

# Cabinet Meeting

## 20 April 2016

<b>Report title</b>	Care Leavers Charter	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Young People	
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Linda Sanders, Strategic Director People	
<b>Originating service</b>	Looked After Children	
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Emma Bennett	Service Director, Children and Young People
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<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	People Leadership Team	14 March 2016
	Strategic Executive Board	15 March 2016

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### Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Sign up to the Department for Education's Care Leavers Charter which is a requirement of the New Belongings Project Action Plan and will endorse the City Of Wolverhampton Council's commitment to raising the expectations, aspirations and understanding of Care Leavers.
2. Support the City of Wolverhampton Council to consider the principles when making key decisions effecting Care Leavers.

## **Purpose**

- 1.0 That Cabinet considers and approves the City of Wolverhampton Council's commitment to the Department of Education's (DfE) Care Leavers Charter. This charter sets out 7 promises and principles to care leavers and endorses the Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities in raising the expectations, aspirations and understanding of care leavers locally.
- 1.1 To ensure that the City of Wolverhampton Council is on track with meeting the requirements of the New Belongings Project Action Plan.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Improving outcomes for care leavers is a key Government and Council priority. The Government believe that too many care leavers leave care with poor educational attainment and end up long term unemployed. The Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 and the statutory guidance Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers, which came into force in April 2011, strengthened the duties local authorities have towards their care leavers. To further endorse the government and local authorities' commitment to Corporate Parenting for Care Leavers the DfE published the Care Leaver Charter in 2012, which was written by young people. The charter is a set of principles that enshrine the aspirations and needs of young people.
- 2.2 In October 2015 the City Council launched its New Belongings Project. The inspiration for New Belongings came from a care leavers group who meet regularly with the Minister for Children and was the third in a series of initiatives, bringing the principles and concepts of Access All Areas and the Charter for Care Leavers down to a local level. The aim is to embed these into local services and communities and reduce the sense of long term isolation often expressed by care leavers. The Care Leavers Charter forms the basis for the project and has been an innovative and ambitious initiative aimed to raise expectation and aspiration for care leavers.
- 2.3 We expect that the combined efforts of the Council's commitment to the Care Leavers Charter and the New Belongings Project will reduce barriers for care leavers in the community, providing them with increased support and engaging the abilities of the whole of the Local Authority, its key service partners, and the wider community. Using the results from our Care Leavers survey (August 2015) and the Care Leavers Charter, an action plan that reflects the priorities of the Local Authority and its care leavers has been implemented. This focuses on, for example, increased participation, on-going education, training and employment opportunities, housing options, access to health and wellbeing services via our local services and partners and raising the profile of care leavers. This should promote aspirations and opportunities for our care leavers so that they can be encouraged, supported and empowered to achieve better outcomes for their future, solidifying the Council's commitment to the National Care Leavers Charter.
- 2.4 The DfE Care Leavers Charter encourages Local Authorities to use the promises and principles outlined to inform the decisions they make that affect the young people's lives. These promises and principles are:

**To respect and honour your identity**

- We will support you to discover and to be who you are and honour your unique identity. We will help you develop your own personal beliefs and values and accept your culture and heritage. We will celebrate your identity as an individual, as a member of identity groups and as a valued member of your community. We will value and support important relationships, and help you manage changing relationships or come to terms with loss, trauma or other significant life events. We will support you to express your identity positively to others.

**To believe in you**

- We will value your strengths, gifts and talents and encourage your aspirations. We will hold a belief in your potential and a vision for your future even if you have lost sight of these yourself. We will help you push aside limiting barriers and encourage and support you to pursue your goals in whatever ways we can. We will believe in you, celebrate you and affirm you.

**To listen to you**

- We will take time to listen to you, respect, and strive to understand your point of view. We will place your needs, thoughts and feelings at the heart of all decisions about you, negotiate with you, and show how we have taken these into account. If we don't agree with you we will fully explain why. We will provide easy access to complaint and appeals processes and promote and encourage access to independent advocacy whenever you need it.

**To inform you**

- We will give you information that you need at every point in your journey, from care to adulthood, presented in a way that you want including information on legal entitlements and the service you can expect to receive from us at different stages in the journey. We will keep information up to date and accurate. We will ensure you know where to get current information once you are no longer in regular touch with leaving care services. We will make clear to you what information about yourself and your time in care you are entitled to see. We will support you to access this when you want it, to manage any feelings that you might have about the information, and to put on record any disagreement with factual content.

