



Corporate Parenting Committee
24 July 2019

**Report from the Strategic Director
of Children and Young People**

Brent's Local Offer for Care Leavers 2018-2020: a year on

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	3 Appendices
Background Papers:	N/A
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1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the progress of the Brent Local Offer to Care Leavers during the period from 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019 and seek approval from the Corporate Parenting Committee regarding Brent's reviewed Local Offer for care leavers for 2019/20.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to review and note the content of this report and provide support and challenge to the service area in their pursuit to achieve the best outcomes for Brent's care leavers.

2.2 The Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to approve Brent's reviewed local offer, presented in appendix 1.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Brent's first Local Offer to Care Leavers was presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee on 7th February 2018, following the Children and Social Work Act 2017 (Section 2 of the Act) introducing a new obligation for local authorities to publish a local offer for care leavers to include their support and guidance to care leavers.
- 3.2 Following approval from the Committee, the Local Offer was then presented to Cabinet for approval as the offer included council tax exemption for Brent's care leavers. The Cabinet unanimously approved the offer which was then signed off by the Lead Member for children and young people before being put in place as of 1st April 2018.
- 3.3 Brent's Local Offer to care leavers was one of the first published in the country. Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which came into force on 1st April 2018, allowed local authorities to have another year before publishing their local offers. However, in order to meet our statutory duty, Brent consulted with senior leaders in the Council, members of staff, partners and most importantly young people in the development of the local offer well before the DfE guideline of publishing the offer by 1 January 2019. Brent's Local Offer was co-produced with young people; 119 care leavers participated in a consultation process which included face to face dialogue, workshops and a questionnaire.
- 3.4 DfE guidance suggests that it would "expect the local offer to be reviewed every 2-3 years", although this was not "prescriptive", it would be for the local authorities to decide. Senior leaders in Brent made a decision for the progress of the local offer to be reviewed on an annual basis with the view to revise it on a two yearly cycle. In this way, care leavers' needs will be kept on the agenda annually.

4.0 Impact of Brent's Offer to Care Leavers in 2018/19

- 4.1 Between May and June 2018, Brent's Children's Services were inspected by Ofsted as part of their Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services. The inspection report was published¹ in July 2018. The inspection judged overall effectiveness of services provided to children and families as 'good' and experience and progress of looked after children and care leavers 'outstanding'.
- 4.2 Although, the Inspection did not specifically comment on Brent's local offer, the quotes below from the Inspection report highlight the strength of support and services offered to care leavers by Brent, as their corporate parent:

- *"The care for children and care leavers is outstanding..."*

¹ For Ofsted's full report visit <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80489>

- *“Corporate parenting is a real strength for the local authority. There is a strong focus on achieving positive outcomes for children in care and care leavers...”*
- *“Care leavers now benefit from a service and staff that greatly invest in relationships with young people. Staff value the importance of these relationships and nurture them well. Care leavers are surrounded by strong support networks, and barriers to their progress are overcome by the committed and tenacious staff group. Increased resources and manageable reduced caseloads enable this to happen.”*

4.3 Brent’s Local Offer to care leavers included statutory support and guidance the Local Authority must provide and additional support offered with partner agencies.

4.4 Brent has fulfilled all its statutory duties to care leavers as set out in the Local Offer:

- i. Allocation of personal advisors to care leavers: all of our care leavers had an allocated personal advisor. As of 31 March 2019 there were 317 care leavers.
- ii. Pathway plans for young people: all care leavers were provided with a pathway plan when statutorily required and the majority of them were reviewed on a six monthly basis. Some care leavers who did not have a pathway plan review were young people who were deported, or did not wish to have a leaving care service.
- iii. Higher education bursary: all care leavers at university have been offered a bursary of £2,000.
- iv. Providing accommodation to care leavers in higher education during holidays: All care leavers in higher education or in residential further education were provided either with accommodation or reasonable funding when they made their own arrangements during school holidays
- v. Providing accommodation: all young people were offered suitable accommodation as per their needs. Young people who were in foster care were provided with the choice of ‘staying put’ with their foster carer or moving to supported accommodation where they were offered weekly sessions to improve their independent life skills. No care leaver had a breakdown of tenancy or became intentionally homeless.
- vi. Financial support: as per statutory requirements, all care leavers were offered an assessment of need when required and they received financial assistance towards expenses related to education, employment and training. They were also supported to access other sources of funding such as college or university funds or from the Department of Work and Pensions.

5.0 Additional Support Offered under the Local Offer

i. Education, Employment and Training: The Local Offer had 9 discretionary commitments; 7 were fully met, 2 partly met. An outline of some of the offers achieved are set out below:

- A staff member from Department of Works and Pensions was seconded into leaving care teams.
- A celebration event for care leavers' achievement was organised with participation of over 70 care leavers. Care leavers' feedback from the event was very positive. An extract from an email sent to the Strategic Director, Children and Young People by a care leaver is as follows:

"...I want to thank you and everyone involved in putting together the event; it was filled with warmth, positivity, and not to mention the delicious food! I've never felt truly cared about in a long time."

