

## NLCBF - Support for care leavers

### Purpose of Report

For direction.

### Summary

The Children and Young People's Board has expressed an interest in hearing directly from young people with care experience. Hannah McCowen, Manager of the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum (NLCBF) will be attending the meeting of the Board to update on the forum's work. Hannah will be joined by three care-experienced young people from the NLCBF's Young People's Benchmarking Forum who will discuss the key issues that are important to them.

**LGA Plan Theme:** Putting people first

### Recommendation(s)

**That the Children and Young People Board considers the presentations from the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum and young people with care experience, and Catch 22, and reflect how they can be taken forward in the LGA's work programme.**

### Contact details

Contact officer: Megan Edwards

Position: Adviser

Email: [megan.edwards@local.gov.uk](mailto:megan.edwards@local.gov.uk)

# NLCBF – Support for care leavers

## Background

1. The Chair of the LGA, Councillor Shaun Davies, announced at the LGA Annual Conference that one of his priorities for 2023-24 is corporate parenting, and in particular how the LGA can support improved outcomes for care leavers and others with care experience. This was also discussed at Executive Advisory Board on 20 July 2023.
2. The Children and Young People Board are leading on the work programme to improve support for care leavers. Work is taking place across three strands:
  - 2.1 The LGA as an employer: training for all staff, guaranteed interviews for those with care experience where minimum criteria are met for roles (subject to legal advice); specialist support during the recruitment process, and a ring-fenced supported internship for care leavers.
  - 2.2 The LGA's work to support and improve local government: dedicated outreach and support for care experienced graduates applying to the National Graduate Development Scheme; best practice guidance and case studies for councils; lobbying government for national changes to provide better outcomes for care leavers and ensure councils have the support and resources to provide the best support for care leavers; training for councillors and officers on corporate parenting, including across the 'corporate core'.
  - 2.3 The LGA as a convener: working with the Care Leaver Covenant to promote their work and encourage sign ups; communications campaign to raise awareness; Work with LAMIT (Local Authorities' Mutual Investment Trust) and CCLA (Churches, Charities and Local Authorities Investment Management) to publicise their work to support care leavers.
3. Both Executive Advisory Board and the Children and Young People Board were clear that the programme should be informed by those with care experience, and the CYP Board have expressed an interest in hearing directly from young people with care experience.
4. Ensuring that the voices of those with care experience directly influence this work is vital to ensure the impact and relevance of the programme. Officers have already engaged with a range of organisations representing those with care experience, including the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum, Become and the Care Leavers' Association to understand key priorities for those with care experience. Work has also been informed by research and reports developed with care leavers. Members of the CYP Board have also attended meetings with care leavers to speak with them directly.

5. The National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum (NLCBF), who are attending the board meeting, are a forum of over 125 local authority leaving care teams in England that work together to improve outcomes for young people leaving care. The NLCBF runs events throughout the year for leaving care practitioners and managers which focus on sharing good practice, hearing the voices of care experienced young people and sharing the latest policy and research updates. All NLCBF member local authorities have access to these events, many of which can be accessed online as well as in person. The Forum is run by the charity Catch 22.
6. The Young People's Benchmarking Forum forms a key part of the NLCBF's work. It is a forum of care-experienced young people that ensures the voices of those with care experience are heard and gives them a direct role in shaping the decisions and priorities of the NLCBF.

## Outcomes for those with care experience

7. Many people with care experience leave care and go on to happy, fulfilling lives. Care experienced people told the Independent Review of Children's Social Care that it was important to recognise that, while a lot of policy and media attention is given to the disproportionate numbers of care experienced people who experience negative outcomes, such outcomes are not inevitable and care can be a "positive, transformational and lifesaving experience". For example, there is evidence that longer-term care can be a protective factor in children's educational outcomes. One of the aims of the LGA's campaign is to emphasise a more positive narrative around those with care experience.
8. However, by understanding where those with care experience are more likely to experience negative outcomes than their peers, it is possible to identify opportunities to address these issues. The Care Review highlights several key areas where government, business and society can play a role in supporting care experienced people:
  - 8.1 An estimated 26 per cent of the homeless population have care experience. Almost a quarter (24 per cent) of the prison population in England have spent time in care.
  - 8.2 Four in ten (41 per cent) of care leavers aged 19-21 are not in education, employment or training (NEET) compared to 12 per cent of all other young people of the same age.
  - 8.3 Adults who spent time in care between 1971-2001 were 70 per cent more likely to die prematurely than those who did not.
  - 8.4 Six per cent of care leavers report having no-one at all to provide emotional support, and nearly one in ten only had support from their leaving care worker.

