

**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Improving Lives Select Commission – 30 July 2024

**Report Title**

Care Leavers Peer Review Update

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

No

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Nicola Curley – Strategic Director, Children & Young Peoples Service

**Report Author(s)**

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**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

The report outlines the outcome of the peer challenge conducted by the Local Government Association (LGA) in March 2024 on the Care Leavers service.

**Recommendations**

That Improving Lives Select Commission note the outcomes of the peer challenge and the progress made on the recommendations.

**List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 LGA Peer Challenge Feedback Report

**Background Papers**

None

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

None

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## Care Leavers Peer Review Update

### 1. Background

- 1.1 A peer challenge via the Local Government Association was requested by the Council to establish our current support, services and practice in relation to care leavers. This review took place between 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> March 2024. A peer challenge is undertaken by experienced, independent senior managers, who explore key practice, performance and governance information in order to provide a robust assurance process and strategic challenge to Councils, around a specific area of service.
- 1.2 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. As such not all care leavers have left the care of the local authority but will be entitled to support and services.
- 1.3 The key lines of enquiry agreed prior to the review being undertaken are as follows;
- Leadership and Governance
  - Do our care leavers have timely and robust pathway plans, which support their transition to adulthood and meet their needs and does this process start at an early enough stage?
  - Do our unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people have bespoke plans for their needs?
  - Do our accommodation options meet the needs of our care leavers, enabling them to transition successfully to adulthood?
  - Do we support care leavers to have successful and long-lasting relationships with family and connected people?
  - Is our draft Local Offer ambitious enough for our Care Leavers and does it support them to have access to quality education or training and employment opportunities?
  - Are leaders as corporate parents tackling disparities in the physical and mental-health outcomes of care leavers and are they able to access help when they need it?
- 1.4 The review included onsite and off-site activity, including case file auditing and interviews with staff, partners and young people. More than 70 practitioners, foster carers, managers and partners were spoken to as part of the review. The peer review team visited various sites, attending focus groups and meeting with a number of care leavers.

### 2. Key Issues

- 2.1 In Rotherham, we are committed to ensuring that our care Leavers achieve their aspirations and the best possible outcomes for their future. We want to deliver the best service we can to support care leavers to be successful in adulthood.

- 2.2 In January 2023, a new judgement for Care Leavers was introduced to the Ofsted ILACS inspection framework: The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers.
- 2.3 Inspections also consider whether local authorities are making good decisions for care leavers, and what they are doing to support them into adulthood. The new judgement focuses on the things that matter most to care leavers' lives, including their:
- Relationships and access to social and recreational opportunities.
  - Ability to influence the services they are offered.
  - Health and emotional well-being.
  - Learning and employment opportunities.
- 2.4 The review identified that there was a commitment from senior leaders in children's services, wider corporate services and health to meet the needs of, and improve outcomes for care leavers. The review evidenced a number of strengths in service and practice and also robustly reviewed the key lines of enquiry requested by the Council. Recommendations to strengthen practice were made in a number of areas and will be shared with Improving Lives Select Commission via a separate presentation.
- 2.5 The Corporate Parenting Partnership Board is responsible for overseeing the delivery of Rotherham Leaving Care Strategy. The Board meets four to six times per year and is responsible for ensuring that the council fulfils its role as corporate parent. The Board will ensure that officers are held to account for the outcomes of children in care and care leavers and that their best interests are at the centre of decision making.

### **3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 3.1 Not applicable.

### **4. Consultation on proposal**

- 4.1 All partners have been consulted in respect of the Peer Review and have contributed to the process of this. Partners have been asked to consider the recommendations and outcome of the Review.

### **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

- 5.1 A Leaving Care Strategy is underway and will be completed by September 2024, with an associated Action Plan, this will outline the timetable for when the recommendations of the review will be fully implemented.

### **6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

- 6.1 Not applicable at this stage.

### **7. Legal Advice and Implications:**

7.1 Not applicable at this stage.

**8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

8.1 Not applicable at this stage.

**9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

9.1 These issues are highlighted within the report.

**10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

10.1 These issues are highlighted within the report.

**11. Implications for CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions and Climate Change**

11.1 Not applicable

**12. Implications for Partners**

12.1 The implications for parents are highlighted within the peer review report.

**13. Risks and Mitigation**

13.1 Not Applicable.

**Accountable Officer(s)**

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