

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 16 September 2024

Report Title

Rotherham Care Leavers' Local Offer

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

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Nicola Curley, Strategic Director of Children's Services

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report presents the updated Rotherham Care Leavers Local Offer to Cabinet. The Local Authority are required to consult on and produce a Local Offer for its Care Leavers, under Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The Local Offer provides information about services and support 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.

It is requested that an increase in the financial offer to Rotherham Care Leavers is approved for 2024, due to the increase in the cost of living and to ensure that The Rotherham offer is appropriate and in line with comparable neighbouring authorities. This will ensure that Rotherham Care Leavers are offered robust support and services, which will support them to achieve successful independence.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the Rotherham Care Leavers Local Offer and increase in financial support for Care Leavers, effective from October 2024.
2. Delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Children and Young Peoples Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People Services and the Section 151 officer to approve annual uplifts to the financial offer, associated with inflation.

List of Appendices Included

- Appendix 1 Rotherham Care Leavers Local Offer
- Appendix 2 Part A Initial Equality Screening Assessment
- Appendix 3 Part B Equality Analysis Form
- Appendix 4 Carbon Impact Assessment

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

Rotherham Care Leavers' Local Offer

1. Background

- 1.1 This paper proposes a revised Rotherham Local Offer for Care Leavers. Sections 1 to 3 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires every Local Authority to consult on and publish a Local Offer for Care Leavers. For clarity, 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. Once approved by Cabinet, the Care Leavers Local Offer will be published on the Rotherham website and updated on an ongoing basis. This Local Offer will sit alongside the Leaving Care Strategy and will be presented back to Cabinet when the strategy is reviewed.
- 1.2 The Local Offer provides information about what services and support are available to all Rotherham Care Leavers from all partner agencies. It also provides information about what financial support is available to Care Leavers. It is a statutory requirement for all Local Authorities to provide a Local Offer for Care Leavers and to review this on a regular basis.
- 1.3 There are seven corporate parenting principles which all local authorities must have regard to when discharging their functions in relation to children in care and Care Leavers (Children and Social Work Act, 2017). These must be considered when producing a robust Local Offer for Care Leavers.

They are:

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people.
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
- To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

- 1.4 Cabinet approval is sought for the Local Offer and associated financial support. This can then be reviewed annually and the support from partner agencies expanded on, through ongoing consultation. This will ensure that all partners are accountable for delivering the highest quality support and services for Care Leavers. This will also keep the Local Offer up to date, growing with the changes in climate and continuing to enable us to be ambitious for Care Leavers.
- 1.5 To ensure that high quality services are offered. The proposed offer has been compared with five neighbouring local authorities. This confirms that the proposed offer to Rotherham Care Leavers is appropriate, in line with comparable neighbours and that it meets the needs of our Care Leavers, supporting them towards independence.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The proposed offer to Care Leavers ensures that they are able to access the support and services they need to develop skills of independence and to transition successfully to adulthood. The Council will review this annually to ensure that the Offer remains suitable and delivers for our Care Leavers.
- 2.2 Rotherham Care Leavers Local Offer remains robust and appropriate in most areas for our Care Leavers. The cost of living has increased over the last seven years, which means that the financial support to Care Leavers needs to be reviewed and uplifted in line with this. While weekly living payments to Care Leavers have risen in line with the cost of living, in accordance with the amount paid to young people on benefits, payments such as clothing allowances have remained the same in recent years. To ensure that the local offer grows, providing Care Leavers with robust and high-quality services and support, there is also a bespoke Care Leaver Strategy being created, due at Cabinet in October 2024.
- 2.3 The request is for an increase in three areas to the previous Local Offer. The £200 per year is now not enough to clothe young people to the necessary standard. It is requested therefore that this is increased to £300 per year for each young person. Previously discretionary payments were made to young people for religious and cultural items where required. Rotherham now have a higher population of young people requesting religious and culture items. As such, this now needs to be formally established in the budget. The only other additional cost requested is the payment towards prom and graduation. This is in line with what other local authorities offer young people and supports celebrating young people's achievements in education, which is essential for their confidence and wellbeing.
- 2.4 The cost of this uplift to the Local Offer will be £27,000 per year, which will be funded by the leaving care budget. The budget is managed stringently to ensure spend is managed within the parameters agreed. As such it is important that discretionary payments are kept to a minimum and that any inflated payments agreed are incorporated into the existing budget. There is some underspend within the leaving care budget currently, which can cover the in-

year increase to the care leaver finance offer, pending the 2025-26 budget being agreed.

2.5 Rotherham Care Leavers are engaged in reviewing the Local Offer and this will now be updated annually to reflect any changes in support and services. Partner agencies are also being consulted with, to review their offer to Care Leavers and ensure that this is robust and kept up to date in the Local Offer.

