



<u>Committee and Date</u>	<u>Item</u>
Council	
19 September 2019	
	<u>Public</u>

Care Leaver Covenant: Shropshire's Pledge and sign up

Responsible Officer

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1. Summary

- 1.1 This paper seeks Council approve to sign up to the Government's Care Leaver Covenant. The proposal encourages businesses and organisations county-wide, including Shropshire Council, to exercise their corporate social responsibility and to continue to build the strong culture of business contribution in the local area by signing up to the Care Leaver Covenant and publish their offers of support for Shropshire on the national MyCovenant App.
- 1.2 As corporate parents, Shropshire Council has made good progress with its offer to care leavers and has recently published what it makes available. The care leaver covenant is in addition to the existing care leavers offer provided under the Children Act 1989.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Shropshire Council sign up to the Care Leaver Covenant and that each Directorate consider opportunities that could be offered to our care leavers as set out in section 5.5.
- 2.2 That Shropshire Council calls on other organisations and businesses to sign up to the Care Leaver Covenant.

3.0 Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

(NB this will include the following: Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community, Environmental consequences and other Consultation)

- 3.1 The proposal aims to improve the opportunities and outcomes for our care leavers and give them the best possible chance of transitioning in to adulthood and independence successfully and help them make a positive contribution to society.
- 3.2 Failure to adopt the proposal would risk Shropshire not fulfilling its corporate parenting and social responsibilities and possible opportunities and resources for our care leavers being missed.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 Cost of the care leaver covenant launch and sign-up event and related printed information, approximately £500-£600.
- 4.2 Costs dependent on offers of support and resources pledged within each department (Shropshire Council's Pledge to the covenant only).
- 4.3 Sign up from outside businesses and organisations would incur no additional costs to Shropshire Council.

5.0 Background

- 5.1 In July 2016, the Government published a major policy document 'Keep on Caring' 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.
- 5.2 The Care Leaver Covenant was officially launched in October 2018 and aims to provide care leavers with opportunities and a package of support to help smooth their transition into adulthood.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 Undoubtedly a large proportion of young people leave their care setting poorly prepared for independence. Typically, they lack the appropriate resource to acquire and hold down gainful employment as well as the skills needed to manage their financial affairs and domestic arrangements. They frequently do not have the social and emotional

confidence or the family and friend networks that would provide the confidence and resilience to face the challenges of earning a living and making their way in society.

- 5.4 The aim of the Care Leaver Covenant to which organisations commit is to provide additional support for those leaving care, making available a different type of support and expertise from that statutorily provided by local authorities. Drawing on the resourcefulness and imagination of their staff and their working environment, organisations have the potential to offer new perspectives and professional expertise. These can offer opportunities and a new way of thinking to aid the care leavers in moving forward successfully to the next phase of their lives.
- 5.5 The national Care Leaver Covenant App is designed for young people to find available opportunities and is available for them to download via app stores. The app has been planned with the needs of the care leaving community in mind. It is continually filled with a variety of opportunities for work placements across the UK, as well as details of training provisions and even discounts and other promotions. It is easy to navigate by geographical region or type of opportunity and it regularly updated to improve functionality.
- 5.6 The action a young person needs to take once they have seen an interesting opportunity varies. In some cases they need to contact Care Leaver Covenant directly, or they may need to contact the employer directly. Within each listing it will be made clear who the first point of contact is.
- 5.7 Work with universities and higher education institutions is also important, in order to ensure that those who are leaving the care system have access to a fulfilling and enriching higher education/further education experience. Statistics show that the number of people going to university from the care system could be improved and it is important that we do what we can to give them the confidence to apply. But the work doesn't just stop there. Once a young person has begun university it is necessary to ensure that they have the necessary support to make that experience positive and fulfilling. This could be through additional mentoring, pastoral support or access to new equipment or financial aid. Universities are also big employers and it hoped that university jobs will be made available to care leavers.
- 5.8 Examples of the sort of activities that the offer might include, depending on the nature of the organisation, are:
 - Work experience placements, work shadowing placements, internships
 - 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.

- Providing care leavers with opportunities to broaden their horizons for example, concessionary access to sport, leisure and cultural activities along with discounted retail offers.
- Encouraging their involvement in specific activities and events which inspire their personal interest and widen their employment prospects.
- Providing or supporting them in educational and training opportunities that will improve their vocational and educational profile and open up future employment opportunities.
- Practical items, for example, first home starter packs (towels, utensils, pots and pans, cleaning items etc) decorating equipment and furnishing.

5.9 In the last OFSTED inspection, the leaving care team was rated as requiring improvement and the corporate parenting panel chaired by Cllr Nick Bardsley has committed to ensuring improvement is made. One of the tasks set out in the plan for improvement was for the Local Authority to launch the Care Leaver Covenant within Shropshire.

5.10 The outlined proposal has been endorsed by the Chief Executive who is committed to spearhead the proposal and raise its profile and implementation within Council Directorates and outside businesses and organisations.

5.11 Information and awareness regarding the proposal will be ongoing and a Care Leaver Covenant sign up event is organised for 25th Oct 2019, to be held at University Centre Shrewsbury.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Government website on Care Leaver Covenant: <https://mycovenant.org.uk/>

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)
Cllr Ed Potter

Local Member

All

Appendices

None