

REPORT TO:	Cabinet 20 July 2020
SUBJECT:	Croydon Offer for Care Leavers, Commitment to Children in Care and National Pledge
LEAD OFFICER:	Robert Henderson, Executive Director Hannah Doughty Head of Service
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Alisa Fleming Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning
WARDS:	All

CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/ AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON

The offer to our young adults leaving care is fully aligned to our Corporate Plan for Croydon (2018-2020) in the following areas

- Our children and young people thrive and reach their full potential
- Everyone feels safer in their street, neighbourhood and home
- Everyone has the opportunity to work and build their career.

[Corporate Plan for Croydon 2018-2022](#)

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The estimated financial impact calculated in accordance with the leaving care financial policy of £365k will be contained within the existing Early Help and Children's Social Care budget for 2020/21 and beyond.

FORWARD PLAN KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO: 2020CAB

The decision may be implemented from 1300 hours on the 6th working day after the decision is made, unless the decision is referred to the Scrutiny & Overview Committee by the requisite number of Councillors.

The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations below

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 To consider, provide views and agree that Croydon Council and its partners:
- Adopt the National Pledge for children in care and care leavers;
 - Make a Croydon Commitment to children in care;
 - Provide a refreshed local offer for Croydon's care leavers.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Croydon Council seeks to provide the best opportunities for our children looked after and care leavers in line with our duties as corporate parents. They are part

of our 'Croydon Family'. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 directs all Local Authorities to provide a local offer for care leavers detailing the services they provide. The Act also names the Council, elected members, employees and partner agencies as corporate parents. We believe we have created a local offer that will ensure, as collective corporate parents, that we keep all children looked after and care leavers safe and enable them to have high aspirations for their futures.

This document will set out our updated local offer for care leavers, along with our adoption of the 'National Pledge' and Croydon's commitment to children looked after and care leavers.

The National Pledge for children looked after and care leavers

- 2.1 The national conference for care experienced people developed a set of principles which it asked all Local Authorities to adopt as their own. As such, Croydon commits to the following:

We will listen to our children/young people and ensure they have access to all legal entitlements. We understand they are experts in their own lives who deserve love and respect as individuals (within the context of their own experience). We recognise relationships are at the core of all we do and we must ensure the emotional well-being of our children/young people are prioritised.

- 2.2 Croydon would like to adopt the National Pledge for its children looked after and care leavers:

1. To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of children and young people
2. To encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
3. To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people
4. To help children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
5. To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for children and young people
6. For children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
7. To prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living

3 COMMITMENTS

- 3.1 Croydon would like to make the following commitments to its children in care:

1. We will help you build your social life and help you to keep in touch with your family and friends
2. We will help you do the things you love
3. We will make sure you are happy with where you live and listen to your views
4. We will help you with your education and whatever you choose to do in life

5. We will make sure you have someone to talk to who gives you good advice
6. We will listen to your thoughts and feelings
7. We will try and understand you as a person, not just a child looked after
8. We will give you all the support you need to go home (if it is an option)
9. We will make sure you have a good relationship with your Social Worker and Personal Adviser
10. We will be there for you in the future and support you to learn the skills you will need to live alone
11. You can have access to your records if you want
12. We will love you for who you are and always welcome you

4. THE 'LOCAL OFFER' FOR CARE LEAVERS IN CROYDON

Summary

The 'Local Offer' for care leavers has been updated, to ensure that they feel supported financially, emotionally, practically and so that they feel part of the 'Croydon Family'.

Key additions include an increase in the setting up allowance and assistance with moving home so our young people are supported at the crucial time of transitioning into independence. This includes an exemption from council tax (until 25 years old) and an arrangement with Housing Services in Croydon that they will not issue a decision of 'intentionally homeless' for any of our care leavers below 25 years old. All care leavers in employment or regular education will be supported with the cost of driving lessons, along with a commitment by the Council to apprenticeship opportunities. We plan to link this to our staff volunteering scheme where employees can 'buddy' and mentor young people entering Council employment, to ensure they have the best experience possible and are supported to become part of the workforce, the 'family business'.

