

Summary Sheet

Council Report

Corporate Parenting Panel

Title

Support to Rotherham Care Leavers

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Jane Parfremment

Report Author(s)

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Children and young people's service

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Ward(s) Affected

All

Executive Summary

The support provided to young people leaving care is clearly defined within the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and its associated guidance for The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers

This paper sets out the support that Rotherham Council provides to young people leaving care, how we meet our statutory duties and provides examples of how this works with young people on a daily basis.

Financial support to care leavers is reviewed on an annual basis in preparation for each financial year.

Recommendations

- 1.1 That the report is received and that Councillors are made aware of the support provided to Care Leavers from Rotherham.

1.2 That the annual review of financial support to care leavers is timetabled to be presented to Corporate parenting panel in preparation for the next financial year

1.3 That the corporate parenting panel notes the increase to the Leaving care grant for this financial year to £2000 which brings the support package into line with the advised minimum.

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Title (Main Report)

Leaving care Support Package

1. Recommendations

- 1.2 That the report is received and that Councillors are made aware of the support provided to Care Leavers from Rotherham.
- 1.3 That the annual review of financial support to care leavers is timetabled to be presented to Corporate parenting panel in preparation for the next financial year.
- 1.4 That the corporate parenting panel notes the increase to the Leaving care grant for this financial year to £2000 which brings the support package into line with the current advised minimum.

2. Background

2.1 The support provided to young people leaving care is clearly defined within the Children (LEAVING CARE) Act 2000 and its associated guidance for The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers

This paper sets out the support that Rotherham Council provides to young people leaving care, how we meet our statutory duties and provides some examples of how this works with young people on a daily basis.

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3. Key Issues

3.1 Support for Care leavers in Rotherham

Statutory Framework

Support to care leavers is outlined in the Children (leaving care) Act 2000 and has two main aims:

- To ensure that young people do not leave care until they are ready.
- To ensure that they receive effective support once they have left

When considering the support to our care leavers it is useful to consider the question 'Would this be good enough for my child?'

Who are Care Leavers?

The act categorises young people leaving care and outlines what support they are entitled to

Eligible

Young People who are still in care aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after for (a total of) at least 13 weeks from the age of 14.

Relevant

Young People who are aged 16 or 17 who have already left care, and who were looked after for (a total of) at least 13 weeks from the age of 14, and have been looked after at some time while 16 or 17.

Former Relevant

Young People who are aged 18-21 who have been eligible and/or relevant Children In Care.

Qualifying care leavers

Young people who were in care after the age of 16 but who are not eligible or relevant because they did not fulfil the 13 week criteria.

These care leavers must be under 21, (or 25 if they are in further education or training).

Or they are Young people who are aged 16-21 who are under a Special Guardianship Order or a Special Guardianship Order was in place when the person turned 18 and the person was looked after by the Local Authority immediately before the Special Guardianship Order was made.

Duties of the local authority

Aged 16-18

- Duty to ensure that a pathway plan is in place by 16 years and 3 months.
- Duty to undertake a needs assessment of each young person leaving care.
- Duty to undertake an assessment of the young person's financial needs and provide support
- Duty to provide a Personal Adviser
- Duty to ensure appropriate accommodation is in place.

Aged 18-21

- Duty to maintain regular contact with the young person and to provide support through a Personal Adviser
- Duty to assist with the costs of education, employment and training
- Duty to regularly review the pathway plan to ensure it is meeting the young person's needs.

Aged 21 and over

- Duty to continue to support young people if they are still in education or training and they wish to receive support.
- Duty to ensure vacation accommodation is in place for those in higher education

The same Duties do not apply to Qualifying Young people.

For these young people there are duties to offer;

- Advice and assistance when requested.
- Financial Assistance where there is an assessed need.
- Where the person is in higher education or training, assistance in securing vacation accommodation

3.2 Current Rotherham Provision

Rotherham has its own dedicated Leaving Care Team that works with Eligible, Relevant, Former relevant and Qualifying young people.

