



**COUNCILLOR
TOM USHER**

**CABINET
MONDAY 24 JUNE 2019**

**WIRRAL'S LOCAL OFFER FOR CARE
LEAVERS**

Councillor Tom Usher said:

"We're committed to making sure vulnerable young people get the best possible support. Protecting the vulnerable is our biggest and most important responsibility.

"The Local Offer for care leavers is about making sure every person who leaves our care knows exactly what support is available to them. They know what they can get, and where they can get it, and they're encouraged to take advantage of the help that is there for them.

"Making sure these young people are supported is vital. They deserve the best start in life, and the best possible chance to build a career and achieve their ambitions."

REPORT SUMMARY

Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires Wirral to consult on and publish a local offer for our 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.

During 2018; with the involvement of the Wirral Children in Care and Care Leavers Council; a working group consisting of Wirral Leaving Care Service staff, the Young People's Involvement Service and the Learning Skills and Education Team met regularly to discuss Wirral's Local Offer for Care Leavers.

This groundwork led to a very successful Conference in November 2018 at the Floral Pavilion, New Brighton focusing on Wirral's Local Offer for Care Leavers. The Conference was hosted and attended by Wirral Care Leavers, staff from across Wirral Council, its partner agencies, Health, Education, Housing, the charity sector and business. The emphasis was very much on what can Wirral as a whole community do to support Wirral Care Leavers. The Conference included presentations from young people and other contributors; and ended with people being asked to make a pledge about how they might improve the lived experience, opportunities and support for Wirral Care Leavers.

Since the conference Wirral's first Local Offer for Care Leavers has been drafted and been shared with the Wirral Children in Care and Care Leaver's Council; and is now being presented to Cabinet for consideration and permission to publish.

The decision supports the children pledges in the Wirral Plan 2020 with specific focus on supporting vulnerable children.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough and is a Key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- Accept and authorise publication of the Wirral Local Offer for Care Leavers.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires Wirral to consult on and publish a local offer for care leavers.
- 1.2 The document with this report as an appendix outlines to Wirral Care Leavers, and other relevant parties, what Care Leavers are entitled to and what type of support will be available to them.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The offer is a requirement for the local authority so there is no option not to have an offer. The options as to what the offer contains were considered during the engagement process.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires Wirral to consult on and publish a local offer for our 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.
- 3.2 Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires Wirral 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.
- 3.3 The Wirral Local Offer for Care Leavers attached as an appendix includes 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:

This will include services that teach about, support and enable good health and wellbeing. It should include links to, or information about, universal health services that might be particularly relevant to care leavers, as well as specific health and wellbeing services targeted at them.

- Relationships:

Having strong and supportive relationships is crucially important for care leavers as they move to independent adult life. The Local Offer document considers the services and support that is available to help care leavers develop and maintain positive social networks and to understand what positive relationships look like.

- Education and training:

Care leavers should be supported to access appropriate education or training that will enable them to fulfil their goals. This includes the statutory support available to care leavers, such as the £2,000 bursary for care leavers in Higher Education, as well as any other support from the local authority; and signpost to universal information such as careers advice and financial support for young people.

- Employment:

This includes information to care leavers about general employment support, such as careers support and links to local Job Centre Plus. Local authorities should also include any other employment support that they or partners deliver that is specifically available to care leavers, for example, any apprenticeships that the local authority offers, in particular where such opportunities are ring-fenced for care leavers.

- Accommodation:

Care leavers should be supported to access appropriate and suitable accommodation. The Wirral Local Offer for Care Leavers includes relevant information about their Staying Put policy, the support available from Housing Services and any other assistance that is available to care leavers, such as advice on maintaining a tenancy.

- Participation in society:

This includes links to and information about activities, events or volunteering opportunities available in the local area that care leavers can get involved in.

- 3.4 In developing the Wirral local offer, there has been consultation with relevant persons, which means care leavers and organisations or people that represent care leavers. Work has been undertaken with their care leavers to co-produce a local offer that is meaningful and reflects the needs, views and wishes of the care leavers they are responsible for. Personal Advisers have also been seeking the views and ideas of the care leavers that they support and work with on a regular basis.
- 3.5 The local offer will be easily available and accessible to all care leavers in the local authority area. It may be made available in a number of formats including printed hard copies, online digital copies and in different languages as appropriate. It is also expected that Personal Advisers will share and promote the local offer with the care leavers they work with and to make sure they are aware of it and the services they are entitled to. It will also be important to consider how the local offer is made available to, and is easily understood by, care leavers with additional needs.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Wirral Council's Local Offer for Care Leavers has been developed by staff within their existing posts at no additional staffing cost.
- 4.2 Wirral Council's Local Offer for Care Leavers Conference 2018 cost approximately £1,200.00

- 4.3 All services and financial support contained within the Wirral Local Offer for Care Leavers are currently agreed and funded.

This report does not seek any new funding.

Publication of Wirral Council's Local Offer for Care Leavers will be mainly electronic with limited hard copies as required. It is anticipated this will incur only minimal reproduction costs.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 By publishing Wirral's Local Offer for Care Leavers, Wirral Council will comply with its duty under Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

- 6.1 No additional costs.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Ofsted have requested a copy of Wirral's Local Offer for Care Leavers.

Publication has taken longer than anticipated but Wirral has staged a successful consultation event.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Wirral Children in Care and Care Leavers Council have been consulted throughout the development of the Local Offer for Care Leavers. In November 2018 Wirral facilitated a Conference to consult on the Local Offer for Care Leavers; which was hosted and attended by Wirral Care Leavers. Staff and organisations from throughout Wirral and beyond, from both the public, charity and private sector attended. This was a very successful event which helped to clarify thinking around what Wirral Local Offer Care Leavers should include.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Wirral Council's Local Offer for Care Leavers seeks to be positively inclusive and treat all young people with dignity and respect.

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APPENDICES

Wirral Local Offer for Care Leavers

REFERENCE MATERIAL

- 1) Children & Social Work Act 2017
- 2) Local Offer Guidance – Guidance for Local Authorities - DfE
- 3) A Local Offer for Care Leavers – The Children’s Society
- 4) Applying Corporate Parenting Principles to Looked After Children & Care Leavers - DfE

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date