



Date: Thursday, 24 February 2022

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: Clayton Hall - Shrewsbury College, London Road, Shrewsbury. SY2 6PR

Contact: Tim Ward, Committee Officer
Tel: 01743 257713
Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk

COUNCIL

TO FOLLOW REPORT (S)

11 Care Leavers Covenant (Pages 1 - 60)

Report of the Executive Director of People **TO FOLLOW**

Contact Tanya Miles Tel: 01743 255811

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<u>Committee and Date</u>
Council
24 February 2022

<u>Item</u>
<u>Public</u>

CARE LEAVERS COVENANT

Responsible Officer:

Tanya Miles, Executive Director of People

e-

mail:

tanya.miles@shropshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01743

255811

Fax

1. Synopsis

This paper sets out the proposal for Shropshire Council to sign up to the national Care Leavers' Covenant to publish the support and opportunities it makes available to care leavers across all departments through:

- The Council to officially pledge its offers of support available to care leavers through signing up to the government Care Leavers' Covenant which will then be published on the government 'My Covenant' website.
- The Council to encourage businesses and organisations county wide to sign up to the Care Leaver Covenant and publish their offers of support on the government 'MyCovenant App'.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Council is the corporate parent for 584 children looked after and 187 care leavers (06.01.2022).
- 2.2. Shropshire Council has made a pledge to our children looked after and care leavers that 'A child who is cared for by the Council has the right to expect everything from a corporate parent that would be expected from a good parent'.
- 2.3. All local authorities have a statutory duty to publish their 'Local Offer' to care leavers setting out what services and supports individual care leavers can expect from their local authority as their corporate parent. The current Local Offer is attached (Appendix 1).
- 2.4. In October 2018 the Government launched the Care Leavers' Covenant. Unlike the 'Local Offer', signing up to the Covenant is not a statutory requirement. Rather, it is a voluntary indication of a

- desire to do their utmost to fulfil their role as a corporate parent to care leavers.
- 2.5. Local authorities sign up to the Care Leavers' Covenant through the government website 'MyCovenant' and their offer is then available to their care leavers through the 'MyCovenant' App which is free for care leavers to download on to their tablet or phone (weblinks in background papers).
 - 2.6. The Covenant encourages local authorities to follow good practice in offering additional discretionary services in line with the recommendations of the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers. 'MyCovenant' along with SOLACE – Society of Local Authority Chief Executives- have set out a "Whole Council Approach Strategy" (weblink in Background papers).
 - 2.7. The strategy sets out to raises awareness and buy in from Local Authorities across all their departments to help ensure their care experienced young people:
 - are better prepared to live independently.
 - have improved access to employment, education and training.
 - experience stability in their lives and feel safe and secure.
 - have improved access to health support.
 - achieve financial stability.
 - 2.8. The Council pledged to sign up to the Covenant on 19th September 2019 (Appendix 2).
 - 2.9. A 'Launch Event' took place with partners and businesses across Shropshire in November 2019 where 32 external agencies and businesses pledged their support (Appendix 3).
 - 2.10. A draft Shropshire 'Whole Council Covenant Offer' was collated in line with the Covenant '5 Part Strategy'. This is set out in Section 7.3.
 - 2.11. The Council is requested to agree this offer to formally sign up to the Covenant.
 - 2.12. There is more that the Council could do to enhance this offer. A 'Whole Council' audit was planned for March 2020 in order to clarify each Council Department's offer for care leavers. However, this was postponed due to the impact of Covid on Council business.
 - 2.13. It is proposed that this audit now take place to clarify and find opportunities to enhance Shropshire's 'Whole Council' offer to demonstrate to our young people that we are acting as the best corporate parents we can be.
 - 2.14. It is further proposed that a further 'social value' event is organised by Shropshire Council to bring together council departments, members and local businesses and partners to renew their pledges and encourage new offers to be made.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Council agrees to sign up to a Whole Council 5 Part Strategy and approves the current Covenant Pledge set out in Section 7.3.

