

Report title	The REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16-25 Annual Review 2020	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor John Reynolds Children and Young People	
Wards affected	All wards	
Accountable director	Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services	
Originating service	Children and Young People in Care	
Accountable employee	Laura Woods	Service Manager Children and Young People in Care
Report has been considered by	Children and Young People Leadership Team	5 November 2020

Recommendations for decision:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Approve the revisions made to the REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16 - 25.
2. Approve the publishing of the revised REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16 - 25.

Recommendations for noting:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to note:

1. The process of the review.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16 - 25 has been now live for the last 24 months. A comprehensive review by care leavers, and the steering group set up to support the services published in the offer, has taken place every 12 months. The latest consultation with young people took place in August 2020 and the steering group held an official review in September 2020.

2.0 Background

2.1 Following the 'Children's Social Care Reform – A Vision for Change' document published in January 2016, the government produced the Children and Social Work Bill which subsequently received Royal Assent on 27 April 2017. Implicit in the Children and Social Work Act 2017, it is the requirement to improve support for looked after children in England and Wales especially for those leaving care.

2.2 The Act introduces seven corporate parenting principles to which local authorities must have regard. These are:

- to act in the best interests and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing of relevant children and young people
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- to help those children and young people gain access to and make best use of services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- to promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for those children and young people
- to have regard to the need for those children and young people to be safe and have stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

2.3 Local authorities in England were required to publish a Local Offer for their care leavers by September 2018. The Local Offer had to provide information about services which the local authority offers that may assist care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living. This includes services relating to health and well-being, relationships, education and training, employment, accommodation and participation in society. The Local Offer must be supported and promoted by all members of the local authority to ensure that it develops and strengthens services offered for young people leaving care. The Local Offer must be reviewed on a 12-monthly basis in collaboration with young people, internal services and external agencies.

3.0 Progress and discussions

3.1 On 5 August 2020, a consultation took place with 21 care leavers using the Mentimeter tool via Microsoft Teams, this was an increase of eight care leavers from last year's review. Participants were asked about the additional elements of the Local Offer added since last year's review to establish which elements were beneficial and which needed strengthening. Highlights of this consultation were;

- Out of the care leavers who took part 47% (10), had heard about the Local Offer and 38% hadn't heard about it; 14% responded with 'maybe'.
- Care Leavers who took part shared that they had a health passport, attend drop-in and had WV active membership. Only one care leaver had completed the ASDAN qualification. No care leavers had shared that they had accessed Embrace (Sexual Health Service) or the online counselling.
- Care Leavers shared that they would like to have had more information on healthy eating and support for mental health for men.
- In respect of relationships; care leavers would like the offer to have information about education on healthy romantic relationships, risky adults and better communication.
- In Education, Employment and Training (EET), over half of care leavers had accessed their EET co-ordinator. There was also high uptake on financial assistance for higher education. Use of mock interviews and Impact work coaches were lower. Care leavers advised they would like more opportunity for work experience and more active support.
- Accommodation support showed that the training flat is well utilised.
- Care leavers felt that the use of emails, social media, texting, introduction to getting involved when preparing to leave care and more groups that were based on socialising would assist care leavers in getting involved.
- One care leaver shared 'I'm not one for getting involved - when you leave care, you really don't want to look back and get involved with things to do with social services.'

3.2 The steering group who represent external organisations and the City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) met to look at the feedback from the young people and to evaluate their experiences of delivering the services and made the following comments;

- The Reach leaving care team are formulating a 'mailshot' list to ensure all care leavers receive information in relation to the Local Offer.
- The Reach leaving care team will also be relaunching 'care leaver packs' which young people will receive when they meet their young person advisor, this will contain information in relation to all entitlements and a copy of the Local Offer.
- The launch of the Reach café will support care leavers to access 1:1 support, work shops and information evenings regarding specific topics which they have requested more information on.
- The ASDAN qualification has been launched and is being utilised within the Reach flats and the House Project, Covid-19 has slowed down the completion rate.
- Kooth online counselling is a new initiative which will support care leavers to access support, advice and guidance regarding their mental health and maintaining a healthy romantic relationship.
- An education, employment and training steering group need to be set up to look at the city-wide offer to care leavers and how this can be promoted more widely, the DWP and local job centre coaches will be part of this.

- Volunteer parent champions are currently been supported to assist our parent care leavers to access appointments and access support
- 3.3 Both consultations highlighted a need for additional support and services that will need to be explored over the next 12 months with other partner organisations and these include;
- Access to suitable electronic devices and connectivity for all care leavers
 - Support is being sourced through Family Group Conferencing for care leavers this will offer them the opportunity to get additional support from family members
 - All care leavers to have both a health passport and a leaving care health summary
 - Access to public transport to care leavers across the West Midlands
 - Smoother transition support from Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services to adult mental health services
 - Access to City of Wolverhampton graduate programme for care leavers leaving university
 - Discounted optical care for working care leavers
 - Access to free beauty treatments for care leavers
 - Continue to develop Senior Officer Mentoring Scheme in the City of Wolverhampton

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 Any costs associated with developments and additions made to the REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16 – 25 will be contained within the overall budget for 2020-2021 for the Children and Young People in Care Service of £31.4 million.
- 4.2 Other Services within City of Wolverhampton Council and external partner organisations are working in partnership with the Children and Young People in Care Service to support the REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16 – 25. Any costs incurred by other Services within City of Wolverhampton Council and external partner organisations will be contained within their existing approved budgets for 2020-2021.
[JB/10112020/E]

5.0 Legal implications

- 5.1 The publishing of a Local Offer for Care Leavers is a legal requirement as set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 to improve support for looked after children in England and Wales, especially for those leaving care.
[TC/04112020/A]

6.0 Equalities implications

- 6.1 Care leavers are asked to begin their journey into adulthood earlier than most young people. This can make them more vulnerable, isolated and unsure how to ask for help. The REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16 - 25 is to mitigate against the challenges faced by care leavers in the community.
- 6.2 Outcomes for care leavers as a result of their pre-care and in care experience are poorer than their peers, Unfortunately, sometimes being in care can have a negative impact on children's education. Frequent placement and school moves will all impact on a child's

confidence and ability to learn. Traumatic experiences before entry into care can also cause difficulties, which may affect a child's behaviour, self-esteem, self-regulation or trust in authority figures. This experience means that nationally compared to the general population care leavers are (DoE, Published 12 August 2019):

- less likely to be in education, employment or training - over a third of 19-year-old care leavers are not in education, employment or training
- more likely to be attempting to live independently - some are unable to remain in their placements beyond the age of 18. They are therefore likely to experience compressed and accelerated transitions to independence.
- Impact of childhood trauma means they are more likely to suffer with issue relating to emotional health and well being
- more likely to have a criminal conviction and may have experienced unnecessary criminalisation. Care leavers are estimated to represent between 24% and 27% of the adult prison population. This is despite less than 1% of under 18s entering local authority care each year.

6.3 The Reach Care Leaver offer sole purpose is to mitigate against the negative impact of being in care and the inequality they can face in society.

7.0 Climate change and environmental implications

7.1 There are no climate change or 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.

10.1 Health and Wellbeing implications

10.2 There are no health and wellbeing implications as a result of this report.

11.0 Covid-19 Implications

11.1 There are no Covid 19 implications as a result of this report

12.0 Schedule of background papers

12.1 The REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16 - 25