leavers to Age 25 (keep on caring)

Local Offer guidance

This guidance requires each local authority to consult on and publish a local offer for its care leavers. The local offer should provide information about all the services and support that is available to care leavers from the local authority, including information about both their statutory entitlements as well as any discretionary support. The local offer should set out what support all local authority departments will provide (not just Children's Services).

The local offer should include information setting out the support available in the following areas.

- **Health and wellbeing:** This will include services that teach about, support and enable good health and wellbeing.
- **Relationships:** This should focus on the services and/ or support that is available to help care leavers develop and maintain positive social networks and to understand what positive relationships look like.
- **Education and training:** This will include the support available to care leavers in Higher Education, and signposting to universal information such as careers advice and financial support for young people.
- **Employment:** This will include information to care leavers about general employment support, such as careers support and links to local Job Centre Plus. Local authorities should also include any other employment support that they or partners deliver that is specifically available to care leavers.
- **Accommodation:** This should include relevant information about the Staying Put policy, the support available from Housing Services and any other assistance that is available to care leavers, such as advice on maintaining a tenancy.
- **Participation in society:** This will include links to and information about activities, events or volunteering opportunities available in the local area that care leavers can get involved in.

Developing the local offer

Local authorities are required to consult with relevant persons, which means care leavers and organisations or people that represent care leavers. Local authorities are also required to work with their care leavers to co-produce a local offer that is meaningful and reflects the needs, views and wishes of the care leavers they are responsible for.

Publishing and updating the local offer

The Government's expectation is that the local offer should be available within six to nine months of commencement of the duty, which is 1st April 2018. Once published the local offer should be reviewed regularly, at least every two to three years, following further consultation with care leavers.

The Local Offer should be written in a way that is easy to understand and be provided in a variety of formats.

The Local Offer for Nottingham City Care Leavers is currently being drafted. The next stage will involve consultation with other relevant directorates and partner agencies regarding their offer to our care leavers plus consultation with care leavers themselves prior to publication in October 2018.

Extending Personal Advisor Support to all are Leavers to Age 25

The objective of this new duty is to protect care leavers aged 21 up to age 25 from feeling isolated, not having anybody to turn to for advice or support, or continuing to struggle with the transition to adult life. Local authorities retain a role as corporate parent to care leavers up to age 25. Young people will be able to continue to receive support when they reach age 21, or to request PA support at any point after age 21 up to age 25, even if they had previously indicated that they did not want it.

The Local Authority does 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. For care leavers aged 21 or over, the duties to assess care leavers' needs, and develop and keep under review a pathway plan apply only where the young person requests support. Where the young person requests help, a PA must be provided to support them. It is recognised that when the new duty comes into force, there will be a significant number of young people aged under 25 who will not have been in contact with their leaving care team for a number of years. Local Authorities are required to take reasonable steps to make contact with these young people and Nottingham City have written to all former care leavers aged under 25 to advise them of the changes to support.

Data collection – The DfE is currently developing proposals in relation to data collection. The working assumptions are that this will focus on the number of care leavers covered by the new duty who access services and what was the primary reason they requested support.

Additional financial support from Government

The government has indicated it will provide additional financial support to local authorities to support them with the new duties. It has set out how it calculates what will be required in an ancillary document to the guidance. The total amount will increase year on year for the four years from 2018/19, starting nationally at £3,029,520 increasing to £12,118,080. Government calculates that if an average Personal Adviser caseload were 25 young people, it would require an additional 184 Personal Advisers nationally once the service is fully implemented. Nottingham City will receive £24334. This will not fund one Personal Advisor post but it is recognised that an additional post will be a minimum requirement to fulfil our new responsibilities.

We are currently considering a new model for a 16+ team, which will be responsible for CiC aged 16 up to care leavers aged 25. This will be a team comprised of 2 team managers, social workers as well as personal advisors and it is anticipated that this structure will improve transition planning.