## What care leavers say is important to them

9. The following list has been compiled from a variety of organisations (including the [National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum](#), the [Care Leavers National Movement](#), [Barnardo's](#) and the [Children's Commissioner](#)) that have worked with care leavers to identify key support that they would like to see, noting that young people would like to see support offered to all care leavers, including those who are living outside of their local authority area.

Issue and asks from care leavers	Examples of good practice
<p><b>Finance:</b> support managing household bills; cold weather allowance; council tax exemptions; savings; higher rate of universal credit for under 25s</p>	<p><a href="#">Winter fuel payments in Gateshead</a>; <a href="#">paying council tax for those living out of authority in Doncaster</a></p>
<p><b>Housing:</b> priority access to affordable housing; Staying Put and Staying Close; access to a 'handyman' service and a maintenance fund; access to guarantor schemes for to</p>	<p>Rent guarantor schemes (e.g. in <a href="#">Devon</a>); <a href="#">home improvements via EQUANS</a></p>
<p><b>Travel:</b> support with the cost of getting to appointments, work and staying connected with family and friends; driving lessons.</p>	<p><a href="#">Greater Manchester free bus travel</a>; <a href="#">Cornwall free bus travel</a>; <a href="#">free driving lessons and paid for licenses in Medway</a>; <a href="#">bicycle packages in Reading</a></p>
<p><b>Health:</b> timely access to mental health services; access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services until 25 where necessary to avoid moving into adult support too early; paid-for prescriptions; NHS dentists; optician appointments.</p>	<p><a href="#">Dedicated mental health worker in Lincolnshire</a>; <a href="#">paid prescriptions in Oldham</a></p>
<p><b>Digital connection:</b> devices and access to WiFi and data to connect with health services, apply for jobs and stay connected to friends and family.</p>	<p><a href="#">TalkTalk free broadband and data for active job seekers</a>; <a href="#">Greater Manchester free data, devices and digital skills training</a></p>
<p><b>Leisure:</b> gym passes, including for a friend to go with them; funds for leisure activities.</p>	<p><a href="#">Cornwall Culture Card</a>; <a href="#">free activities in leisure centres in Dudley</a>; <a href="#">Christmas/festival allowance in Cheshire West and Chester</a></p>
<p><b>Education, employment and training:</b> guaranteed interviews for apprenticeship roles; "work wardrobes"; financial support until a</p>	<p><a href="#">Year-round accommodation at the University of Kent</a>; <a href="#">interview clothing through Smart Works</a> or <a href="#">Suited and Booted</a>; <a href="#">financial support between</a></p>

first pay check clears; education bursaries up to the age of 25 (these are currently available for those aged 16-19).	<a href="#">benefits ending and first wage payment in Cheshire West and Chester</a> ;
<b>Practical support:</b> starter packs for new homes or going to university; mentoring or buddying schemes; clothing allowance; passports.	<a href="#">Clothing allowances in Kent</a> ; <a href="#">setting up home start packs and TV licences in Northamptonshire</a> ; <a href="#">coaching for care leavers in Southwark</a>
<b>Offers for specific groups of care leavers:</b> including care experienced parents, former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, young people with additional needs, those involved with the criminal justice system and the LGBTQ+ community	<a href="#">Support for care experienced parents in Hertfordshire</a> ; <a href="#">building community for former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Leeds</a> ;
<b>Accessing records:</b> including support through the process.	<a href="#">Access to Records training by the Rees Foundation</a>
<b>Post 25 support:</b> to avoid a 'cliff edge' or support.	<a href="#">"Always here" support for those with care experience beyond 25 in North Yorkshire</a>

## Implications for Wales

10. Children's social care is devolved in Wales however learning from the programme can be shared with the Welsh Local Government Association.

## Financial Implications

11. This programme will be delivered within existing budgets, and has been prioritised within this Board's work programme.

## Equalities implications

12. This programme is focussed on reducing inequalities for those with care experience.
13. Around one quarter of care leavers are former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Specific consideration will be given to how the specific needs of this group are recognised in the programme of work.

## Next steps

14. It is proposed that the board considers the presentation from the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum and young people from the Young People's Benchmarking Forum, and reflects on the issues raised. Areas for discussion may include:

- 14.1. What are the priority issues for care leavers.
- 14.2. How would they like to see these addressed and support improved at both the national and local level.
- 14.3. How can these issues, suggestions or proposals be taken forward within the LGA's work programme to improve support for care leavers.
- 14.4. How can the LGA continue to work with, and support the work of, the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum.