



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
3 JUNE 2025

LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S RESPONSIBILITY TO CARE LEAVERS

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the committee with an overview of Leicestershire County Council's duties and responsibilities to care leavers, the progress achieved and the development plan going forward.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The functions of local authorities in relation to children who are 'looked after' by them and for children who have become care leavers, are set out in the Children Act 1989 and associated regulations and guidance; the principal regulations are the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review regulations 2010.
3. The Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-2025 outlines Leicestershire's commitment to the seven corporate parenting principles set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017.
4. Local authorities have a duty to support young people who cease to be looked after (for example those referred to in legislation as 'relevant' and 'former relevant' children). The main aim of the Care Leavers Regulations and of this guidance is to make sure that care leavers are provided with comprehensive personal support so that they achieve their potential as they make their transition to adulthood. The Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 are made under the Children Act 1989.
5. Following a motion made at the County Council meeting on 21 February 2024, Leicestershire County Council committed to making being 'care experienced' a protected characteristic.

Background

6. As of 30 April 2025, Leicestershire County Council had 498 care leavers (aged 18-25). Of this, 226 are UASC care leavers with 10 being aged 22-25, and 272 are British born with 41 being aged 22-25.
7. 'Our Promise' to children in care and care leavers was launched in 2019 and sets out the commitment that Leicestershire County Council and its partners will provide the

best support, guidance and care to children in care and care leavers. It demonstrates that the Service values them for their individuality, provide stability and offer aspirational life chances as a good parent provides for their children. An annual report for Our Promise is completed to evidence the partnership working and impact for children and young people.

8. The most recent Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in April 2024 judged services to children in care as outstanding. The report identified:
 - a. Personal Advisors (PAs) know their care leavers extremely well, recognising their strengths and vulnerabilities. Children in care are allocated a PA at an early stage of their journey towards leaving care, which helps them to build positive, trusting and lasting relationships with their PAs before their transition to adulthood. Care leavers are typically highly positive about the support they receive, particularly in the relationships that they have built with their PAs and social workers.
 - b. Many care leavers in Leicestershire remain in contact with the service and have long-standing links with their PA. PAs act as good parents would and routinely encourage care leavers to continue to access help if needed, and most do. There is thoughtful discussion about care leavers' next stage in life, and what help and guidance is available to them. If care leavers do choose to opt out of receiving a service, they can opt back in at any time.
 - c. PAs are excellent role models and lead by example. They fiercely champion the rights of care leavers. Inspectors saw many examples of workers going above and beyond to ensure that care leavers have the support that they need. Feedback from care leavers themselves was also extremely positive. One care leaver said, 'The service I have received has changed my life. My PA is kind, and they care about me.' Another said, 'The service has been amazing and over time they have helped out as much as they can.'
 - d. Care leavers benefit from a comprehensive and ambitious local offer. The published offer is easy to navigate on the County Council's website and promotes an array of resources. This is a lifelong offer, enabling care leavers to return for support at any age. Care leavers have actively contributed to the development of the offer and PAs ensure that care leavers fully understand what support is available to them.

Service Overview

9. There are four teams for Care Leavers, two for British born Care Leavers and two teams for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Care Leavers, this provides care leavers with specialist personal advisor support, especially for those still waiting on decisions for asylum.

Service Priorities

10. The overall mission as a service is for care leavers to feel well prepared for independence, feeling safe, supported and having a sense of belonging. The priorities identified to achieve this are:

- a. To provide care leavers with the right support at the right time; to ensure that they are enabled to achieve their best outcomes and for the voice of care leavers to inform the Service and the support it offers.
- b. To be good corporate parents and work hard to ensure that young people leaving care are supported to develop their independence skills and have somewhere safe that they can call home. This is enhanced by the regular review of the Joint Housing protocol for Care leavers across the seven district authorities which guarantees priority access to social housing.
- c. Staff will ensure they learn who the important people are in the young person's life and what support networks are in place. They will help grow their networks through undertaking cultural genograms so young people have a good understanding of their own life journey and support them to have adults in their lives who care about them.
- d. All children in care will be allocated a Personal Advisor from the age of 16 to support establishing a meaningful and trusting relationship prior to turning 18. They will ensure the Local Offer for care leavers is provided to all young people and that all care leavers from age 18-25 years of age are fully aware of their rights.
- e. Being aspirational for care leavers, supporting them to engage with Education, Employment, and Training by linking in with work readiness programmes, apprenticeships and supporting young people to access college and further education.
- f. Safeguarding the most complex and vulnerable care leavers by ensuring multi-agency and network support is developed and is purposeful. For those who are assessed as having complex needs and associated risks that are high and medium, multi-agency meetings will be regularly undertaken to review the co-owned safety plans with clear management oversight.
- g. Ensure unaccompanied care leavers have access to legal support, interpreters and community organisations and encourage the use of advocates and Independent Visitors for young people.
- h. Ensure that Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic status is embedded into departmental and Corporate Policy with clear actions to improve outcomes for children and care leavers

