

**CABINET
7 DECEMBER 2021**

THE CARE LEAVER COVENANT

**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Jon Clarke,
Children and Young People Portfolio**

**Responsible Director - James Stroyan,
Group Director of People**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Members' approval to sign The Care Leaver Covenant for the benefit of care leavers in Darlington.

Summary

2. In July 2016, the Government published a major policy document '[keep on caring](#)' strategy to support young people from care to independence. A key policy commitment in the paper is a strategic pledge to introduce a 'Care Leaver Covenant'. The Covenant is a promise made by the private, public and voluntary sectors to provide support for care leavers aged 16-25 to help them to live independently.
3. All young people who leave care at 16, 17 or 18 are statutorily provided with support from the Local Authority in the region in which they live. This includes being assigned a Personal Adviser to help them in the transition to living independently; there should be support with finding accommodation and support with education, training and employment. However, in order to provide a greater level of support at this crucial stage during the transition of care leavers to adulthood, wider society also needs to play a part.
4. The Care Leaver Covenant works with organisations across England in all different sectors to provide support for care leavers aged 16-25 to help them to live independently. The Covenant is funded by the Department for Education and delivered by Spectra. There are five care leaver 'outcomes,' which anchor all of the Care Leavers' Covenant activity:
 - (a) Care leavers are **better prepared & supported to live independently;**
 - (b) Care leavers have **improved access to employment, education & training;**
 - (c) Care leavers experience **stability in life & feeling safe & secure;**
 - (d) Care leavers have **improved access to health & emotional support;** and
 - (e) Care leavers **achieve financial stability.**

5. The Care Leaver Covenant is an app that can be downloaded by care leavers and workers. Personal Advisors encourage young people to download this app and make use of any available offers.

<https://mycovenant.org.uk/>

6. There is no cost attached to signing up to the Care Leaver Covenant, more a commitment to continue to offer and strengthen opportunities for care leavers in Darlington.

Recommendations

7. It is recommended that :-
 - (a) Cabinet notes the contents of the report.
 - (b) Cabinet gives approval for Darlington Borough Council to sign The Care Leaver Covenant for the benefit of care leavers in Darlington.

Reasons

8. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
 - (a) To ensure that care leavers in Darlington are given the best opportunities to support them into independence and to achieve their potential.
 - (b) To ensure that as Corporate Parents Darlington Borough Council continues to be ambitious for our children and young people and offer the highest quality of service, in line with our Care Leavers Local Offer;

<https://www.darlington.gov.uk/education-and-learning/childrens-social-care/leaving-care-and-the-local-offer/our-local-offer-to-care-leavers/>

James Stroyan
Group Director of People

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

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| S17 Crime and Disorder | No specific implication |
| Health and Well Being | No specific implication |
| Carbon Impact and Climate Change | No specific implication |
| Diversity | No specific implication |
| Wards Affected | All Wards affected |
| Groups Affected | Young people – care leavers |
| Budget and Policy Framework | This decision does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework. |
| Key Decision | This is not a key decision. |
| Urgent Decision | This is not an urgent decision. |
| Council Plan | The proposal supports the key priorities of delivering success for Darlington through “working to remove barriers to young people reaching their potential”, “supporting the most vulnerable in the Borough” and “working with communities”. It also supports a key action of the Children and Young People’s portfolio by improving employment opportunities for children in our care and care leavers. |
| Efficiency | No specific efficiencies. |
| Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers | Yes. |

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

9. In July 2016, the Government published a major policy document '[keep on caring](#)' strategy to support young people from care to independence. A key policy commitment in the paper is a strategic pledge to introduce a 'Care Leaver Covenant'. The Covenant is a promise made by the private, public and voluntary sectors to provide support for care leavers aged 16-25 to help them to live independently. All young people who leave care at 16, 17 or 18 are statutorily provided with support from the Local Authority in the region in which they live. This includes being assigned a Personal Adviser to help them in the transition to living independently; there should be support with finding accommodation and support with education, training and employment. However, in order to provide a greater level of support at this crucial stage during the transition of care leavers to adulthood, wider society also needs to play a part.
10. The Care Leaver Covenant works with organisations across England in all different sectors to provide support for care leavers aged 16-25 to help them to live independently. The Covenant is funded by the Department for Education and delivered by Spectra. There are five care leaver 'outcomes,' which anchor all of the Care Leavers Covenant activity:
 - (a) Care leavers are **better prepared & supported to live independently;**
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 - (d) Care leavers have **improved access to health & emotional support;** and
 - (e) Care leavers **achieve financial stability.**
11. The Care Leaver Covenant has worked with businesses, universities, charities, Local Authorities and colleges across the country to improve outcomes for care leavers.
12. Each organisation that commits to the Care Leaver Covenant will be able to offer a support package to care leavers that is tailored to its specific expertise. For example:
 - (a) Providing care leavers with opportunities to enter the world of work, such as offering work experience placements, work shadowing placements, internships, traineeships and apprenticeships.
 - (b) Providing care leavers with additional support. For example, one-to-one mentoring or pastoral support and guidance on various aspects of their lives, financial guidance, career/employment guidance, educational prospects and opportunities.
 - (c) Providing care leavers with opportunities to broaden their horizons, for example, concessionary access to sport, leisure and cultural activities along with discounted retail offers.
 - (d) Encouraging their involvement in specific activities and events which inspire their personal interest and widen their employment prospects.

- (e) Providing or supporting them in educational and training opportunities that will improve their vocational and educational profile and open up future employment opportunities.
- 13. At the heart of the Care Leaver Covenant is close collaboration with Local Authorities who are statutorily responsible for the wellbeing of our care leavers.
- 14. Currently there are over 70 Local Authorities who are actively engaged in conversations about signing up to the Care Leaver Covenant, with Durham County Council being the closest neighbour to us at present who have signed up.
- 15. The Care Leaver Covenant is an app that can be downloaded by care leavers and workers. Personal Advisors encourage young people to download this app and make use of any available offers.

<https://mycovenant.org.uk/>

Darlington Borough Council Leaving Care Service

- 16. The Leaving Care Team have always been very ambitious for our care leavers in Darlington and as such worked hard to ensure that young people are well supported via our Care Leavers Local Offer:

<https://www.darlington.gov.uk/education-and-learning/childrens-social-care/leaving-care-and-the-local-offer/our-local-offer-to-care-leavers/>

- 17. The Leaving Care Team is frequently reviewing and developing our offer, for example most recently introducing reduced travel rates in conjunction with Arriva Buses across the North East of England for our care leavers.
- 18. It has been identified that Darlington Borough Council signing the Care Leaver Covenant can further strengthen our Local Offer. For example, it will support us to strengthen our current 'Family Firm' initiative in Darlington. In 2017 we adopted the 'family firm' ideology which is based on the idea that within a family there maybe opportunities for children and young people that need support to gain education, training and employment. Therefore, as the Corporate Parent for the care experienced population of Darlington, Darlington Borough Council should provide this support. Calvin Kipling (Virtual School Head) is the lead for this approach in Darlington and other members include Human Resources, Learning and Skills, The Looked After Throughcare Team and Foundation for Jobs.
- 19. It is also believed that signing the Care Leaver Covenant would provide a mechanism for engaging with local businesses, this would include via 'Darlington Cares' to get a better offer for care leavers in all areas as set out above.
- 20. It is also worth noting that the Regional Children in Care Council have recently voted on their priorities for the coming year and they will be focussing on strengthening apprenticeship and work experience opportunities for care leavers with Local Authorities. Therefore, being part of the Leaving Care Covenant would help support Darlington Borough Council with this.

Financial Implications

21. There is no cost attached to signing up to the Care Leaver Covenant, more a commitment to continue to offer and strengthen opportunities for care leavers in Darlington.

Legal Implications

22. There are no legal implications.

HR Implications

23. There are no HR implications.

Estates & Property Advice

24. The proposal does not affect the Council's land holdings or involve a lease, or license or any transfer or purchase of land.

Procurement Advice

25. The proposal does not involve any purchase over £100k.

Consultation

26. No consultation is required.

Outcome of Consultation

27. Not applicable.

Equalities considerations

28. There are no equality considerations.