

# **REPORT FOR: Corporate Parenting Panel**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> April 2012
<b>Subject:</b>	Lifeskills Programme for Children Looked After
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Catherine Doran Corporate Director of Children's Services
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Mitzi Green
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Decision subject to Call-in:</b>	Yes
<b>Enclosures:</b>	Yes

## **1.0 Summary and Recommendations**

- This report is to inform the Corporate Parenting Panel to launch and implement the Harrow Lifeskills Programme for children looked after and their transition to adulthood and Leaving Care services
- Panel members are invited to consider recommendations contained in section 3.11 and give guidance on subsequent Cabinet or Portfolio Holder decision making arrangements.

## **2.0 Introduction**

Children looked after (CLA) must be supported to a safe and smooth transition to Leaving Care services and young adulthood, with preparation for independent living and establishing lifeskills to maximise their life chances.

**2.1** CLA will be 18 years old when they become a care leaver and are no longer in the care of the local authority. In accordance with duties outlined in the Leaving Care Act 2000, care leavers are entitled to receive local authority support as Care Leavers.

**2.2** Preparation for adulthood must be started at the earliest opportunity and support young people to develop skills, independence and confidence for when they leave care and become young adults.

**2.3** Harrow Lifeskills Programme was first considered in 2009, by Young people services. However, a working group was established in 2010 by the Service Manager for Children in Need and Looked after Children, under the framework of the CLA Life Chances Forum. Children looked after and young peoples views were sought as to how they could be supported and prepared for independence more effectively by Harrow Council in respect of their transition to young adulthood and leaving care services.

**2.4** Where young people are provided with direct ongoing support, monitoring, evaluation and review the success of independent living is increased. The CLA Lifeskills Programme will establish a foundation of basic needs in lifeskills and is designed to engage young people to contribute and participate in learning and development, leading up to and post 18 years old This will enable an assessment and evaluation of need regarding the progress and completion of the CLA Lifeskills programme, the allocated social worker, foster carer, carers and key support services for young people. Recognition of achievements should also be captured and acknowledged through out the process.

**2.5** The CLA Lifeskills Programme will help assess and recommend transition to independent living and nomination for Council tenancy accommodation under the Locata at 18 years old. The Leaving Care team will then continue to work with the young people establishing independent living support and ongoing monitoring.

**2.6** The CLA Life Chances forum has an established Care Leavers and Housing sub group, which will closely monitor transition and demonstrating key living skills, as well as monitoring rent payments and managing tenancies. The group will scrutinise current processes, maximise the benefit of local partnerships and address specific issues to improve housing outcomes for care leavers. This support after 18, is critical where young people are in thier own tenancy, managing independence and being accountable.

**2.7** A CLA Lifeskills Programme sub group has been established, the representatives of this group include the following;

- CLA Service Manager
- Placements Service Manager
- Leaving Care Team Manager
- Harrow Foster Carer's Association

- Housing Department
- “Beyond Limits” Children in Care Council
- Independent Visitor Scheme co-ordinator
- CLA Team Manager

### **3.0 Issues**

CLA require individual support, training and leadership regarding their development and transition to young adulthood. Young people are best placed learning practical skills, researching and engaging with a person to develop new skills and manage responsibilities. Without such support, young people can fail to manage and retain tenancies, fail in transition and not have fundamental life skills to live independently. In 2010, a small number of young people were evicted from their tenancies, due to not being able to manage them and live independently. Issues regarding financial management, anti social behaviour were key, as well as personal skills and care being of serious concern.

**3.1** In order to ensure that all care leavers are ready to live independently and manage a tenancy once they turn 18 years old, the CLA Life Skills Programme is required, in order to support CLA with preparation and development skills for independent living before and post 18. The Housing and Careleavers sub group will continue monitoring and support. In addition, promoting confidence and praise is critical for all CLA whereby we will introduce a recognition of achievement letter to recognise exceptional goals achieved and event with the young person.

**3.2** Although care leavers are provided with advice and support regarding appropriate benefits and entitlements, benefits legislation is frequently changing and can be difficult system to navigate and so preparation is critical to prevent eviction and related emotional difficulties post 18, where further support will be co-ordinated engaging outreach services from Honey Pot Lane and key partner agencies; HOPE and Housing to support the management of independency and transition to young adulthood.

### **3.3 Participation with Children Looked After**

In 2009, young people services began consultation and design a lifeskills programme with young people leaving care. Young peoples’ views were gathered and a unit based framework was sketched, but was completed. In 2010, the CLA Lifeskills programme sub group was established and gathered the information to begin preparing a lifeskills programme. A co-ordinator was identified and has since put together the lifeskills programme.

**3.2** In 2011, the lifeskills programme co-ordinator established a draft programme and sought feedback from young people and partners colleagues, social workers, foster carers and managers. The draft programme was completed by 4 young people as a pilot. These 4 young people were identified by representatives of the CLA Lifeskills sub group, as being known to them, Their feedback was collated. Feedback was positive and led to the layout and design of the programme. Please see Appendix 1.

**3.4** In November 2011, Beyond Limits were consulted upon in respect of the draft Lifeskills Programme and its implementation. Feedback was very

positive and support of the programme, young people were 'impressed with the folder', 'organised well', 'usefull', promoted discussion' and older young people 'would have loved to have it' when they were younger.