The team consists of both qualified social workers and personal advisors. Personal advisors come from a variety of backgrounds but are all experienced in working with and supporting young people.

The leaving care team currently has 9.2 FTE Personal advisors, 2 of which are social work qualified and 1 Team manager. The team is currently supporting 198 young people.

Numbers of young people leaving care are currently projected to sit between 200 and 220 young people for the next couple of years.

Currently personal advisors hold caseloads ranging from 22 to 24 young people. Nationally case loads within leaving care services are around 18 to 20 young people. In addition the team manager has a high number of supervisees.

To ensure sufficient capacity and skills mix within the service along with robust management oversight a review has commenced of the structure and staffing of the leaving care service. This review should be completed by the end of December 2015.

3.3 Assessment and Planning

Qualified social workers undertake the assessment of each eligible and relevant child (those under 18years).

For those young people who are Looked after, this is undertaken by their allocated social worker. Where young people have left care but are still under 18 years the social workers within the Leaving care team undertake the assessment for the Pathway plan.

The Young Person must be involved in the preparation and review of this assessment and their views, wishes and feelings should be included and listened to throughout.

All young people leaving care should have a Pathway plan that is reviewed with the personal advisor on a regular basis (at least every 6 months or sooner if requested by the young person or the needs have changed). The Plan should be informed by the assessment and should detail how these needs will be met until the age of 21 (or longer when the Young Person is in education or training).

Pathway plans **must** include information on;

- Accommodation

- Practical life skills
- Education and training
- Employment
- Financial support
- Specific support needs e.g. Health and Family
- Contingency plans for support if independent living breaks down

3.4 Personal Advisor

All Eligible, Relevant and Former relevant Young people **must** have a named, allocated Personal Adviser. Qualifying young people do have to have a named and allocated Personal Advisor or a Pathway plan unless they request it.

Personal advisors work with young people to establish a positive working relationship and to effectively support the young person in achieving the targets in their Pathway plan.

Personal advisors are responsible for working with the young person to;

- Provide advice and support, including supporting with practical tasks
- Draw up the pathway plan and ensure it addresses any changing needs
- Keep in touch
- Co-ordinate services, link in and advocate with other agencies

3.5 Financial support and claiming benefits

Personal advisors are required to ensure that young people have had an appropriate financial assessment as part of their assessment and pathway plan and that they are supported to access benefits or are directly supported by the Local authority.

Most 16/17 year old care leavers will not be able to claim benefits, therefore, for as long as a Young Person is a relevant child the responsible Local Authority will be their primary source of income.

Where young people aged less than 18 years are living in Semi Independence or supported accommodation the local authority provides financial assistance to meet accommodation costs.

Weekly Living Allowance

Young people aged 16/17 who have left care **or** who are living in Semi or supported living cannot claim benefits. In these cases the local authority provides them with a weekly allowance that is equal to a benefits payment.

The current weekly allowance is £57.90 and this is usually paid directly into a young person's bank account.

Personal advisors support young people to set up a bank account if they do not already have one and a key part of the role of a personal advisor is working with the young person to ensure that they have the appropriate budgeting and financial literacy skills.

In Rotherham the leaving care team have developed a specific resource to assist young people with their transition to independence which has targeted modules on finance. This is called the Moving on Toolkit.

Financial assistance can also be provided in a way that meets the young person's needs, for example a service charge for accommodation may be deducted directly to ensure payment, shopping may be supported or payments could be given directly to the young person or split into payments across the week.

Accommodation

Accommodation costs for those under 18 are met by the Local authority. Personal advisors must work with the young person to ensure that their accommodation is suitable and safe to live in.

Young people leaving care are given priority status on Rotherham's local housing register and when they are assessed as being ready for their own tenancy they will be supported to attend the councils 'moving on' panel.

This panel considers the application for housing and priority status and ensures that appropriate support is in place to guide them through the bidding and allocation process. All young people accessing housing through this panel must agree to tenancy support for at least 3 months.