There were two offers that were partly met:

- The apprenticeship scheme for care leavers: 10 ring-fenced apprenticeships were offered within Brent's local offer, either directly by the Council or arranged by the Council. There are 3 young people who have successfully secured apprenticeships within the council; a further 5 identified apprenticeships due to commence in 3rd quarter of this financial year. Work is on-going to increase the number of care leavers in apprenticeships.
 - The other partly met offer was a traineeship programme for care leavers who are not in employment or education 'NEET'. Although this was offered, it did not start due to the low take up of students. An accredited life skills programme is under development for care leavers, which will provide further support in this area.
- ii. Accommodation: there were 9 additional support offers which were all met. Some of the examples were:
- 3 workshops were put in place during the course of the last financial year to support care leavers in maintaining a tenancy.
 - No care leaver was made intentionally homeless. Care leavers were either supported with managing their tenancy through a payment plan where we paid a part payment to secure their tenancy or offered an alternative housing option through the housing needs support team.
 - Care leavers were provided with a 'setting up home allowance' of £2,000.
- iii. Health and Wellbeing: under this offer, 6 were delivered; some of those included:

- Safe Base, therapeutic telephone line for care leavers has been well-used by care leavers.
- Support provided to register with a GP
- Care leavers were provided with a summary of their health records at their last Health Review prior to their 18th Birthday.

2 offers were partly delivered:

- ‘Staying Healthy’ sessions were not delivered due to the lack of provider availability. This issue was escalated to the Public Health Commissioning Service to address with the commissioned providers. As a result ‘Staying Healthy’ workshops are being put in place this year. Separately, personal advisors offered advice and signposted young people to services that offered health and wellbeing advice.
- Theatre tickets offered to care leavers by the Kiln Theatre were not fully taken up by care leavers. More work is underway to promote and encourage care leavers to utilise this offer.

iv. Finances: there were 7 additional commitments under this title and all of those were offered. Some of the successes were as below:

- 30 young people were supported via being made exempt from council tax included those residing in another borough.
- Provision of workshops on ‘money management and budgeting
- Support to open a bank account
- Support to obtain identification documents such as passport, provisional driving licence prior to 18th Birthday

v. Relationships: 8 commitments were made as additional support under relationships: 4 were fully met and 4 were partly met. Some of the delivered commitments are below:

- Life skills programmes have been delivered by placement providers and foster carers.
- Therapeutic group work (called Tree of Life) with care leavers. Even though a small number of care leavers attended these sessions provided by a clinical psychologist from Brent Emotional Wellbeing Team, this was a successful start. 2 of those care leavers are willing to participate in delivery of further workshops. Feedback below demonstrates the positive impact of the sessions:

“...The thing that I felt was good about doing this was actually remembering that I have people who care about me who will never leave my side and will always guide me.”

“...They [people around me] never gave up on me.”

Some of the partly delivered commitments were as below:

- Even though the planning process has started, group work for young parents could not be delivered in 2018/19 due to lack of capacity. A project proposal was submitted for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in the last quarter of 2018/19 for funding to enable delivery of group work with care leavers and older looked after children. This has been successful and will enable delivery of the group work activity in 2019/20.
 - Similarly, workshops for care leavers with special educational needs and disabilities are underway to be delivered in 2019/20.
- vi. Participation in Society: 7 commitments were made under participation in society. 6 were offered and 1 will be offered in 2019/20. Some of the offered commitments are as below:
- Provision of seats in Brent Youth Parliament
 - Encouragement and support for enrolment on electoral register
 - Providing information about voluntary work, clubs or groups.

One commitment, that will be delivered in 2019/20, is the workshop led by the Chief Executive Officer around participation in society.

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 The Looked After Children and Permanency service overspent by £1.1m (approx. £230k salary and £870k non-salary costs) against a budget of £5.8m in 2018-19. The service budget is supported by the general fund and £0.1m of government grant. A significant part of the non-salary overspend was attributable to the statutory and discretionary spend on looked after children and care leavers.
- 6.2 The detailed causes of this overspend were reviewed with the conclusion that the service budget has been increased by an additional £0.7m in 2019-20 to alleviate the demand led pressures in the service - including an increasing number of care leavers requiring support.
- 6.3 Appendix 1 details the offer to care leavers including the maximum amounts of support for each area of spend. The service will need to continue to carefully manage this spend within their overall service budget.

7.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: Local Offer to care leavers for 2018/2020 (Draft)
Appendix 2: Brent's Pledge for Children in Care
Appendix 3: Brent's Care Leaver's Charter

Report sign off:

GAIL TOLLEY

Strategic Director of Children and Young People