The Offer in full

- 4.1 Croydon Children's Services wish to make the following pledge to our care leavers:
 - You will have a Personal Adviser by the time you are 16½ years old who will visit you regularly and in line with your individual needs
 - At 16 years old you will have a 'pathway plan' which will set out all your needs, ambitions and goals, including where you will live, study and work
 - You will be provided with somewhere safe to live
 - You will receive assistance to develop a clear financial plan, which will include an assessment to see if you are eligible for an emergency additional income one-off payment
 - We will ensure all your health needs are met and you leave care with a 'health passport'
 - We will ensure you have a photo ID (such as passport, biometric card or provisional driving licence), National Insurance number and a copy of your birth certificate
 - We will ensure you are listened to and know how to access external support and advocacy services, and that you are aware of our complaints procedure

4.2 Housing

- Housing Services in Croydon will not issue you with a decision of 'intentionally homeless' if you are a care leaver under the age of 25
- As a child looked after your housing needs will be considered by the Housing Panel by the time you are 17½ and you will have a clear Housing Options Pathway Plan (by your final looked after review, before you turn 18)
- You will be placed on the Housing Register at 18 years old, as priority Band B which will allow you to bid on properties (if this has been agreed as part of your Pathway Plan)
- You will be entitled to social housing (unless you are an asylum seeker with no recourse to public funds)

4.3 Education, Employment and Training

- If you are a care leaver in education post 19 (or 18 if at university), you will have access to tutor hours for additional learning to support you through exams if you want. These will be offered in conjunction with a clear Pathway Plan or Personal Education Plan setting out education goals
- If you are in regular education, employment or training you will be supported with the costs towards ten driving lessons and one theory and practical test paid for
- As a care leaver you will be able to apply for apprentice opportunities within Croydon Council (this will be at least one place in each part of the Council and three within Children's Services per year)

4.4 Money

- We will provide you with up to six weeks subsistence payments, mirrored to the current benefit rate (to assist you while waiting for your initial benefits claim to be processed), this will be paid via the setting up home grant

4.5 Birthday gifts

- A gift and a contribution towards the cost of celebrations will be paid to you until your 21st birthday if you are in contact with us
 - £50 for your 17th, 19th and 20th birthdays
 - £100 for your 18th and 21st birthdays

4.6 Setting up home allowance

- You will receive up to £2,000 to help with getting essentials for your first home. The allowance is accessed as part of the planned process, alongside the Pathway Plan and is divided up as follows:
 - £1800 for furniture and appliances (this can include purchase of flooring/carpeting)
 - £150 for a TV licence (first year)
 - £50 basic essentials

4.7 Council Tax

- As a care leaver you will be exempt from paying council tax in Croydon until the age of 25. If you live outside of Croydon your council tax will be covered up to the equivalent band of a similar property type in Croydon.

4.8 Care leavers living outside of Croydon

- Your Personal Adviser will liaise with the local Care Leaver's Service to see

what opportunities could be available for you. This will be clearly stated in your Pathway Plan.

4.9 Moving in to a new home

- You will have help with costs of hiring a van or removal service
- You will receive assistance on your moving day from a Personal Adviser

4.10 Rent (until benefit in place)

- We have made an agreement that the Housing Service (both within Croydon and other areas) and Care Leavers Service will liaise with each other to avoid rent arrears where possible

4.11 Health

- We will pay travel for all care leavers to attend hospital appointments for non-routine health concerns, such as surgery
- You will receive a Health Passport upon turning 18, this will also include support with your emotional health
- You will be fully supported by your Personal Adviser to register with a GP, Dentist and Optician

4.12 Participation in Society

- We will support you to engage with your community and local activities such as religious groups, art groups, support groups, gyms, social groups, etc

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Initial consultation groups were led by the young people's participation worker with the care leavers outreach group, this led to a subsequent working group which comprised of ten care leavers. They have actively contributed to the development of this offer and are in agreement with its content.

6. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

- 6.1 This report was discussed by CYP Scrutiny Committee on the 6 July 2020. The cabinet considered the Croydon Offer and noted that the "Local Offer" was updated to continue to improve the Council support for Care Leavers and their experiences and outcomes. The outcome of the most recent Ofsted inspection was overall Good but the inspectors found that our support for Care Leavers is Requiring Improvement to be good. The draft recommendations to Cabinet were supported.
- 6.2 The proposed pledge was discussed at the Corporate Parenting Panel on 4th March 2020.

7 FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 The estimated financial impact of the proposed financial policy revision is £365k per annum and will be contained within the Early Help and Children's Social Care budget for 2020/21 and beyond.

