

	<b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b> 21 October 2020
	<b>Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People</b>
<b>Update on Support Provided to Care Leavers During the Covid-19 Pandemic</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	N/A
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	0
<b>Background Papers:</b>	N/A
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Onder Beter, Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency Onder.Beter@brent.gov.uk  Nigel Chapman Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes Nigel.Chapman@brent.gov.uk

## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 A previous report on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on care leavers and the corporate parenting support that had been provided was presented to the Committee in July 2020.
- 1.2 Further restrictions on social movement were introduced in September 2020. In light of the impact of isolation and loneliness on care leavers (reported to the Committee in July 2020), the Statutory Lead Member for Children and Young People requested an update to be presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee in October 2020 about the support provided to care leavers.

## 2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to review and comment on the content of this report.

### **3.0 Support Provided to Care Leavers since August 2020**

- 3.1. In August 2020, Brent increased the weekly subsistence allowance for older children in semi-independent placements and eligible care leavers by £20 per week in line with the increase in Universal Credit. This change has been made until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 when it will be reviewed by the Council. This has been welcomed by young people, who fed back to Personal Advisors about the positive impact this additional financial support has had on their lives.
- 3.2. The enrichment programme has continued for care leavers throughout the pandemic. On 28<sup>th</sup> August, the Care Leavers Hub Events Committee organised a socially distanced visit to Crazy Golf, which 4 young people attended. Brent financially supported one young person to travel down from Manchester to be part of this.
- 3.3. The Care Leavers in Action (CLIA) group has continued with face to face meetings. On Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020, a face-to-face CLIA session was held in the Civic Centre. The group of nine young people managed the new social distancing rules very well throughout the session, which was also attended by the Strategic Director, CYP. The group worked on a health guide for care leavers, prepared by colleagues from the Clinical Commissioning Group and LAC Health Team. The group also worked on revising the Brent Care Leavers' Charter before going for a meal together. Another face-to-face session has been planned to take place on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2020.
- 3.4. As part of Brent's strategic alliance with Barnardo's to increase positive destinations for care leavers, Barnardo's have been running relevant activities since July 2020. For example, a group of care leavers attended a camping trip in September 2020 for a long weekend in Herefordshire, involving outside activities such as paintballing and quad biking. Four young people attended this activity which focused on team building skills, patience, resilience, motivation and confidence building among young people.
- 3.5. Barnardo's also held a workshop with young people called Pizza and Privilege including a discussion about race and the Black Lives Matter movement.
- 3.6. One care leaver shared their experience of another camping trip she had been on with a charity called 'Under the Sky', via the WhatsApp group, which led to a further 4 care leavers signing up to take part, all of whom greatly enjoyed the experience.
- 3.7. National Care Leavers' Week 2020 is taking place between 26<sup>th</sup> October and 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020. The week is an opportunity to showcase and celebrate the successes of care leavers nationally and also raise awareness of care experienced young people. The Leaving Care Teams are currently identifying young people to take part in the next Element Programme which will begin during National Care Leavers' week. Element is a charity providing workshops to care leavers using arts and crafts enabling young people to express themselves, enhance self-esteem and confidence and build networks of support. A number of young people from the Hub group have requested to join the programme alongside a number of other referrals from Personal Advisors.
- 3.8. A new programme to support young people into employment has also started including a 'Seeking employment' WhatsApp group. The group focuses on inspiring care leavers seeking employment to come forward and be supported to take the next step. There are 40 young people in the group. More recently, 4 care leavers have been interviewed for Level 3 IT and HR apprenticeship opportunities. 3 of them were shortlisted for the second round with final outcomes not yet known. Another young person was

interviewed in the second week of October 2020 for a year-long paid placement as a production runner in a top London advertising agency. Jobs are being posted every day and the Prospects advisors (Brent's commissioned provider supporting young people who are NEET) are part of the group, supporting young people with their CV and interview skills.

- 3.9. Brent currently has 43 care leavers in higher education. They have all been provided with the necessary support at the beginning of the academic year as follows:
- Making therapeutic support available through Safe-Base Brent
  - Regular contact and support from allocated Personal Advisors
  - IT support with dongles, laptops and Wi-Fi costs where necessary. One young person was recently provided with a printer to support with coursework.
  - Support with travel back to Staying Put placements or home at weekends when needed
  - Three young people are in student halls and are contacted regularly by Personal Advisors.
- 3.10. In the event of local lockdowns, young people will continue to have FaceTime visits, be offered any therapeutic support they might need and explore accommodation options if they need to return to London.
- 3.11. Since the end of September 2020, Personal Advisors have started to undertake face-to-face visits to see care leavers. This is the first time visits to care leavers have been carried out face to face for all young people. A small minority of visits are being conducted online following a risk assessment in each case that suggests a Covid-19 related reason that prevents a face to face visit.

#### **4.0. Actions going forward**

- 4.1. As outlined at the Committee in July 2020, the weekly subsistence allowance has increased CYP budget costs by approximately £100,000. Should the government decide to continue with the same rate of Universal Credit allowances post 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, CYP leaders will consider reviewing these arrangements. This would however, create an unfunded pressure on the CYP budget.