

CHILDREN AND LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

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| DATE | 15 th January 2026 |
| REPORT OF | Ben Dent / Charlene Sykes |
| SUBJECT | Local Offer for Care Leavers - update |
| STATUS | Open |

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

Safeguarding children, promoting better outcomes for children in our care, and providing opportunities and improved health outcomes for our care leavers are key elements of the Council plan, and the continuous improvement and transformation plan within Children Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The experience and outcomes for care leavers in North East Lincolnshire is a key priority for this Council. Over the past 18 months, we have made significant progress in raising the profile of our young people, and helping wider corporate parents and our partner agencies to recognise the unique skill set and aspirations of our young people with care experience. However, we have also continued to highlight the significant barriers that our young people face, not least due to the individual experiences of care that the current cohort of care leavers experienced. This report combines insights from the Leaving Care Team, alongside recent care leaver consultation activity in relation to our leaving care offer. This report highlights the voice of young people in relation to the support they feel they would benefit from, and further highlights how we are working to break the cycle of generational disadvantage caused by historic inadequacies in services for care leavers.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

This report seeks to update scrutiny panel members on the ongoing progress that we continue to make with regards to our care leavers, and the development of our local offer.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

Care leavers face significant challenges transitioning into adulthood, often without the support networks available to their peers. Previous services to Care Leavers in NEL have been inadequate, leaving many young people vulnerable to poverty, social exclusion, limited opportunities and aspirations, and without the love and care they need and deserve to help them thrive and develop successfully. The Leaving Care Team currently supports approximately 200 care leavers aged 18-21, and approximately 150 young people informally between the ages of 21-25. The Leaving Care Team also support an additional approximate 75 young people aged 16 and

17 who will leave our care over the next 18 months. Alongside this, the council has committed to a life long offer of support to care leavers. In 2024, a review of the local offer to care leavers was undertaken, with a number of new support elements and financial support provided. This was in the context of no significant review of the offer for the previous 5 years, which had left our local offer stagnant. Through the review process in 2024, we made a commitment to reviewing and updating our offer every year.

A recent consultation with 11 care-experienced young people took place as part of our review of the local offer, ensuring that young people's voices were at the centre of our work. The consultation highlighted areas of strength, such as supportive relationships with personal advisors and access to education and employment opportunities. However, they identified some critical gaps, including how the council could better financially support them in context of their limited wider family and social support networks, citing the support that some young people may traditionally receive from their own parents that they often miss out on. They also shared their views around how increased support for the children of our care leavers (our corporate grandchildren) could benefit them, as well as increased support with social mobility.

Through the consultation with young people, and with our leaving care workforce who are directly supporting our young people, we have factored in the feedback and are currently producing a draft of the updated offer that considers some of these changes, with the intention of enhancing and improving our local offer to young people. This will ultimately improve their life chances and outcomes.

Once this updated offer is in a final draft, it will be submitted for the usual cabinet approval processes.

2. RISKS, OPPORTUNITIES AND EQUALITY ISSUES

Investment in the wellbeing and future of our care leavers is not optional. Our corporate parenting responsibility is enshrined in legislation and also forms a significant part of the inspectorates analysis of our overall effectiveness. Alongside this, NELC made a commitment in 2024 to treat care experience as a protected characteristic, meaning we will consider the unique quality needs of care leavers in our decision making.

But above all of this, it is a moral responsibility that we promote the best possible outcomes for those young people who we have assumed the parental role for. These enhancements and revisions to the leaving care offer will provide our care leavers with enhanced life opportunities and provide the best possible foundation for them to be successful. It will support to reduce the barriers they face to independence and inclusion and reduce perpetuating cycles of poverty and disadvantage. By addressing historic inadequacies, we can create a fairer system that promotes dignity, independence, and opportunity.

Without continuing to develop our offer to our young people, our young people will face continued barriers, reinforcing cycles of disadvantage and increasing reliance on emergency interventions. The financial impact on the Local Authority is

acknowledged, but the long-term social and economic benefits outweigh the financial impact.

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

There are a number of positive reputational considerations that are linked to updating the local offer to care leavers regularly, and ensuring that this is aligned to current barriers faced, and the voice of young people. It represents a strategic and compassionate investment in the future of care leavers, which would enable NELC to continue to be a progressive local authority, that values the outcomes and experiences of our young people, and supporting them to navigate a difficult time in their childhoods. Implement these changes will ensure that care-experienced young people have the resources and opportunities they need to thrive in our community. Reputationally, this will be significant. There is significant national attention and consideration given to the outcomes of care leavers, including the new dedicated grading within the ILACS framework.

Communication of an update offer, in early 2026, will need to be aimed directly at informing the young people impacted upon.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

As part of the review, we have engaged with our finance partners to consider whether the financial implications of the updated offer, based on the estimated projections, can be met within the existing budgetary requirements. Whilst some of the investment can, it is not wholly possible. Therefore, this has been taken into consideration within budget setting planning for 26/27

5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

Please see above body of this report. The Local Offer for Care Leavers is directly linked to the outcomes and experiences of our children and young people. There are no disadvantages to children linked to providing an updated local offer to care leavers.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE, NATURE RECOVERY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No impact

7. PUBLIC HEALTH, HEALTH INEQUALITIES AND MARMOT IMPLICATIONS

No impact

8. MONITORING COMMENTS

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance or physical assets). As a result no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal

Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

9. WARD IMPLICATIONS

All wards impacted, as the local offer applies to all care leavers who have previously been in the care of NELC, regardless of where they now reside.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Existing care leaver offer published in 2024.

11. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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