Service Outcomes

Progressing the impact of Care experience being a Protected Characteristic

11. Following a motion made at the Council meeting on 21 February 2024, care leavers now have Protected Characteristic status due to the Council recognising that care experienced people are a group who are likely to face discrimination.
12. In the delivery of the Public Sector Equality Duty the Council will include care experience in the publication and review of equality objectives and the annual publication of information relating to people who share a protected characteristic in services and employment.
13. Future decision, services and policies made and adopted by the Council should be assessed through Equality Impact assessments to determine the impact of changes on people with care experience alongside those who formally share a protected characteristic. The Council needs to continue to proactively seek out and listen to voices of care experienced people when developing new policies.
14. Care Leavers can often struggle with engaging with training and employment due to their experiences. The service is working with Leicestershire Cares and Reed to support care leavers who are not in education, employment and training, to provide coaching and support for interview techniques, creating a CV and accessing training, apprenticeships and employment.

Supporting care leavers with complex risks and needs

15. The Service has improved processes to engage with adult social care, Health and Police when care leavers present with complex risk and/or need. This supports the development of co-owned safety plans which are robust and effective to reduce risk.
16. Care leavers in prison are identified as having complex need and risk and the care leaver Teams are working with the prison services across the East Midlands to ensure the Care Experience Matters guidance is being implemented. This has ensured that if a care experienced young person is being held in custody, the prisons record their Care leaver status, which identifies vulnerability and includes the details of their Personal Advisor. This improves support during their time in custody and planning for housing, employment, education six weeks prior to their release.

Housing offer for care leavers

17. Work has taken place with all seven district authorities to review the Joint housing Protocol. This includes the data on how long care leavers have been waiting for housing applications to go live and the length of time waiting for social housing in each District. Whilst young people are waiting for social housing, the service will provide care leavers with safe and appropriate accommodation that meets their individual needs, to help them transition into independence when they obtain their social housing.

Support for Care Leavers

18. The Local offer for care leavers includes exemption for Council tax, a bursary for University of £4,000, a Leaving Care Grant of £3,000, support with learning to drive and Leisure passes for 'Everyone Active' gyms. The Service is always looking for opportunities to further strengthen the offer which is for all care leavers.
19. The Service facilitates social opportunities for care leavers once a month through SYPAC (Supporting Young People After Care), where care leavers come together to share food, share views and socialise. Care leavers have been clear that they enjoy the social element of SYPAC rather than it being a structured forum. The Service has recently offered two separate SYPAC venues one in the north and south of the county, to support more care leavers being able to attend. This is open to all care leavers including unaccompanied care leavers

Impact

20. Care leavers all have a Pathway Plan which gives clear actions for how to support to achieve the best outcomes, this is reviewed every six months. As part of this plan there are expectations for the frequency of visiting by the Personal Advisor which are at a minimum of six weekly unless otherwise agreed. The Service is measured against the timeliness of both plans and visits. Pathway plans in timescale is currently 90% and recorded visits in timescale is currently 86%. There are also three key measures which are set by the Department for Education which are: being in contact with care leavers (up to 21), being in suitable accommodation and being in employment, education or training. Below is the current data for these measures.
 - i. Care leavers in Employment, Education or Training 63%;
 - ii. Care leavers in contact 97%;
 - iii. Care leavers in suitable accommodation 95%.

Background Papers

21. Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022 – 2025
<https://trixcms.trixonline.co.uk/api/assets/llrcs-leicestershire/8bb67275-2f3f-476c-91db-049bf6dd2dbc/corporate-parenting-strategy-2022-2025compressed.pdf>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

22. None.

Equality Implications

23. All assessments and services provided for Children in Care and Care Leavers are done so in a framework of respecting equality and diversity for young people. The Children and Family Services department is committed to equality and ensuring the

human rights of all users, and importantly to support those young people who have arrived here from other countries as unaccompanied children.

24. Care Leavers as a protected characteristic is considered as part of all service development.

Human Rights Implications

25. There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

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