### Title: Local Offer for Care Leavers

#### Report of the Director of People and Resilience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Report</th>
<th>For Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wards Affected: All</td>
<td>Key Decision: No</td>
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| Accountable Director: April Bald, Operational Director, Children’s Care & Support |

| Accountable Strategic Leadership Director: Elaine Allegretti, Director of People and Resilience |

#### Summary

The Children & Social Work Act 2017 requires the Council to publish a ‘local offer’ of support and services that it makes available to children and young people leaving care. It also sets out seven principles that should inform the Council’s approach to its corporate parenting duties.

The local offer is based on both the guidance supporting the Act and the publication in December 2018 of the first Annual Report of the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers.

As part of the enhanced local offer development process, a number of key stakeholders including Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC), are being asked to consider as corporate parents and in some cases corporate grandparents **what do we want for our care leavers to support them to succeed in adulthood?** such as ensuring young people have a network of support they can turn to when they need help and advice.

In order to support OSC in this discussion, this report sets out:

- The statutory requirement (sections 1 and 2)
- The current local offer achievements so far (sections 3 and 4)
- Some examples of best practice (section 5)

On considering the above question, OSC are recommended to seek a further report in 6-9 months to review progress.

#### Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

(i) Receive a presentation at the meeting on work so far and best practice examples
1. Introduction and Background

The statutory requirement for care leaver offer

1.1 Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 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 are available to care leavers from the local authority, including information about both their statutory entitlements and any discretionary support that a local authority chooses to provide.

1.2 Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires local authorities to have regard to seven corporate parenting principles when discharging their functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those 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 the 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
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

2. Local Offer Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities

2.1 The local offer should set out what support all local authority departments and relevant partners will provide, having regard to the corporate parenting principles. The local offer should include details of the services and support that may assist care leavers in, or moving to, adulthood and independent living that the local authority provides in relation to:
• Health and wellbeing
• Relationships
• Education and training
• Employment
• Accommodation
• Participation in society

2.2 The Children and Social Work Act did not specify how soon after commencement of the duty the local offer should be published. However, the Government’s expectation was that the local offer should be available within six to nine months of commencement of the duty and LBBBD published its Local Offer to Care Leavers in October 2018.

2.3 After local authorities have published their local offer it should be reviewed regularly to ensure that the services on offer reflect what care leavers need most.

2.4 Local authorities can choose how regularly they review their local offer however, it should be updated at least every two to three years, following further consultation with care leavers.

2.5 The local offer should be easily available and accessible to all care leavers in the local authority area. Sections 3 and 4 of this report detail the current local offer and achievements so far.

3. **The current local offer for care leavers**

3.1 Young people report overall that they feel safe but want better preparation for independence and a clearer housing and employment support offer.

3.2 Following consultation with care leavers, the Local Offer to Care Leavers document was amended to reflect their comments and to ensure that it contained information that care leavers themselves had said that they wanted and needed to transition into adulthood and independent living. As such, a local offer was put together that covers health and wellbeing, relationships, education and training, employment, accommodation, participation in society as well as finance. The care leavers offer sets out the advice, care and support care leavers can expect from Children’s Care and Support Commissioning as well as from statutory and non-statutory local and national services.

3.3 The Local Offer to Care Leavers also contains useful links to support and advice services which should equip young people with the services they may require to transition smoothly from care to independent living.

3.4 The Chief Executive is leading further work to ensure the Local Offer is fit-for-purpose and capitalises on the benefits of the Council’s inclusive growth agenda and wider partner’s support, including delivery of our new duty of care for up to 25-year old care leavers.

3.5 Children’s Care and Support commissioning and operational teams are working together to ensure that the Local Offer to Care Leavers is available to all eligible young people in various formats, including as an App, on the council website, as a PDF and as a hard copy and in different languages as appropriate.
4 Local Offer to Care Leavers: Our achievements

Commissioning framework for semi-independent provision

4.1 Care leavers are supported in a range of external semi-independent provision which is subject to a Commissioned Framework, and includes shared houses rented from the private sector with bespoke support packages if required. The aims and achievements of the framework have been to:

- provide an appropriate, best-value service that delivers excellent outcomes for young people, and
- improve consistency in the quality of accommodation provided to young people to ensure an equitable position for all care leavers provided with accommodation and support.

Further and higher education achievements

4.2 We are proud of our care leavers in further and higher education. This academic year, 19 care leavers are at University and four care leavers graduated. 59% of care leavers were in employment, education or training (EET) at end of year 2017/18 and one care leaver was accepted to study Law at Oxford University.

4.3 There has been a significant focus on care leavers this year through two Member-Officer-led workshops on NEET led by the Lead Member and other key portfolio holders. One of the outcomes of the workshops was an additional weekly payment on top of apprenticeship salaries to enable young people to cope financially (now succeeded by the commitment to the London Living Wage).

