

Committees: Safeguarding Sub-Committee – For recommendation Department of Community and Children’s Services (DCCS) Grand Committee – For decision	Dated: 16/04/2024 01/05/2024
Subject: Care Leaver Offer	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	3, 10
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N/A
Report of: Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Community and Children’s Services	For Recommendation to approve at CCS Committee
Report author: Rachel Talmage, Head of Children’s Social Care and Early Help, People Department, Department of Community and Children’s Services	

Summary

This report to Members shows the fully revised offer to Care Leavers supported by the City of London. The offer was redesigned following: (1) ideas and feedback from care leavers and their social workers; (2) the Care Leaver Covenant; (3) the Care Leaver Compact; (4) consideration of other outstanding local authorities’ offers; and (5) a request by the Town Clerk that the offer be world class. The offer was approved by the Children in Care Council.

Recommendations

Safeguarding Sub-Committee Members are asked to:

- Discuss and recommend the Care Leaver Offer for approval at the Grand Committee.

DCCS Grand Committee members are asked to:

- Approve the Offer.

Main Report

Background

1. It is a duty under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 that England's local authorities must publish information about the services offered for care leavers.
2. Following approval by the Safeguarding Sub-Committee of a paper presented to the Grand Committee in December 2023, the City of London is a signatory to the Pan London Care Leavers Compact and affords care leavers protection and support equivalent to the protected characteristics under the Public Sector Equality Duty.
3. The Care Leaver Offer fully adopts all six recommendations from the Compact.¹ The Compact was formally launched on 5 March 2024.
4. City of London Corporation Members have always demonstrated a commitment to supporting our care leaver population. Following a focused visit of our care leaving services in November 2018, Ofsted noted that:

“Care leavers in the City of London benefit from a strong service that ensures that they are very well supported. They receive effective help which enables most to achieve good outcomes. There is a determined and appropriately ambitious political and corporate focus to sustain and improve outcomes for care leavers.”

5. Furthermore, in 2020, during the full Inspection of Children's Social Care Services, Ofsted judged the experience and progress of children in care and care leavers to be 'outstanding', noting the following:
 - Children in care and care leavers are extremely well supported.
 - Commitment to ensuring that needs are met is demonstrated by senior leaders, councillors, health partners and children's social workers, resulting in an extremely good level of service.
 - Extremely strong involvement and interest from council members.
 - Particular sensitivity shown regarding cultural diversity.
 - Strong use of advocacy and independent visiting.
 - Good housing offer, with support and moving only when ready.

¹ The six requirements of the compact are:

- 1) London local authorities offer a full council tax exemption for their Care Leavers (18–25) that live within the borough.
- 2) London local authorities adopt the principle that no care leaver (18–25) should be found intentionally homeless.
- 3) London local authorities adopt the principle that their care leavers up to the age of 25 are to be found as being in 'priority need' under homelessness legislation.
- 4) London local authorities offer a rent deposit scheme for their care leavers (18–25) for whom private rented accommodation is assessed as a suitable option.
- 5) London local authorities have a joint protocol between Housing and Children's Services for care leavers in line with good practice advice.
- 6) London local authorities become signatories to the Care Leavers Covenant.

6. In 2023, Ofsted introduced a separate judgement on care leavers, in recognition of the unique set of presenting needs of this cohort of young people.
7. The Care Leaver Offer has been updated after listening to the views of our care leavers, the people who work with them, from national research, and from reviewing other offers from local authorities that are also graded as 'outstanding'. The final offer is appended for review and decision (see Appendix 1).

Current Position

8. The Care Leaver offer is fully updated to realise the commitments in the Compact.
9. Since becoming a signatory to the Compact, a fully revised joint protocol between housing and children's social care has been approved; care leavers have ringfenced apprenticeships, attended university taster sessions, learnt more about apprenticeships via introductory sessions, and taken up our enhanced travel offer (Transport for London pay 50% of bus passes, City of London top up the remainder).
10. Following a decision by the Grand Committee, care leavers have protection akin to protected characteristics under the Equality Act. The Corporation as a whole organisation is corporate (community) parent to each of our children in and leaving our care.

