

# Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

11 February 2019

Support for Care Leavers - Personal Advisor

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**Report of:** Cllr Steven Dixon, Executive Member for Families, Education and Children and Lead Member for Children's Services ([steven.dixon@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:steven.dixon@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

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## Purpose of this report

This report considers the new extended statutory legislation and demographic growth pressures on the support available to young people leaving care in Central Bedfordshire from their allocated Personal Advisor.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel is asked to:

**To note the proposal for additional Personal Advisor support to “meet legislative changes bringing extra statutory duties for Care Leavers aged 21-25” for which a budget has been built into the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2019/20 subject to approval by full Council in February 2019.**

## Issues

1. Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires each local authority to consult on and publish a local offer for its Care Leavers. The local offer provides information about all the services and support that is available to Care Leavers from the local authority, including information about both their statutory entitlements (such as appropriate accommodation, staying put, financial support to meet their education, training and employment needs, help to pay for things such as accommodation, food and clothing) and any discretionary support that a local authority provides (such as careers advice or public health services).

2. Central Bedfordshire's offer to Care Leavers includes details of services aimed at supporting young people with
  - a. Education and training
  - b. Health and Wellbeing
  - c. Relationships
  - d. Employment
  - e. Accommodation
  - f. Participation in Society
3. This report highlights the impact the statutory increase in the scope of eligibility, will have on demand and the subsequent statutory support that will need to be provided to young people leaving care by the Personal Advisors.
4. In Central Bedfordshire, eligible young people leaving care receive support and advice from a Personal Advisor (PA).
5. The Personal Advisor is the person appointed to work with the young person when they leave care and occupies a key role in providing support. They hold a pivotal role in the assessment, planning and review of the young person's needs as set out in the Pathway Plan; The Pathway Plan sets out the ambitions and route to the future for the young people leaving care and states how their needs will be met in their path to independence, including what support is available to them from the local authority.
6. The extent to which the Personal Advisor becomes the main source of advice and support to the young person varies according to individual circumstances and the young person's wishes.
7. In Central Bedfordshire, all eligible young people leaving care receive a multi-agency assessment of their needs including: the need for advice, assistance and support they need when leaving care. This informs the Pathway Plan.
8. All eligible young people have a Pathway Plan in place by their 16th birthday.
9. The Pathway Plan is reviewed with the young person and relevant professionals at least every 6 months.

### **Impact of new legislation on Personal Advisor (PA) support**

10. Under previous legislation, Local Authorities were required to only provide Care Leavers with support from a Personal Advisor until they reached the age of 21, with that support continuing up to the age of 25 if a Care Leaver was engaged in education or training. This support was not available to Care Leavers aged over 21 who were not in education, training or employment.

11. Based on the current cohort of Looked After Children and Care Leavers, the forecast of our child population indicates that in the next 3 years the number of young people receiving support from a Personal Advisor will continue to increase.
12. These figures take into account the fact that the Care Leavers who are now over the age of 21, have become entitled to Personal Advisor support under the new legislation.

Date	Number of young people entitled to receive PA support
31/03/2019	259
31/03/2020	254
31/03/2021	258

13. Current establishment in the Corporate Parenting Service is of 7 PAs (at the cost of just over £200k per year - £28,500 per Personal Advisor). At the time of this report (January 2019), the average caseload for each Personal Advisor is approximately 23 young people. This sits just under national average of 24-25 young people per Personal Advisor (*Source: DfE's new burden assessment, Comment of Mark Ridell, Leaving Care Adviser to Minister to eastern region leads*) and enables good quality direct work with this vulnerable group.
14. Manageable caseloads also allow for the best possible transfer of responsibility for working with the young person from their Social Worker to their Personal Advisor. Currently this takes place close to the young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Best practice will be for this to take place with a period of joint working between the ages of 17 and a half and 18.
15. Taking into account the projected figures above, if the establishment remains at 7 Personal Advisors, the caseload in the following years will look as follows:

Date	Ave Caseload 7 PA's
31/03/2019	37
31/03/2020	36
31/03/2021	37

16. The increase in caseloads above is not a sustainable model as one Personal Advisor is unable to provide relational intervention and a good quality service and to 40 young people. The most up to date figures indicate the following average caseloads below if we meet the need for all those young people, with their newly established statutory entitlement, require a service (January 2019):

Date	Caseload per 7 PA	Caseload per 8 PA	Caseload per 9 PA	Caseload per 10 PA	Caseload per 11 PA
31/03/2019	37	32	29	26	24
31/03/2020	36	32	29	25	23
31/03/2021	39	35	31	28	25

### **How many young people will this new statutory requirement affect?**

17. On 26<sup>th</sup> March 2018 all young people aged 21-25 newly entitled to receive a service from a Personal Advisor were written to and advised of their new statutory entitlement.

18. When the full detail of Central Bedfordshire's Leaving Care Offer is concluded including the level of financial and other support, the Leaving Care Offer will be formally launched. This will involve our CICC, partners, significant publicity and assertive outreach to all those your people entitled to a service. This outreach will include Personal Advisor's visiting young people. This high impact promotion is in line with our statutory commitments.

19. Three out of four of our care leavers who have turned 21yrs old since the change in the statutory entitlement, continue to be supported by the Leaving Care Service.