Approved by Lisa Taylor, Director of Finance, Investment and Risk and S151 Officer

8. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The Head of Social Care and Education Law has commented on behalf of the Director of Law and Governance that there is significant legislation and statutory guidance which sets out the role of the Local Authority as the Corporate Parent in respect of children in care and care leavers, which includes the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the Children and Young Persons Act 2008.

Approved by Doutimi Aseh, Head of Social Care and Education Law on behalf of the Director of Law and Governance & Deputy Monitoring Officer

9. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 9.1 There are no direct human resources implications expected as a result of the development and implementation of this offer. The priorities and actions created to support its implementation are either already planned for, or will be supported through to delivery through creating a skilled and motivated workforce, aligned to [Croydon's Workforce Strategy](#),

Approved by: Nadine Maloney, Head of Human Resources Children, Families and Education on behalf of the Director of Human Resources

10 EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 10.1 An Equality Analysis was undertaken to ascertain the potential impacts on groups that share a protected characteristic.
- 10.2 No negative impact is identified, the Equality Analysis demonstrates that the policy evidence shows no potential for discrimination and that all opportunities to advance equality have been taken.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 11.1 There are no significant changes, increased or decreased environmental impacts in the following areas:
- Energy use and associated carbon dioxide emissions (e.g. new or refurbished building, purchase of IT equipment, increased vehicle movements etc.) The Council "Carbon Management Energy Efficiency Programme" (approved by Cabinet October 2010) set a target to reduce carbon emissions from the council's own operations by 25% over the next 5 years (compared to 2009/10 baseline).
 - Water use (e.g. new or refurbished building, parks and irrigation etc.)

- Use of natural resources (e.g. durability of products and materials, products made with recycled materials to offset raw material use, use of sustainable timber etc.)
- Pollution to air, land or water (e.g. air quality impact from increased vehicle use, use of paints, pesticides etc.)
- Waste (e.g. construction waste, disposal of surplus furniture, promotion of waste minimisation behaviour etc.)
- Transport - aside from the energy & air quality impacts of vehicle use, will the recommendation(s) increase vehicle congestion or promote other modes of transport (e.g. public transport, cycling, walking)?
- Biodiversity (e.g. loss or creation of habitats, street trees, parks etc.)

12. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

12.1 We know from research Care Leavers (nationally) are over-represented in the criminal justice system. This is impacted on by wider systemic factors

- *Those with experience of the care system are more likely to have experienced significant trauma and abuse and other disadvantage that can put them more at risk of violence, self harm and suicide when in prison. Many also have experiences of being failed by their corporate parents and can come to prison feeling extremely isolated and angry.* (Farmer Review, 2017)
- 27% of the prison population have spent some time in care, despite the fact that only 1% of under 18s enter Local Authority care annually (HM Prison and Probation service, 2019)
- Care leavers are more likely to be reconvicted or breached when they leave custody (MoJ, 2013).
- Unfortunately, research suggests that Care Leavers are far less likely to achieve well in education than their peers. In 2013, only 27% of children in care had achieved 5 GCSE's compared to 80% of non-looked after children (DfE, 2013). The impact of trauma and maltreatment in childhood (63% of children enter care as a result of abuse or neglect) places Care Leavers at risk of poor physical and mental health. It can also impact on their ability to self-regulate their feelings and behaviour. For many Care Leavers, their physical and mental health needs may not have been diagnosed or treated due to lack of support networks or regular placement moves. All of this can exacerbate an environment of disadvantage where Care Leavers can find it more difficult to find employment and find themselves in difficulty from exposure to and participation in criminal activity.

Our offer to care leavers seeks to increase opportunities for our young people that will increase their social capital and reduce societal disadvantage, exclusion and discrimination. Alongside emotional and relational support, practical measures such as assisting with driving lessons and providing Council based apprenticeship opportunities are viewed to be key to this. This approach also has direct links to the Public Health Model to reduce serious youth violence.

13. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 13.1 This revised Local Offer has been written drawing from examples of best practice of Local Authorities where Ofsted found an Outstanding offer to Care Leavers.

14. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

There are no issues around data protection.

- 14.1 **WILL THE SUBJECT OF THE REPORT INVOLVE THE PROCESSING OF 'PERSONAL DATA'?**

NO

- 14.2 **HAS A DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT (DPIA) BEEN COMPLETED?**

NO

Approved by Nick Pendry, Director Early Help and Children's Social Care

CONTACT OFFICER: Hannah Doughty , Head of Children Looked After and Care Leavers

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None