

	<b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b> <b>14 October 2024</b>
	<b>Report from Director, Early Help and Social Care</b>
	<b>Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools - Cllr Gwen Grahl</b>
<b>Brent Care Leavers Local Offer 2024 - 2027</b>	

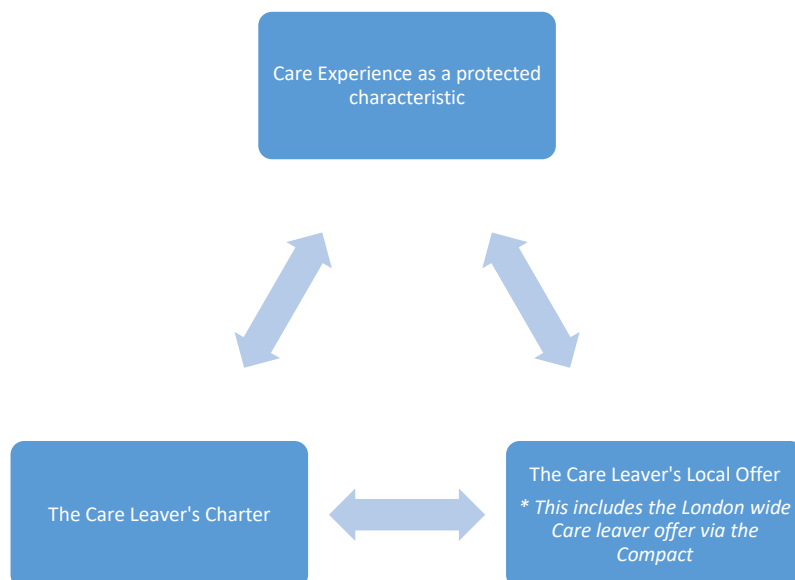
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	ALL
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	N/A
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
<b>List of Appendices:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Care Leaver Local Offer</li> <li>2. Care Leaver Local Offer- Design Draft</li> <li>3. Care Leaver Charter</li> </ol>
<b>Background Papers:</b>	N/A
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> (Name, Title, Contact Details)	<p>Afzal Ahmed  Service Manager for Leaving Care  <a href="mailto:Afzal.ahmed@brent.gov.uk">Afzal.ahmed@brent.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Kelli Eboji  Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency  <a href="mailto:Kelli.eboji@brent.gov.uk">Kelli.eboji@brent.gov.uk</a></p>

## 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report informs Corporate Parenting Committee (CPC) of the updated Local Offer to Care Leavers. The Local Authority are required to consult on, and produce, a Local Offer for its Care Leavers, under Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The Local Offer provides information about services and support available to Care Leavers from the local authority, including information about both statutory entitlements as well as any discretionary support that a local authority chooses to provide.
- 1.2 Our Care Leaver Local Offer has been in place since 2018 when it was first published, and then refreshed in 2022. This is the second refresh of our Local Offer.

- 1.3 Our Local Offer for care leavers works hand in hand with our Care Leavers Charter which provides commitment to care leavers and outlines the expectations young people can have when we work with them. The Charter has also been updated and is presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee as an appendix to this report.
- 1.4 Care as protected characteristic is a live discussion for Corporate Parenting Committee currently and introducing this would provide an overarching principle, ensuring that care experienced children and young people are not discriminated against.
- 1.5 There is a clear relationship between these three elements, the Local Offer, Charter and Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic. The monitoring of the offer and charter will in turn provide a mechanism for reviewing the effectiveness of care as protected characteristic. This relationship is depicted in Graph 1 below.

**Graph 1**



## **2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 To review and note the contents of this report and to endorse the updated Care Leavers Local Offer (Appendix 1) and the work undertaken to date to ensure that the local authority and partners are effective corporate parents.

## **3.0 Detail**

### **3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities and Strategic Context**

- 3.1.1 This activity contributes to all five Borough priorities, by reviewing and refreshing our Care Leavers Local Offer we are ensuring that our looked after

children and care leavers receive the fullest support and opportunity available from their corporate parents.