20. Based on the assumptions:

- All current Looked after Children/Young People who turn 18 before 31/03/22 will become care leavers
- Any of the above who don't qualify as a care leaver will be replaced by new LAC that do qualify.
- Three out of every four Care Leavers turning 21 receive services (take-up rate since April 18, 72%)
- Young people stop receiving services at 25
- Three out of four Care Leavers on 31<sup>st</sup> March 18 with whom we are not currently in touch seek further support

21. The total number of care leavers whose statutory entitlement to support from a Personal Adviser will be:

Date	Care Leavers requiring statutory support form PA
31/03/2019	162
31/03/2020	232
31/03/2021	230

22. An establishment of 11 Personal Advisors will allow an average caseload of 21.1 young people and the additional statutory responsibilities:

- Proactive follow up including visits to young people entitled to a service who have not responded so far. This will be a major piece of work in the first 6 months of the new financial year.
- High quality support to young people in the transition from working with their Social Worker to working with their Personal Advisor. This is a commitment of 6 months extra work for the Personal Advisor with every care leaver that they support.
- The ability to respond to increases in the number of care leavers in total
- The ability to be agile and respond to increases in the number of those in the cohort entitled to support taking it up (e.g. due its success, publicity or word of mouth) We intend to increase the percentage of young people returning to the service and staying with the service to 100%. This will be a commitment to support young people for the first 7 years of their adulthood to the age of 25.
- The ability to respond to the increasing complexity of this group of young people whose needs and demands can be high but often they do not meet the threshold for adult services.
- The provision of an Outstanding service to the children for whom we are corporate parents and have statutory responsibilities.

23. Over the last 18-24 months young people leaving the care of Central Bedfordshire Council have achieved good outcomes as Social Workers and Personal Advisors have manageable caseloads and they are providing relational social work and support to the young people. This is reflected in the fact that in this period the percentage of our Care Leavers in education, employment or training has consistently been very close to or exceeded 70%. This compares favourably with local (48.5%) and national (50%) figures.

24. Central Bedfordshire Council is fully committed in our offer to our Care Leavers and to achieve this, the caseloads and the support offered should be maintained at the same level going forward to ensure the best outcomes for our young people. In the recent inspection OFSTED found that in Central Bedfordshire

***“Care Leavers are safe and feel safe. They are confident young adults who have pride in themselves”.***

Furthermore, it was noted that ***“Personal Advisors support Care Leavers very well and help them to understand their choices”.***

The full OFSTED report can be found here:

<https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50004395>

25. These positive outcomes have been achieved with caseloads between 21-23 (October 18 – January 2019). It is important to maintain these very positive outcomes. It is also necessary to take into account the new statutory duty to support the larger number of care leavers for longer and to meet the additional demands outlined in points 21.1. It is for these reasons that we have set the recommended caseload as outlined above.

26. In response to the new legislation, the Department for Education have allocated £10k to Central Bedfordshire under the New Burden Funding for the current financial year. This is a nominal amount which will not fully cover the needs of the service.

### **Funding for the additional Personal Advisor support**

27. In order to meet the new extended statutory legislation and demographic growth pressures of our young people leaving care, Central Bedfordshire Council currently allocates a budget of just over £200k per year for the employment of Personal Advisors.

28. In order to continue offering good quality support to our Care Leavers, the caseloads need to be maintained in line with national averages. To achieve this for our young people, whilst taking into account the increase in demand detailed above, this report updates the Panel that subject to approval of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) in February 2019, the base budget will be increased by £245K of which £114k, will fund the equivalent of 4 Personal Advisors.

### **Council Priorities**

29. Leaving care support is a key statutory service to Looked After Children between the ages of 16 and 25. The efficient and effective delivery of this service is aligned with the Council's priorities to offer great resident services, to improve education and skills of young people leaving care, to protect the vulnerable; improving wellbeing whilst at the same time creating stronger communities and being a more efficient and responsive Council.

## **Corporate Implications**

### **Risk Management:**

30. Regulatory Risks: The provision of suitable support for Care Leavers is a key activity monitored by Ofsted during inspections, forming part of their judgement about services for Looked after Children.
31. Child Protection Risks: Failure to effectively support young people is a child protection risk.
32. Reputational Risk: Good support and good outcomes for young people leaving care has a positive impact in the way the council delivers its statutory duties as Corporate Parent for children looked after.
33. Financial Risk: there is a financial implication to delivering support to young people leaving care. Should young people not have access to timely support and their issues escalate then there is a far greater financial risk for example if a young person enters the criminal justice system.

## **Legal Implications**

34. National regulations and legislation outline the way in which the council delivers statutory duties for young people leaving care.

## **Financial and Risk Implications**

35. The proposed funding of £245K in the MTFP includes £114K for additional Personal Advisers from 7 to 11 is built into the MTFP for which approval is being sought by Council in February 2019.

## **Equalities Implications**

36. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
37. Looked After Children are not a protected group under the Equality Act, however the effective support of looked after children requires consideration of a range of issues related to their protected characteristics. Consideration of mental health and wellbeing can be particularly important and has been highlighted by the Office of the Children's Commissioner. Children who have been in care:
- are between four and five times more likely to attempt suicide in adulthood
  - have a fivefold increased risk of all childhood mental, emotional and behavioural problems
  - have a six to sevenfold increased risk of conduct disorders
  - 60% of Looked After Young People have some level of mental health problem

The proposals in this report will increase support for young people when they leave care and help to promote their equality of opportunity.

## **Conclusion and next Steps**

38. To note a proposed pressure in the 19/20 MTFP to “meet legislative changes bringing extra statutory duties for Care Leavers aged 21-25”