

## **The Vale of Glamorgan Council**

### **Cabinet Meeting: 6 February, 2017**

### **Report of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Social Care & Health**

#### **Support for Care Leavers**

##### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To advise Cabinet of correspondence from the Children's Commissioner regarding the need to improve the range and level of opportunities for care leavers.
2. To endorse meeting the support needs of care leavers as a corporate priority, as part of the Council's responsibility as a Corporate Parent.

##### **Recommendation**

1. That Cabinet notes the content of the letter from the Children's Commissioner and endorses as a corporate priority meeting the support needs of care leavers.

##### **Reason for the Recommendation**

1. To support the development of current and future initiatives to respond to the needs of care leavers.

##### **Background**

3. The Children's Commissioner for Wales, Sally Holland, has prioritised within her work programme the need to look at the support offered to care leavers during their transition from leaving care. This arose as a priority from her 'What Next? | Beth Nesa?' consultation during 2015 when she engaged with over 1,000 children in face-to-face meetings and received over 6,000 responses to the online survey. The Commissioner consulted further with care experienced young people from across Wales at two events during the summer of 2016 (to ask what is important to them in being able to access work or training opportunities within their own local authority) and again in October 2016 (to develop these themes and consider what could and should be offered to care leavers in order for them to succeed).
4. The Commissioner is clear that every child and young person in Wales should have an equal chance to be the best they can be but that too many care experienced young people have poor outcomes when they leave care. At the very least, she believes that every care leaver should have a suitable offer of housing to suit their needs and something constructive to do with their time such as education, work or

training as a collective means of giving stability to a young person at this point in their lives.

5. The Commissioner advocates that local authorities, as corporate parents for the children in their care, should offer work and training places to care leavers as any other parent would do within their own family firm.
6. To capture the work that is currently taking place in Wales, the Commissioner has issued a survey to each local authority that will help to map a baseline of the provision currently offered. She will then analyse against what young people have told her is important to them. Her ambition is that, by 2019, Wales will have made a measured increase in offering care experienced young people access to safe and secure housing options and an active offer of a job, education or training place.

## **Relevant Issues and Options**

7. To further discussion about what can be offered by every local authority that will ensure a consistent offer of support to all care leavers across Wales, the Commissioner intends to visit every local authority from March 2017. A copy of her letter to the Managing Director is attached at [Appendix 1](#). She will be looking for examples of best practice and seek commitment to a better offer for all care leavers.
8. With regard to the request of the Commissioner to meet, the Leader, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Social Care and Health, the Managing Director and senior officers from across the Council have confirmed their commitment to meeting for further dialogue. A date has been confirmed as 24th March 2017.
9. The letter from the Commissioner has been discussed at Corporate Parenting Panel who recommended that Cabinet should receive a report on the issue as soon as possible.
10. The Vale of Glamorgan Council takes very seriously its responsibilities to young people who have experienced local authority care. Its Corporate Strategy for Children and Young People who need Care and Support has been endorsed recently. It is attached at [Appendix 2](#).
11. Success in offering good support to care leavers involves bringing together the help the Council and its partners can provide in areas such as personal support, accommodation and education, training and employment. We are confident that this Council will be able to provide examples of excellent practice in these domains. For instance, young people who remain in education between the ages of 18 and 25 receive considerable help and do very well. However, we also know that care leavers continue to experience relatively poor outcomes, nationally and locally, in key areas of well-being.
12. An area in which we have done well is the very good range of accommodation options which the Council has for young people, especially those leaving care. However, there is a shortfall in our ability to meet, consistently, the accommodation needs of a small number of young people with especially complex needs. They can find it difficult to keep a tenancy and use the support available and so quickly exhaust the options we have. To meet this deficit, Social Services and Housing are working in partnership to develop a 24/7 supported accommodation option. The proposal will be the subject of a Cabinet report in January.
13. Social Services are also working with the Head of Human Resources to look at the existing arrangements to support Foundation Modern Apprenticeships (FMA) placements. We hope that these can be broadened to encompass more effectively a

targeted approach to care leavers. These arrangements have the potential to develop beyond the business support placements currently offered to include FMA opportunities in other areas of the Council's business/service delivery. This is part of the Council's strategy to increase youth employment opportunities - which also brings advantages to us as a Council, not least in succession planning.

14. The Vale of Glamorgan Youth Engagement and Progression Board comprising representatives from the Council, Careers Wales, Job Centre Plus, Cardiff and the Vale College and local training providers, ensures that the partnership's plans prioritise the identification of education, work or training opportunities for young people including those who are looked after. Schools utilise a vulnerability profile to identify at an early stage, young people who are most at risk of not being in education, employment or training (NEET) in the future. As part of an intervention process a multi-disciplinary panel meets in secondary schools termly to broker suitable provision to engage young people in training, apprenticeships or alternative and further education pathways. Working collaboratively with Careers Wales, the Council prioritises care leavers who are at risk of becoming NEET through the provision of a dedicated learning coach who provides one-to-one support to help them progress on to education employment or training. There is a need to improve the on-going tracking of care leavers after they leave school.
15. The Council's Adult Community Learning service (ACL) provides accreditation and course work for a range of targeted intervention projects and programmes. Improvements to curriculum planning over the past 3 years and high accreditation rates has made the progression from pre 16 learning programmes into post 16 ACL provision far easier for young people. Careers Wales sign post young people on to Get Back on Track and Vale Learning Centre programmes as an alternative pathway for young people, including care leavers, who are not ready or able to progress directly to further education.