### **The Best Start in Life**

Aligned to the borough plan priority for parents, children and young people to get the best start in life, the local offer aims to ensure that care leavers receive the support they need, when they need it, particularly at the important point of transition to adulthood.

### **Prosperity and Stability**

The Local Offer aims to tackle inequality and disproportionality for care experienced young people in London by creating a consistent response across local authority areas.

### **A Healthier Brent**

In order for care experienced young people to have good health outcomes social determinants of health such as inequalities in housing, employment and income must be addressed. The Local Offer aims to address these inequalities.

### **A Cleaner, Greener Future**

The Local Offer includes areas such as public transport travel which contributes to this priority.

### **Thriving Communities**

In order for our care experienced young people to thrive and actively engage within their community, they require a whole council response to ensure that their needs are met. This Local Offer, alongside the Charter, represents Brent Council's commitment to these young people in line with our Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

## **3.2 Looked after Children and Care Leavers**

3.2.1 The term 'looked after' refers to any child or young person for whom the local authority has, or shares, parental responsibility, or for whom we provide care and accommodation on behalf of their parent. The term "child" can refer to any child or young person aged 0 to 18 years. The Council also has a duty and responsibility to those young people who leave their long-term care from the age of 18 years until they reach the age of 21, or 25 if they are in further or higher education. One of the key changes in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 is that the duty and responsibility to all care leavers is extended to 25 regardless of their education or employment status.

3.2.2 As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, Brent was responsible for 564 care leavers of which 134 were aged between 22 and 25.

## **4.0 Brent Local Offer**

4.1 This report proposes a revised Brent Local Offer for Care Leavers. Sections 1 to 3 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires every Local Authority to consult on and publish a Local Offer for Care Leavers. For clarity, a care leaver is a young person aged 16-25 years old who has been 'looked after' at some point since they were 14 years old and were in care on or after their

16th birthday. Once approved by the CPC, the Care Leavers Local Offer will be published on the Brent website and updated on an ongoing basis.

- 4.2 The Local Offer provides information about what services and support are available to all Brent Care Leavers from all partner agencies. It also provides information about what financial support is available to Care Leavers. It is a statutory requirement for all Local Authorities to provide a Local Offer for Care Leavers and to review this on a regular basis, which we are committed to every 3 years.
- 4.3 Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires Brent to publish information about:
- Services that Brent offers to care leavers.
  - Any other service Brent offers that may assist care leavers in preparing for adulthood and independent living. This includes services relating to health and well-being, relationships, education & training, employment, and participation in society.
- 4.4 The main changes in the revised local offer, including the commitments made as part of the Care Leavers Compact, are as follows:
- All eligible care leavers will be able to apply for the Digital Resident Support Fund for a device and 12-month free fibre connectivity in their home.
  - All eligible care leavers claiming universal credit will be able to apply for free internet access from TalkTalk (internet provider).
  - Our current work with Grandmentors will expand to recruit mentors from within the Council to offer mentorship to our care leavers this could be as simple as help with their CV, or support if they move to their own tenancy, or more intensive mentoring over a longer period.
  - We will offer a rent deposit scheme to care leavers for whom private rented accommodation is assessed as a suitable option.
  - Care leavers can apply for half price bus and tram travel, we will pay the difference if the young person is in education, employment, or training.
  - Statutory guidance requires local authorities to provide a leaving care allowance, to enable care leavers to purchase essentials (such as furniture, white goods and carpets/curtains) when they move into their first home. The allowance has been increased to £3000 for care leavers, or £3250 if you are a care leaver and single parent.
  - festival and birthday allowances will rise in line with similar London local authorities.
- 4.5 To ensure that high quality services are offered, the proposed offer has been compared with neighbouring London local authorities. This confirms that the proposed offer to Brent Care Leavers is appropriate, in line with comparable neighbours and that it meets the needs of our Care Leavers, supporting them towards independence.