Where a young person lives in another authority the personal advisor will assist and support the young person to navigate the appropriate housing pathway and access support.

When a young person turns 18yrs old they are supported to claim relevant benefits where required.

Young people who are in part time or low paid employment should not be disadvantaged and all young people will be encouraged to work where appropriate and possible.

Where needed the young person's financial situation would be assessed and the local authority may continue to contribute towards accommodation costs.

Young people who progress to Higher Education are supported with accommodation for 52 weeks of the year.

In Rotherham we are fortunate to have several bespoke accommodation options for our young people leaving care.

Young people who have been living in foster care and wish to remain beyond 18 years old can be supported to 'stay put' through the supported lodgings scheme. Last year all of our 18 year olds who were living with RMBC foster carers chose to 'stay put' with their foster carer's.

We have 2 specialist accommodation projects for young people leaving care in Rotherham; both of these are operated by RMBC.

Nelson Street has 6 bedsit style rooms with shared bathroom facilities.

Hollowgate consists of 10 self-contained flats (2 are 2 bedroom flats). The accommodation needs significant refurbishment and is not in the model of accommodation normally in Leaving Care Services.

The accommodation team provides support to the young people who are residents around their tenancy and independent living skills.

This team has developed the local authorities 'moving on toolkit' which was recognised as an area of good practice by ofsted in 2014. The toolkit supports the young people to evidence their progression towards independence. (A copy of the toolkit will be available at the meeting to review)

This team also provides tenancy support to young people in their own accommodation and dispersed properties.

Setting up home Allowance/ Leaving care grant

In Rotherham young people who have left care are entitled to a grant of £2000. This grant is to be utilised over the lifetime of support from the service and is used to purchase the essential items to furnish a home.

In practical terms this may mean that a small amount is accessed in the first instance when a young person moves into semi-independent or supported accommodation as some items and furnishings are provided. A larger amount would then being accessed when the young person is successful in getting a tenancy.

Spending from this grant has to be supervised and agreed to ensure that young people get all the essential items for the home. Personal advisors and accommodation support workers are vital to this as they often have well established contacts for affordable and suitable items.

Other needs

The young person's assessment and Pathway plan may identify other financial needs. The leaving care team can provide support young people with assessed needs where appropriate.

This might include;

- Travel
- Family contact
- Clothing
- Childcare costs
- Education support costs
- Work support costs
- Health costs
- Prom/ Graduation costs.

3.6 Keeping in touch/ out of Area

If we lose touch with a care leaver the personal advisor takes reasonable steps to re-establish contact with the young person and they will continue to do so until contact

is re-established or the young person confirms that they no longer wish to receive support.

We retain responsibility for our young people wherever they live. This means that Personal advisors will continue to support our young people if they move out of area. Young people are also entitled to short-term or emergency assistance from the authority they are living in. To support this the leaving care service always ensures that if our young person is living in a different area that they know where the local leaving care service is based and that the local area is informed that they are living there.

Contact is generally made with our young people at least once every 2 months; however this may be more or less frequent if identified in the pathway plan. This contact will include visiting the young person in their accommodation.

3.7 Education, Training and Employment

This is a major focus for personal advisors and young people. Personal advisors work closely with the Virtual School and the Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS – connexions) to ensure that young people have a clear plan, encouragement and support to access Education, training and Employment.

Young people under the age of 18 are required to have a PEP (personal education plan) this is supported by Rotherham's virtual school. Young people can be supported to access Employability group work sessions to provide additional support and guidance where needed.

In Rotherham the local authority operates a flexible 30 day work program for young people leaving care. This is a guarantee that any Rotherham Care leaver will be matched to a work placement within the council should they wish to be. We have also been able to match young people to opportunities within other organisations and businesses.

The program is flexible in its approach as we recognise that young people may not be ready for the world of work and the commitments of 9-5, Monday to Friday. Young people may initially start out with one afternoon a week and build up to a regular pattern.

