

Corporate Parenting Panel

Care Leaver and Asylum Local Offer Update

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 Discussions to be had with the Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board to progress conversations around free prescriptions for care leavers.
- 1.2 For the other recommendations raised from the West Midlands ADCS challenge meeting to be considered and discussed with relevant organisations and people.

2. Executive Summary

This provides the annual review of the Local Offer for Care Experienced young people. In the last year we have been fortunate to be part of the regional network reviewing and comparing the offer. In August 2024, Warwickshire met with the Network to have a formal review of our offer this was a very positive exercise with Warwickshire performing well.

3. Financial Implications

Budgets for the year have been set and monthly forecasting is underway. Currently all activities for this financial year's local offer are covered. However, with cuts from Warwickshire Welfare towards setting up home's allowances, if we want to honour our commitment to these, we will need to include the full allowance in the budget for 2025/26.

4. Environmental Implications

None known.

5. Supporting Information

5.1 Warwickshire Care Leaver Local Offer

- 5.2 To support young people to be better prepared for independence all care leavers, through the local offer, are entitled to support with Council tax for 3 years between the ages of 18-25 years old. We have supported 83 Young People with council tax.

- 5.3 We have also supported 38 Young People with their driving lessons.

- 5.4 126 Young People have received a gym membership (this excludes the free Everyone Active memberships) and 12.
- 5.5 A total of 91 young people were supported to access some or all their Setting Up Home Allowance.
- 5.6 In December 2022, we set up a partnership with Severn Trent whereby young people can be signed up for the Big Difference scheme, enabling them to receive a 70% discount off their water bill. Once signed up, this will remain in place for the young person until they reach the age of 25. Post 25, young people may still be eligible for this however will need to apply through Severn Trent. Severn Trent waived their income threshold for this scheme so all young people responsible for their water bills, living in a Severn Trent household can access this, regardless of their income. So far in FY 2023/24, 55 young people have signed up for this scheme. Many of our young people were already signed up to this before the partnership and therefore already have the discount in place.

5.7 Financial Support

- 5.8 Young people can access additional financial support in the way of a grant from with the Barradell Grant, the Tiffin Club Fund or the Education, Employment and Training Fund. These funds can provide financial support to young people to promote hobbies, area of interest, trips, education, employment or training, clothing to attend interviews, laptops, childcare to support young parents to access education, employment or training or top up bursaries. Young People can access this through an application to the Barradell and Tiffin Club Panel via their Social Worker or Personal Advisor. The panel meet every 6 weeks to discuss applications. Between April 2023 – March 2024, a total of £300 was granted to individual young people.
- 5.9 49 young people accessed additional support via the Education, Employment and Training Fund.
- 5.10 Young people who attend University receive a bursary of £1000 per academic year (up to three years). During this period, 11 young people received this support.

5.11 Housing costs

There has continued to be difficulties in supporting some young people into suitable accommodation. During 2023 - 24 there have been 14 young people over the age of 18 who were supported financially to pay for accommodation some short term or one-off rent payments some for a longer period of time. This has been due to the young people having more complex needs and a lack of suitable options. The team has also supported young people with rent in advance when they have secured accommodation to

ensure that they are not in arrears with their rent payments from when they move in. Costs have also been covered for one-to-one support from a sessional worker for those young people that may need support out of hours.

5.12 Young People receive a 'Home Furnishing Grant' from the service and additional items from Warwickshire Welfare to help them set up home when they first move into independent living. Young People get £3000 setting up home allowance from the team. Historically the Warwickshire Welfare Fund provided £650 towards this grant however this stopped in April 2024. This fund is now fully provided through Warwickshire County Council.

5.13 Participation opportunities within the Care Leaver Local Offer

The Leaving Care and Asylum team work closely with the Voice, Influence and Change team to offer a considerable amount of participation opportunities for our Care Leavers and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking children.

5.14 The Care Leavers Forum is held monthly, alternating between the north and south of the county. This forum enables care leavers aged 18-25 to come together and discuss areas that are important to them throughout their journey of care experience and how to better improve these services for themselves and for other children in care. The information and opinions gathered at these meetings helps to formulate reports that are heard from the senior leadership team (SLT) to activate change across the Children and Families team.

5.15 Young people are encouraged to participate in bringing together the reports for SLT and help to present these in the meetings. Young people from the Care Leaver and Unaccompanied Asylum team are also given the opportunity to take part and present at the Children and Young Peoples' Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

5.16 Throughout the year, teams from across Children and Families will recruit new staff into their service and our care experienced young people often form part of youth panels or sit as part of the main interview panel to assess the candidates and give their feedback on suitability.

5.17 Care Leavers have also had the opportunity to be involved in the planning of larger local authority events including the Youth Conference and Staff Conference. The latter of these involved care leavers attending a part of the event and sharing their experiences to the wider Children and Families staff team.

5.18 The Leaving Care and Asylum Team often hold monthly social events including winter/summer socials and more recently in 2024, Wellbeing Walks in Warwickshire's County Parks. Other activities that have been held that care leavers have been invited to include seasonal celebration events, the yearly Sibling Day, a day trip to Weston-Super-Mare, a young parent's holiday weekend to Butlins and evening activities like bowling and roller skating.

5.19 Ring-Fenced Apprenticeships

Warwickshire has been one of the lead local authorities in providing ring-fenced apprenticeships for our care experienced young people. Currently, there are 5 active apprentices with care experience working for the local authority.

In the past two years, Warwickshire have had 7 care experienced apprentices:

- 2 of these have completed their course and moved onto full time job opportunities within the Children and Families Team
- 1 has completed and moved to work elsewhere
- 1 is continuing their apprenticeship in another role outside of Warwickshire
- 3 did not complete their course due to various circumstances

Given the change of agreement around apprenticeships and the recruitment freeze, there are unfortunately no concrete plans to recruit ring-fenced apprenticeships in the next 12 months. Funding opportunities are being researched elsewhere to see if this is something that Warwickshire will still be able to provide.

5.20 West Midland ADCS Peer Review – 27th August 2024

On 27th August, Chris Yates from the West Midlands ADCS Network visited Warwickshire at Myton Park to compare Warwickshire's local offer against the local offers of our neighbouring West Midlands's Local Authorities. This is part of a wider piece of work to audit local offers and to try and set up a West Midlands Local Offer that is comparable across local authorities.

West Midlands ADCS Network were impressed with the Local Offer that Warwickshire currently provide their care leavers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children with many areas being as good as or better than other local authorities. One main area that was highlighted as good were the ring-fenced apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers and the job opportunities that follow on from these.

Appendices

1. Local Offer Edits that have been sent to comms to create a new version of the online and paper copy of the Rights and Entitlements

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s):

Other members: