

# **REPORT FOR: Corporate Parenting Panel**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	22 <sup>nd</sup> April 2013
<b>Subject:</b>	Leaving Care Charter Review
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Catherine Doran Corporate Director of Children and Families
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Mitzi Green Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Enclosures:</b>	Appendix 1 – Charter for Care Leavers Appendix 2 – Harrow Leaving Care Charter Review Schedule

## **1.0 Summary and Recommendations**

- This report seeks to inform the Corporate Parenting Panel on the review of the Leaving Care Charter; support and entitlement for young people leaving care.
- Panel members are invited to consider recommendations contained in section 3.6 and give guidance on subsequent Cabinet or Portfolio Holder decision making arrangements.

## 2.0 Introduction

The Pledge for Children Looked After (CLA) was reviewed in Harrow by Beyond Limits, towards the end of 2012 and presented to the Corporate Parenting panel, this set out principles of support to looked after children.

On 30 October 2012, Edward Timpson (MP) Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Children and Families wrote to all Directors of Children Services in the country, distributing a Charter for Careleavers and requesting that local Charters for careleavers are reviewed and consider setting equality with the provision of independent living grants (ILG) nationally to provide consistent financial support.

Leaving Care Charter has been operated in Harrow since 2008, support entitlements and principle expectations of services were set out. These are promises regarding services to young people leaving care.

The key principles in this Leaving Care Charter remain constant through any changes in legislation, regulation and guidance. Care leavers urge local authorities to use these principles when they make decisions about their lives and support. The Charter for Care Leavers is designed to raise expectation, aspiration and understanding of what care leavers need and what the government and local authorities should do to be good Corporate Parents.

Harrow Council has a responsibility to children and young people in its care and to its care leavers. This is represented by the Corporate Parenting panel and responsibility for all the Council.

### 2.1

A project group was established to undertake the review of the Leaving Care Charter. This project group consisted of:

- Review the current Leaving Care Charter
- Consult with young people and LCT staff members
- Consult with subgroups such as Beyond Limits
- Consult with Housing professionals by having regular sub-housing meetings
- Consultation with the Virtual Head Teacher
- Consultation with placement services/foster carers
- Consider existing financial implications and support

A schedule was initiated in December 2012 and an interim review report was presented to Children's Service Management Team on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013. The Leaving Care Charter schedule of entitlements is attached, **Appendix 1**.

### 2.2

A project was established to review the Leaving Care Charter, **Appendix 2**, led by Negus Gebeyhu, UASC and Leaving Care Team Manager. When undertaking the focus group with young people leaving care to review the Charter, they had said "the charter was designed to raise expectation, aspiration, and understanding of what care leavers needed" so government and local authorities should do more to be good corporate parents.

### **2.3**

Whilst the charter compared the views of young people leaving care from different background reflecting diversity, young people were anxious about how they would cope if they have no skill to live independently. Although, some had said “I learned everyday domestic skills” and “that they needed more training in practical activities; such as cooking, washing, and cleaning” which the charter will address.

### **2.4**

The focus group also had feedback regarding support with education, a young person had said "the reward to educational achievement and the Independent Living Grant to be increased to £2000 is a great news for us". Also in respect of health and improving outcomes, "the charter will address all care leavers to have a health passport what fantastic news". We expect that this small increase makes living more sustainable for young people leaving care.

## **3.0 Issues**

There are several key areas in respect of the Leaving Care Charter; Education; Employment and Independent Living Grant (ILG).

### **3.1**

Supporting careleavers in aspiring and achieving educational outcomes is a key role of Corporate Parents. Previously the Leaving Care Charter suggested that young people in higher education that complete their courses be rewarded with £25 per course. This continues to be a reasonable reward incentive to improve basic educational achievements and support young people to aspire to further training and education. The current Leaving Care Charter has also proposed that young people that pass their Higher National Diploma (HND) are rewarded £150, Higher National Certificate (HNC) to be rewarded £100 and degree courses to be rewarded with £250.

The Virtual School is being established to develop education attainment and improved outcomes for looked after children. Support is being provided by Leaving Care Team and UACS during higher education and for YP who are not in education employment or training. This requires increased attention and practical support for children looked after, but the purpose of the Charter will be to acknowledge and reward achievement. The annual celebration of achievement award will continue to recognise and celebrate progress.