2.6 The previous financial offer and proposed changes are outlined in the table below.

	Eligible/ Relevant/ Former Relevant Young Person	Qualifying Young People (up to 21)	Previous agreed finance offer	Cost per year of amending payment
Weekly Living Allowance if Care Leavers are unable to claim Universal Credit.	£71.93	No	N/a this increases annually in line with universal credit amount.	
Clothing Allowance Summer	£150	No	£100	£11,550
Clothing Allowance Winter	£150	No	£100	£11,550
Birthday Gift - 18	£233	No	No change – this remains in line with fostering payments.	
Birthday Gift- 19	£50	No	No change	
Birthday Gift - 20	£50	No	No change	
Birthday Gift - 21	£100	No	No change	
Festival Payment over 18	£50	No	No change	
Cultural and Religious Items	£50	No	£0	£1700
Maternity - First Child	£200	No	No change	

Driving (Licence and Test Fees)	£120	No	No change	
Driving lessons	£350 (or 10 lessons)	No	No change but the price has increased each year	
University HE Bursary and maintenance costs at university	£2000	Based on assessment up to £2000	No change	
University accommodation costs	Based on assessment up to £7500	Based on assessment up to £7500	No change	
University Vacation Accommodation	Based on assessment and in line with halls of residence payments.	Based on assessment and in line with halls of residence payments.	No change	
University UCAS application	Yes	No	No change	
Prom and Graduation	£50	No	£0	£2400
University Travel costs to visit home	Based on assessment	No	No change	
University Household Items for Accommodation	Based on assessment	No	No change	
University Initial Food Shop	£75	£75	No change	
Custody Remand and Sentence weekly payment	£20	£20	No change	
Payments for Consultation / participation work	£30	£30	No change	

Financial support in an emergency	Based on assessment	Based on assessment	No change	
Total				£27,200

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 Cabinet is asked to approve the Rotherham Care Leavers Local Offer for 2024. Approval of this offer will ensure that the Council is meeting its statutory duties in respect of ensuring that there is an up to date, published Local Offer for Care Leavers. This will also ensure that Rotherham Care Leavers have the best level of service, support, and financial assistance available to support them to become autonomous and successful adults.
- 3.2 The alternative option is to not endorse the revised Local Offer and retain the previous offer. This is not recommended as the Rotherham Care Leavers Local Offer was last revised some time ago and does not align with the increase in the cost of living.
- 3.3 Cabinet is also asked to delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Children and Young Peoples Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People Services and the Section 151 officer to approve annual uplifts to the financial offer, associated with inflation. This would be collated with other annual uplifts in relation to Children and Young People's Services and take effect for this element from April 2026.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 The development of this Local Offer has involved a number of partner agencies across Rotherham, including health, education, commissioning, performance, legal services, and finance. Meetings with the Care Leavers Forum and the Residents Meeting at Hollowgate attendees are scheduled regularly to offer their views about the Rotherham Care Leavers Offer, to enable these to be built into the ongoing revision of the Local Offer.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 The new arrangements will commence upon approval from Cabinet on 1st October 2024, if this Local Offer is approved.
- 5.2 The implementation of the Local Offer will be reviewed in various forums, including monthly performance clinics and boards and the Corporate Parenting Panel. The Rotherham Care Leavers Local Offer will be reviewed annually or as changes arise to services.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 The overall cost of implementing the changes to the Care Leavers financial offer as set out in the table in paragraph 2.6 above is estimated at £27,200 per annum. The estimated cost is based on an assessment of the number or cohort of Care Leavers that would be impacted or in receipt of the allowance (based on 2023/24 data). However, there is the risk of increased costs as the number of requests may rise and be higher than the level in 2023/24, assumed in the calculation.
- 6.2 The Leaving Care service is forecasting an overspend of £0.2m mainly due to increased leaving care allowances and insufficient Government funding to cover the cost of supporting the rising number of 18+ UASC cohort. Therefore, approval of the proposed changes to the Care Leavers financial offer will create a further overspend in this area. It should be noted that the service are working to address the wider demand pressures facing the service.
- 6.3 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 makes provisions concerning looked after children and Care Leavers to improve support to promote their welfare and safeguarding. The seven principles of corporate parenting has already been referenced in this paper; such principles are set out in legislation, that every Local Authority must have regard to as a corporate parent of these children and young people. This paper focusses on improved support and the critical question when considering this is, “would this be good enough for my child?.”
- 7.2 This is the approach that is stipulated in statutory guidance for local authorities, “Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and Care Leavers” Feb 2018. This question highlights the priority that is to be given to this responsibility and recognises that looked after children and young people have the same needs as other children. The proposals of various types of support as set out at para 2.6 cater for those needs, which can be a combination of financial and practical help in the exercise of corporate parenting principles are to be aimed, as far as possible, to secure positive experiences for looked after children and young people.
- 7.3 Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 dictates that every Local Authority must publish information about services that Care Leavers are offered to assist in preparing for adulthood and independent living. Such services offered by a Local Authority are to be known as its “Local Offer for Care Leavers.” Section 5 states that a Local Authority must update its offer from time to time as appropriate. Therefore, the further development of the Local Offer, is in line with this legislation. The requirement to consult relevant persons about the services has also been undertaken as addressed above at paragraph 4. Therefore, there are no legal implications posed by the recommendation at 3.1.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no direct HR implications within this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 Implications to vulnerable children and young people are covered within the report.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 Equality and human rights are considered within the report.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 Any implications are included in Appendix 4 Carbon Impact Assessment.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1. Implications for partners are reflected in the report.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 These are referred to in the report.

14. Accountable Officers

Monica Green, Assistant Director Children's Services

Jane Wood, Head of Service Children in Care and Corporate Parenting

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp OBE	02/09/24
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	21/08/24
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	21/08/24

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