Young people are matched with suitable employees from across the council to mentor them throughout their time in work. A support plan is established which sets out the pattern of work and the tasks to be undertaken.

On completion the young person is provided with feedback and a letter to be placed alongside their CV.

We have a good number of young people in Education, training and Employment at around 71%. Whilst there is still room to progress this is above statistical neighbours and national average.

Currently the leaving care team tracks the progress of those young people who have progressed beyond Y11, in the future this role will be undertaken by the virtual school.

This year we had a number of young people who have achieved in their chosen courses of education and training and some young people who have progressed on to Higher education.

The table below highlights the achievements and progression of the young people who have completed academic courses this year.

<u>Young Person</u>	<u>Grades</u>	<u>Where they are going</u>
1	English A2 - C Business studies A2 – D General studies A2 – D Drama A2 - A	Currently on a year out and seeking employment.
2	Biology AS – U Physics AS – U Chemistry AS – U Maths AS - U	Resitting qualifications
3	Btec Engineering	Kingston University. Degree in Engineering
4	2:1 Degree in Geography	Undertaking a teaching qualification and working at Brinsworth Comprehensive.
5	Degree in Youth and Community work	Currently Seeking work
6	BTEC Applied Science	Sheffield Uni to study Law Degree
7	Degree in Public Services	Currently Seeking work
8	Veterinary Nursing level 3	Bishop Burton College to study for Level 4
9	Level 2 in Music and Drama	RCAT to study for Level 3 Music and Drama
10	Level 2 in Health and Social Care	Wolverhampton College to study for Level 3 Health and social care
12	Btec Law – A Distinction* Btec Health and social care -Distinction Sociology - U Government and Politics - U	Birmingham University to study Law and Criminology

We are very proud of all our young people and achievements in education, training and employment and we celebrate these with all corporate parents in the annual 16+ Achievement awards. This year's awards will take place on the 11th December 2015.

3.8 Duty/ Emergency support

The Leaving care team provides a face to face duty/ drop in service for young people leaving care every week day. This is currently based in the Eric Mann's youth support building in the town centre. This is an essential service for young people leaving care as they require someone to talk to when they are in need, the leaving care team is able to provide emergency financial and Crisis support to young people throughout the week. Where there is a need the leaving care team will also work with colleges from the accommodation team to provide support to young people into the evening and at weekends.

3.9 Group Work and Other Opportunities

The leaving care team provide opportunities for young people to participate in group work and activities with other young people leaving care.

Group work is targeted around themes to support young people e.g. employability or health.

Outings and events are also provided to ensure young people are able to enjoy social activities.

It is vital that the young people leaving care have a specific building where the service is based.

This base is the 'hub' of the service provision and is somewhere that young people can come to when in need or to 'drop in' to have contact with staff.

Young people leaving care do not always have positive links with their birth family or previous carers so it is vital that we can create a homely environment where they feel comfortable to drop into as we are their corporate family.

Currently the leaving care team services for young people are based in the Eric Mann's building and that staff team are in Riverside, this has led to problems as the team is not based with the service delivery.

Young people tell us that this isn't how they want their leaving care service to be, whilst they access the service they tell us that they don't feel that it is their building as it is shared with other services.

They tell us that they don't always feel comfortable in Eric Mann's and they don't feel that they can just drop in to see staff.

Young people tell us that they would like a like a building that is for young people leaving care only where they can drop in to

At the remit of the Eric Mann's building is changing we are currently looking to relocate the Leaving care service somewhere in the town centre. We have taken the young peoples and the teams wishes into account and we are currently undertaking a property search. RMBC do not currently have anything in their property portfolio that is suitable so we are currently looking for alternative venues.

National Leaving care week is an opportunity for the service to run a range of events and activities for young people.

This year leaving care week is from the 21st to the 28th October. The focus is on improving emotional wellbeing and its connection with health and fitness.