Key features of the 2024 offer

11. Our Care Leaver Offer seeks to include our young people in every opportunity within the City of London Corporation. The Corporation includes high-profile green spaces, tourist attractions, the Port Authority, our own police force, the Barbican, Museum of London, related institutions such as Guildhall School of Music and Drama along with employment in surveying, law, IT, environment, media, strategy and community services among others.
12. Care leavers will have the support needed to obtain citizenship. This includes help with finding and securing legal aid lawyers, social work support in home office interviews, support with applications for Indefinite Leave to Remain and citizenship applications. If eligible, all care leavers will have a passport. This offer meets care leavers' immediate basic need for security and supports this through their life course.
13. Care leavers are given the highest priority in respect of a council tenancy. Care leavers will be supported to stay with their foster carers where this is the right plan. Care leavers will be in supported accommodation that meets their needs until their tenancy is granted.
14. Apprenticeships, work experience, interview practice, exposure to career fairs and connections between the Virtual School Head, participation and adult skills are a core part of our 'family firm' offer.

15. Care leavers are supported with the same level of funding for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, including masters and PhD programmes of study.
16. Care leavers are supported to vote.
17. Care leavers receive free prescriptions.
18. Care leavers can experience theatre, art and music, and have a Barbican young person's pass, with a full enrichment programme giving access to oracy classes, sport and forest school at Epping Forest.
19. Care leavers are included in the Children in Care Council, with independent visiting and advocacy – it is a choice to opt out. All care leavers are supported to access charitable/leisure groups to build friendships and social connections.

Care leaver views

20. Care leavers appreciate the offer and think it is comprehensive. Two further requests are made: a travelcard for tube/train/buses within London each year to age 25; and monthly gym membership to age 25 (it currently stops at age 21).
21. The cost of the travelcard would not be subsidised by Transport for London as the current 50% bus pass is. The cost is prohibitive without additional funds being awarded.
22. The monthly gym membership would cost £30 per month per care leaver, and is beyond the scope of the budget. The other costs in the offer can be contained within our local risk.

Corporate plan

23. Work to support care leavers sits within a commitment to a flourishing society, ensuring equality of opportunity. We would like to see equal outcomes for our young people: being able to access well-paying jobs and receive a good-quality education. Our ambition for care leavers is equivalent to our hopes for our own children.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

- **Financial implications** – Costs to meet these commitments are managed within local budgets. Any enhancement to the gym membership to age 25 and the travelcard to 25 would require additional funds.
- **Resource implications** – Resource needs are met within the Department's resource base. Wider corporate engagement, for example, the procuring of laptops, will see wider commitment and distribution of resources to support our ambitions.
- **Legal implications** – none

- **Risk implications** – Providing a full, creative, enrichment programme and ensuring that young people are provided with opportunities and courses that will stretch them offers an antidote to boredom and the risk of unhealthy behaviours on an individual basis. The City of London will be subject to an Ofsted inspection in this area. There is a risk that, should the impact of the offer not continue to innovate and grow, then the City of London would suffer reputational risk.
- **Equalities implications** – The London Innovation and Improvement Alliance Report on Local Authority Commitments notes the following:

“Care Leavers and those who support them have advocated for some time that care experience should be recognised as a ‘protected characteristic’. This gained further traction through the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care. The Review discusses the stigma and discrimination that people experience as a result of being in care or care experienced and argues that it is similar in nature to other groups that have a legally protected characteristic under the Equality Act (2021). It recommends that care experience should be made a protected characteristic to give employers, public services etc greater authority to put in place programmes to promote better outcomes for care experienced people. “

The Safeguarding Sub-Committee proposed and the Community and Children’s Services Grand Committee approved our care leavers as having support equivalent to those protected characteristics under Equality legislation.

- **Climate implications** – none
- **Security implications** – none

Conclusion

24. The Care Leaver Offer sets out a comprehensive ambitious offer for all our children. The ambition is to be a world-class service to care leavers, to ensure that they reach their potential, vote, enjoy arts/music/sport, have good friends and relationships and obtain better quality and higher paying jobs, including within the Corporation and its institutions.

Appendices

- **Appendix 1:** The City of London Care Leaver Offer

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