Celebrating achievements

4.4 We have high aspirations for our care leavers and are committed to celebrating their achievements and ambitions. In October 2018, the 5th Leaving Care Awards ceremony was held and was very well attended by Members and the senior leadership team. 85 care leavers attended and awards covered achievements in formal qualifications, apprenticeships, volunteering, participation in groups and giving back to the community.

4.5 A new initiative took place over the last 12 months in partnership with Youth Reality Homes, a 16+ provider that works with our Leaving Care Service providing accommodation and support. A 2-week trip to Ghana was organised and four LBBD Care Leavers attended alongside other Care Leavers from Newham and Tower Hamlets to support Care Leavers to raise aspirations and broaden their horizons. The initiative was developed to address the limited opportunities available to ‘disadvantaged’ care leavers, to benefit from a ‘gap year’ experience – often enjoyed by young people from more affluent and stable backgrounds. The trip was a huge success, where seven young people travelled to Ghana to volunteer and learn more about the country and its heritage. It had a significant, positive and lifelong impact on their lives.
4.6 We have also had numerous professionals trained via ‘Total Respect’ training led by Care Leavers. A follow-on session is planned for Foster Carers. This has helped to foster a deeper understanding of what it is like to be a child in care. In addition, more care leavers are involved in influencing practice and service development, through involvement in the interviews for the recruitment of staff in the Leaving Care Service and quality assuring 16+ and 18+ supported provisions as part of a large-scale procurement exercise. Keeping in touch with our care leavers is good at 92%.

## 5 Best practice examples

5.1 Best practice examples will be used to evaluate the progress to be made locally on achieving the outcomes as set out in the legislation. Some best practice examples were highlighted in the recent National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers’ First Year Report and are summarised in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome 1: Better prepared and supported to live independently</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Every part of the council is thinking about how its services can be tailored so that care leavers get the support they need to achieve the best possible outcomes</td>
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<td>• Voice of care leavers is at the heart of the decision-making process and how their feedback is taken into account to subsequently improve the local offer</td>
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<td>• Pushy parents – “would this be good enough for my child?” – reflected in meetings and activities to ensure that care leavers develop the knowledge and skills to live independently; and have access to the practical and emotional support they need</td>
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<th>Outcome 2: Improved access to education, training and employment</th>
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<td>• Local authorities set ambitious targets for the number of care leavers who are in employment, education and training (EET)</td>
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<td>• Provide ring-fenced/supported opportunities in the Council and with local partners/businesses</td>
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<td>• Work closely with regeneration and community development teams in the Council to bring local businesses into the ‘corporate family’</td>
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<th>Outcome 3: Experiencing stability and feeling safe and secure</th>
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<td>• Focusing on housing and addressing the issue concerning London and the south east of the lack of availability and affordability of social housing</td>
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<td>• Promote Staying Put arrangements – when our care leavers choose to remain local</td>
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<td>• Strengthen supported accommodation frameworks</td>
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<th>Outcome 4: Improved access to health support for care leavers</th>
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<td>• Adopt a ‘favoured approach’ to care leavers, for example:</td>
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<td>• Stockport Borough Council has a mental health practitioner from the transitions team seconded to the leaving care team 2 days a week, providing a link between children’s and adult mental health services, consultation role to the leaving care staff, provides training and direct interventions</td>
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<td>• Fast track referrals to counselling for care leavers</td>
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Waltham Forest has a vision for commissioning and delivery of services including access to CAMHS up to age 25 as a mandatory expectation

**Outcome 5: Achieving financial stability**

- Ensure our Personal Advisers provide advice and support to help care leavers manage their money
- Invite colleagues from the finance directorate to attend sessions with care leavers to explore their understanding of managing money
- Offer council tax exemption to care leavers up to 25 years
- Consider putting a ceiling on housing benefit arrears to act as a marker so that housing benefit workers contact the respective leaving care worker to ensure the debt does not escalate to the point of debt recovery
- Support care leavers to access credit union accounts

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6. **Financial Implications**

Implications completed by Katherine Heffernan, Group Manager – Service Finance

There are no financial implications directly arising out of this report which concerns a review of our local offer for Care Leavers. However, the Committee should be aware that this service is an area of financial pressure for the Council as our funding levels have not kept pace with demographic and demand growth and there has not been significant new funding made available.

7. **Legal Implications**

Implications completed by: Lindsey Marks, Deputy Head of Legal Community

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 places a legal duty on local authorities to support young people making the transition from care to adulthood. Section 2 Children and Social Work Act 2017 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 that a local authority chooses to provide. Section 1 Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires local authorities to have regard to seven corporate parenting principles when discharging their functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers. The local offer should set out what support all local authority departments will provide (not just Children’s Services), having regard to the corporate parenting principles.

**Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:**


- National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers: first year report. Published by Department for Education, December 2018

List of Appendices: None