**To support you**

- We will provide any support set out in current Regulations and Guidance and will not unreasonably withhold advice when you are no longer legally entitled to this service. As well as information, advice, practical and financial help we will provide emotional support. We will make sure you do not have to fight for support you are entitled to and we will fight for you if other agencies let you down. We will not punish you if you change your mind about what you want to do. We will continue to care about you even when we are no longer caring for you. We will make it our responsibility to understand your needs. If we can't meet those needs we will try and help you find a service that can. We will help you learn from your mistakes; we will not judge you and we will be here for you no matter how many times you come back for support.

### **To find you a home**

- We will work alongside you to prepare you for your move into independent living only when you are ready. We will help you think about the choices available and to find accommodation that is right for you. We will do everything we can to ensure you are happy and feel safe when you move to independent living. We recognise that at different times you may need to take a step back and start over again. We will do our best to support you until you are settled in your independent life; we will not judge you for your mistakes or refuse to advise you because you did not listen to us before. We will work proactively with other agencies to help you sustain your home.

### **To be a lifelong champion**

- We will do our best to help you break down barriers encountered when dealing with other agencies. We will work together with the services you need, including housing, benefits, colleges and universities, employment providers and health services to help you establish yourself as an independent individual. We will treat you with courtesy and humanity whatever your age when you return to us for advice or support. We will help you to be the driver of your life and not the passenger. We will point you in a positive direction and journey alongside you at your pace. We will trust and respect you. We will not forget about you. We will remain your supporters in whatever way we can, even when our formal relationship with you has ended.

## **3.0 Progress**

- 3.1 The City of Wolverhampton Council has already shown its commitment to Care Leavers in approving and endorsing the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2015/2017 and its commitment to the New Belongings project launched in October 2015. In order to meet the requirements of the New Belongings Project the Charter needs to be officially signed up to.
- 3.2 A care leaver survey has been carried out with Wolverhampton care leavers. The analysis of these results showed some common themes on what improvements are required and have been the focus of the New Belongings Action Plan. The key themes in the action plan are:
  - Increase communication and participation with care leavers
  - Introduction of the Outcome Star Assessment
  - Increase support for care leavers in regards to their independence skills
  - Reduce number of care leavers who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)
  - Increase health and leisure opportunities for care leavers
  - Improve partnership with services that support the most vulnerable group of care leaver
- 3.3 A Wolverhampton care leavers' forum has been established to lead on the project and the findings from the survey. The forum will ensure that Wolverhampton's care leavers are consulted on a regular basis regarding the New Belongings project and plans/changes for the services and support offered. The forum will be used as a way of gathering care leavers' views on changes and service delivery, with the aim of making improvements which will further support young people to reach their potential and achieve their aspirations.

3.4 Quarterly meetings are being held with other Local Authorities within the Black Country cluster. These meetings are supported by the National Project Manager and a dedicated care leaver who is attached to each Local Authority to offer support and guidance throughout the project and an arena to share good practice.

3.5 A successful meeting was held between Wolverhampton City Council's Managing Director and the national lead for New Belongings, at which we were advised that we are making good progress on the project. We are planning to continue with the action plan for a further year. Outcomes of the project so far include:

- the publication of an updated webpage for Care Leavers
- the introduction of mandatory training for key staff in supporting Care Leavers' independence
- Additional support to ensure that Care Leavers are in Education Employment and Training (EET) – e.g. an EET drop-in session
- Free membership of the Youth Zone for care Leavers
- Improved partnerships with Youth Offending Team, Clinical Commissioning Care Group and other partners to support the vulnerable

#### **4.0 Financial implications**

4.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this report.  
[JF/10032016/E]

#### **5.0 Legal implications**

5.1 There are no legal implications as a result of this report.  
[TS/29032016/L]

#### **6.0 Equalities implications**

6.1 An initial equality analysis has been undertaken on this report, and following further consideration, this report is to address the inequalities that Care Leavers face and therefore meets our equalities duty.

#### **7.0 Environmental implications**

7.1 There are no environmental implications as a result of this report.

#### **8.0 Human resources implications**

8.1 There are no human resource implications as a result of this report.

#### **9.0 Corporate landlord implications**

9.1 There are no corporate landlord implications as a result of this report.

#### **10.0 Schedule of background papers**

10.1 New Belongings Report 2016