## **5.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement**

- 5.1 The development of this Local Offer has involved teams within the local authority and health partners. In April 2024, council services came together in the Senior Management Group (SMG) to review the current local offer. The SMG sessions were planned and co-produced with care experienced young people and Brent Care Journeys. There was also online consultation questionnaire which was launched in January 2024 to get views from care leavers over 76 responses were received about the local offer. We also carried out focus groups with young people including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC), young people leaving custody and young parents.
- 5.2 The session with SMG in April did not result in many immediate, tangible offers for care leavers, however it was a well-received session that raised senior leaders understanding regarding their corporate parenting responsibilities for care experienced young people and generated a lot of discussion and ideas. Immediately following this session colleagues from the Brent Communication Team reached out and supported the service to initiate a WhatsApp Channel for Care Leavers which will allow the service to “push” information out to all young people who are signed up to the group. Currently we have approximately 100 young people in this group, with incentives being provided to encourage all care leavers to join. This has and will continue to address one of our primary concerns about communicating the Local Offer and other information with care leavers in a consistent, fair and transparent way. We were also able to immediately start working with Brent Transformation team to access the Brent Resident Fund for care leaver access to laptops/tablets and free Wi-Fi.
- 5.3 Other areas of future potential offers are still being discussed and developed following ongoing engagement with young people:
- Prioritise social value outcomes from our commissioning contracts to create jobs/training for our care leavers
  - Reserving placements for care leavers on graduate training
  - Extending the current Brent Resident Fund pilot to include mobile phones/laptops to care leavers
  - Brent staff mentors for care leavers
- 5.4 The key message from the online consultation was that young people were most concerned about finding the right accommodation and finding the right job followed by rising cost of living. They wanted to know about the Local Offer through the council website, by email, or from their Personal Advisor.
- 5.5 Young people requested an “easy to read” document, in a simple format and it be available in young people’s spoken language (offer will be available in a range of dialects).
- 5.6 This revised and updated version of the Care Leavers Local Offer will be simplified, condensed, and will outline all the services available to Brent Care Leavers, including financial support. A draft version is attached as Appendix 2.

5.7 It is proposed that the updated Brent Leaver Local Offer will be published on the Council's website and sent to all Brent Care Leavers through the Brent Care Leavers WhatsApp channel.

## **6.0 Pan London Care Leavers Compact**

6.1 A report was presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee on the 16 October 2023 on our progress made against the compact. The Council endorsed the adoption of the Compact and supports its implementation across the council. The commitments made via the Compact have been incorporated into the revised Local Offer.

## **7.0 Brent Care Leavers Charter**

7.1 The Charter for Care Leavers is designed to raise expectation, aspiration and understanding of what care leavers need and what local authorities should do to be good Corporate Parents. The Brent Care Leavers Charter has been updated in line with the Brent Local Offer and the final design of the Charter will be completed in partnership with young people during this current quarter. Content of the updated Charter can be found at Appendix 3.

## **8.0 Financial Considerations**

8.1 The only new additional commitment is the small increase in the holiday/birthday allowance included in paragraph 4.5. This will be funded from the Leaving Care budgets and managed as part of the annual inflationary allowances.

## **9.0 Legal Considerations**

9.1 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 makes provisions concerning looked after children and Care Leavers to improve support to promote their welfare and safeguarding.

## **10.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations**

10.1 The Local Offer contributes to our Corporate Parenting responsibilities to care experienced young people, ensuring that they are not further disadvantaged because of their adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and have the best opportunity to succeed in all aspects of their adult lives.

## **11.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations**

11.1 At this stage there are no climate change or environmental considerations.

## **12.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)**

12.1 At this stage there are no human resource or property considerations.

## **13.0 Communication Considerations**

13.1 At this stage there are not any communication considerations.

**Report sign off:**

***Nigel Chapman***

Corporate Director Children and Young People