

County Council – 13 October 2023

Item 11(b) - Notice of Motion on Support for Care Leavers from Cllr Linehan

Briefing Note

Background

The Care Leavers service supports our young people as they move towards independence. The service currently cares and supports 594 young people with an allocated Personal Advisor (PA) and a further 78 with other extended support. In 2018 statutory guidance extended PA support to all care leavers up to age 25 and not only, as previously, if they were engaged in education or training.

The Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee on 13 September 2023, included a paper on ['Leaving Care in West Sussex \(PDF, 213KB\)'](#) in direct response to the comments from the County Council's Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) by Ofsted in March 2023 about meeting the needs of our care leavers.

Corporate Parenting

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced corporate parenting principles to which local authorities must have regard. These include the promotion of physical and mental health and wellbeing; to encourage them to express their views and to take those views into account; to help them gain access to and make the best use of services of the local authority and relevant partners; to promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for them; to be safe and have stability in their home lives, relationships and in education or work, and to prepare them for adulthood and independence.

As corporate parents the County Council's aim is to make sure that our children get the same opportunities, in education, employment and training, and in life generally, as other young people are not discriminated against, and that they have every opportunity to live fulfilling and successful lives without barriers.

National Context

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care led by Josh McCallister published in May 2022 had a recommendation that:

"Government should make care experience a protected characteristic" and "New legislation should be passed which broadens corporate parenting responsibilities across a wider set of public bodies and organisations."

Many care leavers face discrimination, stigma, and prejudice in their day to day lives. Public perception of care experience is that these children are damaged and that can lead to discrimination and assumptions being made about them. This discrimination can be similar in nature to other groups that have a legally protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

This stigma and discrimination can be explicit but can also be implicit and evidenced in the way that care leavers and care experience is discussed in schools,

workplaces, and the media. This can lead to care leavers being refused employment, failing to succeed in education or facing unfair judgements about their ability to parent when they have families of their own. The Office for National Statistics and various sector led organisations track and monitor various data regarding children we care for and care leavers, below are some headlines:

All Children (England):

- This year, around 36,000 children and young people will enter the care system: That's 100 children every day
- There are around 103,000 children cared for away from home
- Nearly 70,000 children live with over 55,000 fostering households
- There are currently 1,990 children waiting for adoption in England
- Global majority children (i.e. mainly non-white) are disproportionately represented in our care system. Global majority children make up 5% of the general population but 7% of in care and care leavers
- Global majority children are less likely to go on to be adopted and wait longer to find their adoptive family

Care leavers and care experienced young people (England):

- Over 10,000 young people in England leave the care system every year on their 18th birthday
- Care leavers make up 25% of the homeless population
- Almost 25% of the adult prison population have previously been in care, and nearly 50% of under 21-year-olds in contact with the criminal justice system have spent time in care
- 7% of care leavers aged 17 years; 4% of care leavers aged 18 years and 6% of care leavers aged 19 to 21 years are in accommodation considered to be unsuitable
- 41% of care leavers aged 19 to 21 years are not in education, employment, or training, compared to 12% of all 19 to 21 year olds
- 13% of care leavers enter higher education by their 19th birthday, compared to 45% of the wider population
- Care-experienced applicants are 179% more likely to apply for health and social care than non-care-experienced students, and 50% more likely to apply for nursing and midwifery

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies, such as councils, to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation of people with protected characteristics. Fifty-four local authorities have taken the step to recognise care experience as a protected characteristic.

Lucy Butler

Director of Children, Young People and Learning