### **Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)**

16. Responding to the needs of care leavers is a statutory responsibility and one that is shared across the Council. There are costs associated with these obligations whether in Children and Young People Services, Housing or Learning and Skills. The costs are currently being met from within existing budgets.

### **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

17. Providing and promoting opportunities for care leavers is key to them being able to achieve their full potential. Youth employment is recognised as a priority for the Council given its contribution to maintaining a sustainable workforce and to achieve a workforce age profile comparable with that of our Community.

### **Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)**

18. The Local Authority's duties to and the support for young people who have ceased to be 'looked after' by the Local Authority, which includes care leavers under the age of 18, care leavers aged 18 and over, and care leavers who reconnect to care at 21 for education and training are set out in the relevant sections of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 ("the Act") and The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (Wales) Regulations 2015 and the accompanying Codes of Practice.
19. The duty of the Local Authority to provide accommodation to children whose parents are not in a position to provide them with accommodation or care is contained in the

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The priority duty for the Local Authority to provide housing for homeless adults is given by Part VII of the Housing Act 1996. The Local Authority has further duties in assisting with accommodation in relation to those young people who have been looked after but are no longer looked after under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014.

### **Crime and Disorder Implications**

20. Creating opportunities that promote the well-being and potential of care leavers increases the chances of individuals making a valuable contribution to society and reduces the likelihood of crime as a means of survival.

### **Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)**

21. Providing and promoting equal opportunities to this often disadvantaged group is a corporate responsibility. It is essential the support is inclusive and accessible to young people with additional needs, such as learning disabilities, mental or physical ill health, dependence on substances etc.
22. Ensuring that young people are assessed as individuals, with their unique strengths recognised, engage as partners in identifying those areas where they need help and support, and have a service tailored to meet their assessed needs is an absolute necessity.

### **Corporate/Service Objectives**

23. This report is consistent with the following Corporate and Service Objectives of the Council:
  - Young people in care or leaving care have access to training, learning, job skills and apprenticeship opportunities available in the Council or its partnership networks.
  - To ensure that people have access to comprehensive information about Social Services and other forms of help and support, and are appropriately signposted to help and supported by proportionate assessments, care and support plans, and services which meet their individual assessed needs.
  - Develop opportunities for employment and training through new developments, regeneration schemes and the management of the Council's assets.
  - Increase the learning opportunities for disadvantaged individuals and vulnerable families.
  - Reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training.
  - Improve outcomes for post 16 learners through greater cooperation between schools, training providers and businesses.
  - Provide appropriate accommodation and support services for particular vulnerable groups.

### **Policy Framework and Budget**

24. This approach is in line with the requirements of the Council's Corporate Strategy for Children and Young People who need Care and Support.

## **Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)**

25. Corporate Parenting Panel and the following response was received from Councillor Traherne:-

- It is reassuring to note the 'corporate efforts' of the Council to meet the needs of 'care leavers' but I am not necessarily convinced that these measures alone are sufficient to ensure that young people leaving care have the same life chances as other young people. It is a fact that in Quarter 2 the percentage of care leavers who were in education, training or employment 24 months after leaving care was only 43.75%. We should be able to do much better and I would have hoped to have seen something a little more radical in this report to address this unsatisfactory performance. I think it is absolutely vital that there is no further delay in the implementation of the Corporate Strategy for Children Who Need Care and Support. This is an excellent document and the Action Plan should be implemented in full and as soon as possible. If this is effected and there is 'corporate desire' to really support the various initiatives; then I believe that there is an opportunity to improve the life chances of young people leaving care here in the Vale of Glamorgan.

26. The following response was received from Councillor Bertin:-

- 'A good Corporate Parent should have the same aspirations for a child in care or a care leaver as if it was their own.' I am pleased to see that we are supporting families to stay together, wherever it is safe to do so and reduce the need for children to be looked after by ensuring a focus on early intervention and prevention.

## **Relevant Scrutiny Committee**

27. All Scrutiny Committees across the Council

## **Background Papers**

None

## **Contact Officers**

Rachel Evans, Head of Children and Young People Services  
David Davies, Head of Service, Learning and Skills  
Adrian Unsworth, Operational Manager, Human Resources  
Mike Ingram, Operational Manager, Housing

## **Officers Consulted**

Corporate Strategy for Children in need of Care and Support Management Group  
Corporate Management Team

## **Responsible Officer**

Rob Thomas, Managing Director and Resources