### **3.2**

Education opportunities are critical in supporting careleavers with maximising life chances. We want to develop and improve employment opportunities, making use of volunteer schemes and apprenticeships in Harrow. Our programme is the X16 Programme, where we are promoting opportunities for careleavers and provide real life chances. Recently a young person leaving care was offered a job, following her programme in placement at a Children Centre. Like many authorities we do have challenges with some of our careleavers to develop aspirations, but we regularly seek their views, engagement and establish opportunities where there is local interest and practical support. We have experienced that initiatives must have practical support for young people whilst undertaking these programmes and opportunities.

### **3.3**

Harrow Council had previously provided an ILG to young people of £1,500. This has been deemed nationally as insufficient to enable support to young people setting up home, where local authorities nationally are asked to consider £2,000, as set out by the letter from Edward Timpson in October 2012.

The Leaving Care Charter suggests that all young people over 18 who are eligible for permanent accommodation and meet the criteria for housing nomination will be entitled to an Independent Living Grant to use to furnish their accommodation.

### **3.4**

The Children Looked After Life Chances Forum has established a sub groups where progress and monitoring takes place in respect of implementing the Leaving Care Charter. These entitlements should be reviewed annually.

### **3.5**

As current performance indicators regarding Careleavers outcomes requires improving, the leaving care charter sets out specific support to careleavers, where support with education achievement and attainment is promoted and recognised. The Department of further Education will in future want monitoring information to be collected by local authorities regarding contact with young people 20 and 21, in addition to aged 19.

## **3.6 Proposed Recommendations**

- 1) Support the increase of the independent living grant to increase from £1500 to £2000
- 2) Continue to recognise and reward young people in higher education i.e. HNC (£100), HND (£150) and degree courses (£250)
- 3) Support implementation of the Leaving Care Charter 2013, Appendix 1

The format of the Leaving Care Charter will be in a booklet format and will be young people friendly. It is hoped that the front cover of the Leaving Care Charter is designed by young people. There will also be an electronic copy for all professionals (outlined in the policy and procedures).

## **3.7 Environmental Impact**

There is no specific environmental impact from the issues outlined in this report.

### 3.8 Financial Implications

Implication with increasing the Independent Living Grant for young people leaving care is:

No of Young People 2013	Current LCG	Proposed LCG	Estimated Increase
25	£1,500	£2,000	£500.00 per person
<b>Total</b>	<b>£37,500</b>	<b>£50,000</b>	<b>£12,500</b>
No of Young People 2014	Current LCG	Proposed LCG	Estimated Increase
29	£1500.00	£2000.00	£500.00 per person
<b>Total</b>	<b>£43,500</b>	<b>£58,000</b>	<b>£14,500</b>
No of Young People 2015	Current LCG	Proposed LCG	Estimated Increase
22	£1500.00	£2000.00	£500.00 per person
<b>Total</b>	<b>£33,000</b>	<b>£44,000</b>	<b>£11,000</b>

Implications with continuing to recognising academic achievement:

Number YP in final year degree courses	Estimated cost at the end of June 2013	Forecast for the next three years based on current figures
5	£1250 (@ £250 per YP)	5 x 3 years = £3750
Number of YP in their second Year	Estimated cost at the end of June 2013	Forecast for the next three years based on current figures
3		3 x 3 years = 9 YP
Number of YP who will start University in Oct 2013/14	£2000 bursary for joining University as a first year student	£2000 bursary for joining University as a first year student

2	£4000 one off payment	2 x 2 years = 4YP £8000
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### 3.9 Risk Management Implications

All related risks are recorded in the Children's Services risk register. There is a significant reputational risk from a poor inspection of social care, where support to children looked after and young people leaving care are crucial to mitigate risks and demonstrate developing practice and procedure support to this cohort.

### 3.10 Equalities implications

CLA and care leavers are additionally vulnerable child in need. The 2009 statutory guidance "The Roles & Responsibilities of the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services" highlights the need for Local Authorities to work corporately to improve the well-being of looked after children and young people leaving care, to make their needs a priority and seek the same outcomes that any reasonable caring parent would want for their own children. CLA consistently fare worse than their peers across a range of indicators including health, education, training, employment, homelessness and offending.

### 3.11 Corporate Priorities

CLA and care leavers are additionally vulnerable by virtue of the experiences that led them into Local Authority care and in respect of the poor outcomes that many CLA and care leavers experience when compared to their peers, The Council's corporate priorities include providing care and protection to those who are most in need and this includes CLA and care leavers.

### 4.0 Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Patricia Harvey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 15 April 2013		
Name: Banaz Dreary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 12 April 2013		

## **5.0 Contact Details and Background Papers**

**NONE**

**Contact:**

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