



## Committee report

Committee	<b>POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES</b>
Date	<b>6 SEPTEMBER 2018</b>
Title	<b>UPDATE ON PROGRESS TO MEET REQUIREMENTS OF CHILDREN AND SOCIAL WORK ACT 2017 FOR CARE LEAVERS</b>
Report of	<b>AREA DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES</b>

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 set out new requirements for local authorities in relation to corporate parenting and care leavers. This report provides an update in relation to the progress made by Children's Services in meeting the new requirements.

### BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Children and Social Work Bill was introduced to the House of Lords in May 2016; all parliamentary stages were concluded early April 2017 and the Bill received Royal Assent becoming law in April 2017.
- 2.2 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 is intended to improve support for children in care and care leavers, promote the welfare and safeguarding of children and make provisions about the regulation of social workers.
- 2.3 Whilst the Act became law in April 2017, local authorities were given until 1 April 2018 to develop their local offer. Consultation, with local authorities and partner agencies, took place through October and November 2017 with guidance provided to local authorities in December.
- 2.4 The Act sets our corporate parenting principles for local authorities to be the best corporate parents they can be to children in care and care leavers. These are largely a collation of existing duties local authorities have towards children in care and those leaving care. Local authorities will be required to publish their support offer to care leavers and to promote the educational attainment of children, who have been adopted or placed in other long term arrangements.

- 2.5 In October 2017 the Minister for Children and Families, Robert Goodwin, wrote to local authorities to advise of the appointment of a national implementation adviser for care leavers, Mark Riddell, who will support local authorities to introduce and embed the changes introduced through the Children and Social Work Act 2017.
- 2.6 Three key areas were identified within his letter:
- Local authorities will 'have regard' to seven corporate parenting principles, which frame how they deliver services to children in care and care leavers
  - there will be a duty on local authorities to consult on and then publish their 'local offer' to care leavers, and
  - local authorities will be required to offer support from a personal adviser to all care leavers up to the age of 25. New burdens funding will be provided to support implementation of this change.
- 2.7 A response was provided to the children's minister, which identified progress and key actions required to ensure compliance across the three key areas identified.
- 2.8 Considerable work has been undertaken across the children in care and care leavers team to meet the new requirements and this report provides details on compliance with the new requirements.
- 2.9 Update against the key issues and actions
- 2.10 *Local authorities will have to 'have regard' to seven corporate parenting principles, which frame how they deliver services to children in care and care leavers.*
- 2.11 The Children and Social Care Act 2017 outlines seven corporate parenting principles, these are:-
- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
  - to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
  - to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
  - to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
  - to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure best outcomes, for those children and young people;
  - for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work, and
  - to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.
- 2.12 The Isle of Wight Council is compliant with regard to the seven corporate parenting principles. The principles are embedded in the council's approach to working with children in care and care leavers and can be evidenced through the service's performance management and quality assurance

processes undertaken internally, including case file auditing, practice observation and looked after child reviews and the council's corporate parenting board.

- 2.13 *There will be a duty on local authorities to consult on and then publish their 'local offer' to care leavers*
- 2.14 The Isle of Wight Council is compliant with regard to consulting on and publishing their 'local offer'.
- 2.15 The local offer was informed by consultation with the Hearing Young People's Experiences (HYPE) group, corporate parenting board and was developed through a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary task and finish group.
- 2.16 The publication of the online local offer took place in May 2018. The local offer will continue to be scrutinised through corporate parenting board and HYPE and the task and focus group will continue to meet a minimum of bi-annually to ensure that the offer evolves in response to the needs of care leavers and that all links are current and resources relevant.
- 2.17 The local offer can be accessed via the Isle of Wight Council's website - <https://www.iow.gov.uk/Residents/Care-Support-and-Housing/Childrens-Services/Isle-of-Wight-Care-Leavers/Isle-of-Wight-Local-Offer-for-care-leavers>
- 2.18 *Local authorities will be required to offer support from a Personal Adviser to all care leavers to age 25. New burdens funding will be provided to support implementation of this change*
- 2.19 The Isle of Wight Council is compliant with regard to offering support to all care leavers, who qualify under the changes in legislation.
- 2.20 All eligible young people were written to by the end February 2018 and 63 have responded requesting additional support.
- 2.21 As the local offer progresses new actions will be identified and scrutiny of these will be passed to the corporate parenting board and management teams.
- 2.22 Supporting evidence including financial, personnel and ICT
- 2.23 The government have stated that 'new burdens funding' would be available to local authorities to support meeting the new requirements. New burdens funding relates to any new policy or initiative by government which increases the cost of providing local authority services and could lead to an increase in council tax if it was not additionally funded by central Government.
- 2.24 £10 545 has been awarded to the Isle of Wight. Clearly this does not constitute enough resources for additional staffing, however the funding is being utilised to support young people aged 21-25, who have requested additional support in relation to education/setting up home. A volunteer mentoring scheme is also being developed.

2.25 The number of cases currently open to the care leavers team is 157 with a complement of six personal assistants, the average caseload is 26. This case load is currently manageable, however it is anticipated that this will increase over the next 18 months due to the number of children in care between 16-18 years and care leaver's being able to access further support post 21 years of age.

### RISK ANALYSIS

- 3.1 In order to be able to create outstanding care leavers services, consideration needs to be given as to how the local authority can meet the projected demands in caseload increase and ensure that young person receive the appropriate interventions and support. It is recommended that each personal assistant has a caseload of 25 maximum as outlined by the National Implementation Advisor during his visit in December 2017.
- 3.2 Children's Services are currently reviewing the team structure within the care leaver's team and assessing the anticipated capacity required to meet future demand. This will need to be balanced with statutory demands in relation to safeguarding in the rest of the service. The review is due for completion in late September.

### CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The Isle of Wight Council is in a positive position with regards to compliance with the requirements within the Children and Social Care Act 2017.
- 4.2 The local offer will continue to evolve, through regular consultation with HYPE and monitoring through the corporate parenting board.

### RECOMMENDATION

That the Children's Scrutiny and Policy Committee note the progress made against the requirements of the Children and Social care Act 2017 in relation to children in care and care leavers.

That the Children's Scrutiny and Policy Committee receive an annual update on the local offer to care leavers.

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