

Report for: Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee – 25 March 2025

Item number: To be added by the Committee Section

Title: Care Leavers Programme

Report

authorised by: Ann Graham, Director, Children's Services

Lead Officer: Dionne Thomas, Interim Assistant Director, Children's Safeguarding & Social Care

Ward(s) affected: N/A

1. Describe the issue under consideration.

1.1 The purpose of this briefing is to provide elected members and CPAC attendees with an overview of the Care Leavers Programme, a proposed new set of projects led by the Children's Young Adults Service (YAS) and Children's Programme Team.

1.2 This briefing will include an overview of progress of work completed to date, and an outline of the projects that the Care Leavers Programme will comprise of.

1.3 The cohort in focus is Haringey's Care Leavers, defined as a person aged 18-24 who has been in the care of the local authority for 13 weeks upon reaching their 16th birthday. Focusing on this specific cohort means that colleagues are clear on who is being supported, and that Haringey is continuing to develop an offer that meets our statutory and corporate parenting responsibilities.

2. Recommendations

2.1 For Members to note the proposals of the programme and endorse progressing with next steps of development and implementation.

3. Reasons for decision

N/A

4. Background information

4.1 Following close working with YAS colleagues, undertaking an extensive Needs and Gap Analysis, and most importantly, engaging with a group of Care Leavers, the Children's Programme Team have proposed that the Children's Directorate undertake the 'Care Leavers Programme'. This programme will aim to combine with existing YAS work to develop new interventions for our Care Leavers cohort.

4.2 This will comprise of 3 intervention-based projects: 'Employment', 'Housing', and 'Independent Living Preparation'. During the progression of the Needs and Gap Analysis, it was identified that these projects should be underpinned by a further project focused on developing Haringey's 'Corporate Parenting and Local Offer'. This further project will help to continue building collaboration throughout Haringey Council as a corporate parent, and act as an enabler to the other projects.

4.3 To inform our approach, the Programme Team has approached each issue by considering ‘what level of support could a young person expect within a ‘traditional’ family setting?’. This is to ensure Haringey focuses on providing our Care Leavers with an equivalent level of support as their non-care experienced peers.

5. Findings

5.1 In order to identify the existing needs and gaps, the Programme Team assessed national and local trends, predominantly over the period 2019-2023, and included data from 2024 wherever possible.

5.2 Haringey’s NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) data showed that Haringey have a total of 418 Care Leavers, with 193 (46%) of them classified as NEET, despite the excellent work the YAS is providing to support these young people to access educational or employment opportunities external to the council.

5.3 In 2023/24, 118 of 189 of Haringey’s leaving care placements (62%) were outside of the borough, due to existing placement market pressure. It would be beneficial to reduce this number, both financially to the local authority and to keep Care Leavers in their communities. The Care Leavers who met with the programme team emphasised that they would like to see further housing options in their community, with an emphasis on these places being in safe areas.

5.4 YAS has access to some independent living training resources, which receives positive feedback from young people and staff. This includes the Money House/MyBnk Training, where Care Leavers receive training and support to manage housing tenancies and their finances, which Care Leavers who met with the Programme Team were vocally supportive of. They also stated they thought it would be helpful for those in care to be given earlier access to this training, such as an initial taster when a Care Leaver turns 16 years of age. However, in the most recent financial year, there were issues with completion being experienced. Likewise, the high propensity of Care Leavers being in rent arrears over £500 (111 in arrears, 72 over £500 of arrears) suggests that further support and training would be beneficial.

5.6 The Programme Team identified that Children’s Services is extremely focused and successful in delivering upon its responsibilities as a corporate parent, and further work should be undertaken to ensure this is the same across the whole council. Similarly, Care Leavers shared that they felt there was the potential for them to be judged by colleagues in the council for their status as a Care Leaver. Therefore, the goal of the programme will be to engage with a broad range of colleagues from all directorates, to further the awareness of the lived experience of Care Leavers and the responsibilities we all hold as the corporate parent to this cohort.

5.7 Following these findings, the Programme Team has developed a set of project proposals, which offer interventions to address these issues that Care Leavers are experiencing.

6. Next steps

6.1 The Programme will undertake a Care Leavers Employment Project: This project will take an approach of 'Jobs in the Family Business' and develop a pathway of work opportunities within the council to support care leavers to build their employment experience. This will be achieved by expanding the number of internships, work placements and apprenticeship roles available for Care Leavers. It will also look to develop accompanying resources and strategies to help YAS and our young people to identify, apply and secure roles. The ultimate ambition of the project is to secure 10 dedicated roles within the councils that are ring-fenced for Care Leavers, with the ambition for this number to grow in time.

6.2 The Programme will undertake a Care Leavers Housing Project: This project is informed by the fact that young people in society are statistically more likely to stay with their parents or guardians for longer in the current economic environment. As such, the project will look to secure available housing options and stock, to develop spaces for Care Leavers to live, and prepare them to move out and manage their own independent tenancies. The first phase of this project will utilise the 11 flats available at Hornsey Town Hall to implement a short-term semi-independent accommodation for Care Leavers with medium support needs. The project will then continue to identify further options for housing for Care Leavers.

6.3 The Programme will undertake an Independent Living Preparation Project: With strong interdependencies with the Housing Project, this project will look to expand the training offer for all Care Leavers to prepare them to live independently. This will support YAS to develop its training offer through newly commissioned services, whilst also utilising existing capacity, resources and expertise within the council and care providers. For example, this could see the Repairs Team offer DIY sessions on a quarterly basis, to help Care Leavers gain skills and insights into managing a home of their own. Likewise, it will also look to develop tools and resources for young people to track and 'own' their journey towards independence.

6.4 The Programme will undertake a Local Offer and Corporate Parenting Project: Given that all parts of the council are corporate parents, aunties and uncles (and in some cases grandparents) to Care Leavers, the project will work with all areas and directorates of the council to develop specific offers or interventions for Care Leavers. This will see the council leverage the capability of its multi-faceted organisation to best support its young people.

6.5 The Children's Programme Team will proceed with developing a full business case for the programme. This will then be scrutinised by the Children's Directorate Management Team, Finance, HR and all relevant colleagues before being signed off.

6.6 Thereafter, the business case will be presented to the Elected Member for Children's, Young People and Families at their one-to-one meeting with the AD Children's Commissioning and Programmes, to update on progress.

6.7 Once the full financial cost of the programme and projects is identified, any relevant items will be added to the CPAC Forward Plan for scrutiny.

7. Contribution to strategic outcomes

7.1 Borough Plan: The Care Leavers Programme aligns with the Children and Young People section of the Borough Plan by ensuring that Care Leavers receive an array of support to achieve their full potential. By securing the proposed targeted interventions and support, the programme contributes to the outcome area "Successful futures." It specifically addresses the section '*Develop a plan related to supporting the financial stability of young people leaving care*', by further developing opportunities for financial stability for our young people leaving care. This includes creating pathways for employment in the local authority for Care Leavers to earn a stable income, as well as securing further housing options and expanding training where Care Leavers are prepared to manage their future homes. These initiatives will help Care Leavers build a secure and successful future, which aligns with the Borough Plan's objectives of reducing inequalities and improving the quality of life for all children and young people in Haringey.

7.2 Haringey Deal: Similarly, the programme's focus on providing equivalent support to care leavers as their non-care experienced peers reflects the Haringey Deal's goal of addressing inequalities. By creating these pathways for employment, housing options, and expanding training for independent living, the programme supports Care Leavers in achieving a secure, healthy, and fulfilling life, all central to the Haringey Deal's vision for a fairer borough.

7.3 Additionally, the Care Leavers Programme aligns with the Haringey Deal's objectives by fostering a collaborative and inclusive approach to governance. By actively listening to Care Leavers and prioritising their needs throughout development and implementation, the programme will ensure that their voices are heard, and their experiences shape the services provided. This aligns with the Haringey Deal's commitment to better community engagement and sharing power with residents.

7.4 Vision 2035: The Care Leavers Programme aligns with the Haringey Vision 2035 by addressing key calls to action such as supporting children and young people's experiences and skills, tackling inequalities in health and wellbeing, and ensuring safe and affordable housing. By focusing on the needs of Care Leavers, the programme contributes to creating a borough where all residents have the opportunity to thrive and enjoy the best possible version of their life, no matter what start they had.

8. Use of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Care Leavers Programme – Needs and Gaps Analysis

9. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985