

## Council 30 January 2024

### Motion in the name of Councillor Pauline Coakley-Webb and Councillor Zahra Beg Leaving Care Covenant

#### Council Notes

- All young people who leave care at 16, 17 or 18 are statutorily provided with some support from the local authority. This includes:
  - Being assigned a Personal Adviser to help them in the transition to living independently
  - Support with finding accommodation and with any costs of participating in education, training and employment.
- That given the greater level of support at this crucial stage during the transition of care leavers to adulthood is needed, wider society also needs to play a part.
- The Care Leavers Covenant sets five outcomes across the public and private sector:
  - 1. Care leavers are better prepared and supported to live independently.
  - 2. Care leavers have improved access to employment, education, and training.
  - 3. Care leavers experience stability in their lives and feel safe and secure.
  - 4. Care leavers have improved access to health and emotional support.
  - 5. Care leavers achieve financial stability.
- The Council has an extensive set of provisions available for care leavers including:
  - Woodhouse Road Leaving Care Centre which provides:
    - Support for Employment, Education and Training
    - Support for both physical and mental health and wellbeing through multiagency collaboration and accessibility.
    - Support to live independently through training and the support of Personal Advisors, advocates and mentors.
    - A safe space to meet with other care leavers to celebrate achievements.
  - Council Tax exempt to the age of 25
  - Leaving Care Housing protocol with a commitment to no care leaver being made *"intentionally homeless"*.
  - Life long offer of support and advice to all Barnet care experienced young people
- The Council is developing a range of projects through its charity "Live Unlimited" and across departments to support care leavers, including work experience, apprenticeships, and training.
- Care experienced people face significant barriers that impact them throughout their lives.

- Despite the resilience of many care experienced people, society too often does not take their needs into account; care experienced people often face discrimination and stigma across housing, health, education, relationships, employment and in the criminal justice system.
- Care experienced people may encounter inconsistent support in different geographical areas.
- As corporate parents, councillors have a collective responsibility for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by us as an authority.
- That all corporate parents should commit to, hearing the voices of looked after children and young people and to consider their needs in any aspect of Council work.
- That councillors should be champions of the children in our care and challenge the negative attitudes and prejudice that exists in all aspects of society.
- The Council has adopted an approach to equalities is based on the Equality Act.
- Care experienced young people experience multiple disadvantages.
- That people with “protected characteristics” in equalities legislation such as disability or sex are protected by a public sector equality duty that requires public bodies, such as councils, to
  - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- *Under Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017:*
  - *(1) A local authority in England must, in carrying out functions in relation to the children and young people mentioned in subsection*
  - *(2), have regard to the need - (a) to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;*
  - *(b) to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings; 121*
  - *(c) to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;*
  - *(d) 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;*
  - *(e) to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;*
  - *(f) for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;*
  - *(g) to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.*
  - *(2) The children and young people mentioned in this subsection are –*
  - *(a) children who are looked after by a local authority, within the meaning given by section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989;*
  - *(b) relevant children within the meaning given by section 23A(2) of that Act;*
  - *(c) persons aged under 25 who are former relevant children within the meaning given by section 23C(1) of that Act.*

- *According to the “Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers statutory guidance for local authorities” the following functions are functions where consideration of corporate parenting principles should generally apply education, social Care, housing, libraries, leisure and recreation and local taxation collection.*

The Children and Social Work Act sets out requirements for the council to comply with

**Council Resolves to:**

- Lobby government for a change in the law to allow Care Experience to become a protected characteristic under the Equality Act and other legislation so that it will enable this to be a requirement for both the private and public sectors. This would be helpful in such areas as employment for example.
  - Recognise that care experienced people are a group who are likely to face discrimination.
  - Recognise its duty to put the needs of disadvantaged people at the heart of decision-making through co-production and collaboration.
  - Ensure that future relevant decisions, services and policies made and adopted by the Council should be assessed through assessments to determine the impact of changes on people with care experience.
- Become a signatory to the Care Leavers Covenant.
- Ask officers to explore the implementation of Implements the 5 Part Strategy for Local Authorities enshrined in the Covenant ensuring we commit to, or maintain our present practice, in:
  - Raising awareness of the covenant
  - Council tax exemption
  - Training and employment opportunities
  - Social value policy
  - Economic development
- Continue to proactively seek out and listen to the voices of care experienced people when developing new policies based on their views.