**3.5** The Lifeskills programme will focus on the timely preparation of development of appropriate life skills for all CLA. This includes a readiness assessment for a broad range of issues, including appropriate practical skills, emotional resilience and well-being needs, support requirements and the type of education, employment and training conditions that will support a successful transition to young adulthood, including managing and maintaining a tenancy.

**3.6** Consideration will be made in future to prepare an online version, so that young people have the option to have a physical hard copy programme and/or an electronic programme.

### **3.7 Implementing the Lifeskills Programme**

The CLA Lifeskills Programme will be provided from April 2011, to every looked after children as they turn 14 years old. In addition, the programme will be provided for all looked after children who are already 14 to 18 years old.

**3.8** Social workers, foster carers and key partner agencies will be offered training and guidance to prepare and complete the lifeskills programme with young people looked after. The key partners engaged with launching, preparing and completing the lifeskills programme will be:

- the allocated social worker
- foster care
- Independent visitor
- Honey Pot Lane staff

**3.9** The CLA Life Chances Forum will monitor and review the implementation of the lifeskills programme and evaluate feedback from young people and professionals involved.

**3.10** The recognition letter (appendix 2) will be used more frequently to recognise and praise the achievements by young people and acknowledge this accordingly, acting as Corporate Parents for the child/young person by sending a letter from the Divisional Director or Portfolio holder for Children's Services.

### **3.11 Proposed Recommendations**

The Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to consider the following recommendations in order to address the Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities for children looked after and introducing the CLA Lifeskills Programme;

- a) To endorse the CLA Lifeskills Programme, for all CLA aged 14 – 18 years old
- b) To support the distribution of the Lifeskills Programme to all looked after young people aged 14 – 17 years old and all young people who turn 14 in future

- c) To support the collective endeavours of the CLA Life Chances Forum and task them with the responsibility for developing training, clear operational systems and processes for monitoring and reviewing how the lifeskills programme will be implemented by the Council
- d) To request the CLA Life Chances Forum to report back to the Corporate Parenting panel regarding progress and evaluation of the 1<sup>st</sup> year of the CLA Lifeskills Programme in April 2013
- e) To note the contribution and feed back of CLA and care leavers regarding the development of the lifeskills programme
- f) Endorse and support the letter of recognition for CLA and young people leaving care

### **3.20 Environmental Impact**

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

### **3.21 Financial Implications**

The Lifeskills Programme costs £22.32 for each actual programme and a one off administration fee of £610.00, which included the draft programmes. There are 88 CLA young people who are currently aged 14 – 17 years old.

In 2012, a further 8 young people will turn 14, in 2013, there will be 3 young people turning 14 and in 2014, there will be 5 young people turning 14. In total, for the next 3 years, the total cost for each person to have a programme will be £2,320.91 and £610 administration cost. This will be funded by the Care Matters grant.

### **3.23 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, in particular any serious or untoward significant incident concerning a care leaver. Preparations are in place to mitigate this risk.

### **3.24 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.

### **3.25 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: Emma Stabler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 21/3/12		
Name: Sharon Clarke	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 15/3/12		

## 5.0 Performance Officer Clearance

Name: David Harrington	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Divisional Director Partnership, Development and Performance
Date: 19/3/12		

## 6.0 Contact Details and Background Papers

**Contact:**

**Nick Crick, CLA Service Manager, Children's Services**

Tel: 0208 736 6976

nick.crick@harrow.gov.uk

## Appendix 1

### Consultation and feedback with young people

The programme was piloted by 5 young people in the summer of 2011. Their comments and contributions have been fully incorporated and adopted within the final programme.

**Beyond Limits** were also consulted in December 2011, these are some of their comments:

*CR questioned whether the adult comments box was necessary as he feels this may undermine the fact that this should be a reflection of the young person's view. He said young people looked after often feel that they are told what they feel is not correct or is wrong. When explained to CR that the aim of having the adult's box is to promote dialogue and discussion around how others see how a young person deals with situations and the impact of their behaviour on others, CR agreed that this is a good idea. Perhaps this needs to be made clearer!*

*CR suggested that the file be seen as a 'living document' so there should be places for a young person to put copies of their PEP plan for example. He suggested having specific spaces for these things. This is now adopted at the end of the folder.*

*CR said that at the age the young person will be filling in the life skills files, they will be having their progress in life skills development reviewed on a regular basis rather than once a year so CR suggested there should be sheets that can be used to record progress on a more regular basis (like a diary), which is also at the end of the folder.*

*TE did not feel that a 14 year old will like the cover but thought that the older young people may not mind it so much.*

*TE felt the content was quite good. He said that Unit -6 would be the most important and relevant to him at this point.*

*TE also said that it would be worth having this on line as some young people might misplace it or lose it while changing placement etc.*

*NB was quite impressed with the folder. She said that she has filled in bits and bobs of this kind with her social worker but felt that this was much clearer and organized well.*

*She also said that Unit 6 would be really useful for her and Unit 7 as she wants to join a gym and it would help her to have information on leisure activities.*

*On the whole she thought this was a good programme and she would have loved to have used it if she had had the opportunity couple of years back.*

*She also said that the young people should have an option of doing it on line.*

## Appendix 2

### Recognition letter

To: Address

Date

Dear ?

Recognition:

I wanted to take this opportunity to write to you to congratulate you in respect of  
(insert text regarding individual recognition)

Well done and I wish you well for the future,

Yours Sincerely,

Gail Hancock  
Divisional Director - Targeted Services

Cc: Nick Crick Service Manager - Children Looked After  
Cc: Team Manager - file copy