The leaving care service is undertaking a range of activities with young people over care leaver's week including;

- Cinema trip
- The Great British Bake Off
- Developing a young person's recipe book
- Participation in a regional football tournament.
- 10 pin bowling

Two of our young people have been successful in their application to take part in the Care to Cook workshop with Jamie Oliver and the apprentices at his restaurant 15 in London.

We have also contributed to the national leaving care forum's conference on managing risk and presented at the south Yorkshire Criminal justice boards event around leaving care. This event in particular has been useful in raising awareness of the needs of young people leaving care with colleges from adult services and probation.

3.10 Health

The Specialist Looked after children's nursing team includes support to young people leaving care. Young people leaving care are able to access a health assessment if required from this team or can be supported to access their GP and universal health services.

There are also specialist young people's health services on offer from the Eric Mann's building where the leaving care service is based including, Sexual health, substance misuse and Youth Start. Personal advisors can support young people to access clinics and drop in sessions where required.

3.11 Case studies.

The case study below demonstrate how this support is delivered to young people on a day to day basis.

The name of the young person has been changed to maintain their confidentiality.

James

James lives in specialist young peoples supported accommodation.

He moved into his accommodation when he was 17 and was managing well.

He was undertaking an apprenticeship but was concerned that when he became 18 he would not be able to pay his rent and utilities.

James's wage of £105 a week was not enough to cover all his rent and living expenses.

He had 3 months left to complete his apprenticeship and it was a real risk that he would end his course to claim benefits or seek out high cost loans.

James and his personal advisor worked together to do a detailed financial assessment and budgeting plan.

Together they were able to find some areas where James could budget and make some savings however this would have been a real struggle and it was unlikely that he would have kept to the plan without additional support for this amount of time.

The leaving care service supported James with a small 'top up' of £20 a week for the duration of his apprenticeship to ensure that he was able to maintain his accommodation and meet his living costs.

James's personal advisor referred him for increased tenancy support specifically to assist him with his weekly shop and keeping to his budgeting plan.

James successfully completed his apprenticeship and maintained his accommodation. James has since been successful in gaining employment.

Comments from James

'My PA (Personal advisor) is great; he got me the support I needed so I didn't lose my flat'

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

None

5. Consultation

RMBC Directorate Leadership Team 26/10/15

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

Not Applicable

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

7.1 Finance for care leavers is detailed within the councils leaving care financial guidance.

This guidance was updated in April 2015 and it requires annual review.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 RMBC must ensure that they are meeting their legal requirements under the Children (leaving care) Act 2000

9. Human Resources Implications

9.1 To ensure sufficient capacity and skills mix within the service along with robust management oversight a review has commenced of the structure and staffing of the leaving care service. This review should be completed by the end of December 2015.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

10.1 The Leaving care service provides advice, guidance and support directly to young people leaving care.

11 Equalities and Human Rights Implications

11.1 Young people leaving care are one of the most vulnerable groups in our society

According to research they are:

- Three times more likely to be cautioned or convicted of an offence
- Four times more likely to have a mental health disorder
- Five times less likely to achieve five good GCSEs, eight times more likely to be excluded from school and less likely to go to university
- One in five homeless people are care leavers
(DfES, 2007, Care Matters: Time for Change)

The Leaving care service aims to support young people to mitigate against these risks by providing appropriate consistent support in the right way at the right time.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

12.1 In order for young people leaving care to be supported effectively partners and other directorates are required to provide services and ensure that Young people leaving care are supported by their corporate parent this is relevant to the whole council

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Service for Care leavers is part of the ofsted inspection framework and as such carries a separate judgement; in 2014 this area of the service was graded as inadequate.

Focus on improvement and development of the service is required to ensure that progress is made and young people's outcomes are improved.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Jane Parfremment

Director for safeguarding children and young people

Approvals Obtained from:- N/A

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services:- Named officer

Director of Legal Services:- Named officer

Head of Procurement (if appropriate):-

Maryann Barton. Service manager Looked after Children and Leaving care.

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