- 3.2 Members are requested to sign today their commitment to promote the Care Leavers' Covenant with partners and businesses they come into contact with, and to refresh their commitment to the SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS' CHARTER (Appendix 5).
- 3.3 That Council delegates to the Chief Executive and the Executive Directors consideration of which of the additional options to enhance the Whole Council Five-Part Strategy they are prepared to endorse to include:
- The development of more suitable housing options for care leavers.
 - Support to gain suitable housing for care leavers through use of rent guarantor schemes and/or payment of a supplement to housing providers where finance is a barrier.
 - The expansion of support to care leavers who become homeless by extending the automatic priority need category up to the age of 25 (legally it is currently 21).
 - Further to this, no care leaver would be made intentionally homeless from a care placement (ie, children's home, foster care, SB&L, SHIP, SAIL) and all care leavers would be placed into gold banding (or equivalent due to the review of the policy) for HomePoint.
 - Funding for additional work experience and apprenticeship opportunities in the Council ring-fenced for care leavers
 - A 'Whole Council' audit to take place.
 - An annual 'Social Value' face to face event to bring together Council members and representatives from Council departments with local businesses and partner agencies to promote opportunities for Shropshire care leavers and set ambitious targets to enable them to live and work successfully within Shropshire.

REPORT

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

(NB This will include the following: Impact on Children and Vulnerable Adults, Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community and other Consultation)

4.1 Impact on Children and Vulnerable Adults

This will have positive benefits for Shropshire's children looked after in preparation for adulthood and when they become 'care leavers' as young adults. Care leavers are a disadvantaged group nationally with on average only 50% in employment, education or training. They are more likely as

adults to experience difficulties with their emotional and mental health due to the trauma they suffered as children prior to being looked after, and many have fractured relationships with their birth family, leaving them with fewer lifelong supports. Care leavers are also over-represented in the prison population and more likely to become homeless. However, given the same opportunities and supports that we give our own children and family, they demonstrate that they can thrive and make the most of their lives.

4.2 Risk Management

The recommendations in this paper pose no risks for the Council. There is a reputational risk in not offering such opportunities as the Council may be judged as not being as good a corporate parent as we could be by our care leavers and by external scrutiny such as Ofsted or the DfE.

4.3 Human Rights

Children looked after and care leavers have a right to the same opportunities as any other child being brought up by their (corporate) family.

4.4 Equalities

Children looked after and care leavers are a vulnerable group. Within this group, especially in Shropshire there is a higher proportion of children and care leavers with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) demonstrating they have additional needs. There is also a growing cohort of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people (UASC) arising from Shropshire accepting up to 45 UAS young people through the National Transfer Scheme over the next year.

4.5 Community

Care leavers are young adults with a contribution to make to the local economy and the community in which they live if they are given the right supports and opportunities to develop and enhance their skills and abilities.

4.6 Consultation

Feedback from care leavers is supportive of this Council initiative. Care leavers in Shropshire, on the whole, feel supported by their corporate parents. They highlight areas for improvement as greater access to education, employment and training close to where they live and have their support network; access to suitable accommodation to enable them to maintain employment, education and training; the ability to be able to travel for work, training or education and maintain their social network.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. The Council has already budgeted for the commitments made for Council Tax payments, the existing support from the Virtual School

and Learning & Skills Department for 2 apprenticeships and support with CVs, preparation for interviews and work experience.

- 5.2. The current Care Leavers' Local Offer is budgeted for.
- 5.3. The proposed annual 'social value' event is not yet budgeted for. The event in 2019 was budgeted at £500-£600.
- 5.4. Any additional apprenticeships, or support to ensure suitable housing are not yet budgeted for.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

Care leavers who are enabled to live closer to their support network and employment, training or education are not going to need to travel as far. If they live in suitable housing they will not need to waste fuel for heating. Many care leavers have the same worries and concerns for the climate as their peers and would wish to be able to contribute more widely to impact on the adverse effects of climate change.

7. Background

7.1 Shropshire Council as Corporate Parents to our care leavers

The Council is the corporate parent for 584* children looked after and 187* care leavers. Shropshire Council has made a pledge to our children looked after and care leavers that 'A child who is cared for by the Council has the right to expect everything from a corporate parent that would be expected from a good parent'.

All local authorities have a statutory duty to publish their 'Local Offer' to care leavers setting out what services and support individual care leavers can expect from their local authority as their corporate parent. The current Local Offer is attached (Appendix 2). The revised Local Offer is about to be published in February 2022, following a period of consultation with our care leavers.

Care leavers in Shropshire feel supported by their corporate parents. Our Leaving Care Personal Advisors recently won the National Care Leavers Benchmarking Award as PA Team of the Year 2021, with supporting comments from care leavers who wanted to say how well they had felt supported by the team through the Covid pandemic. Many have had no other support available to them and levels of anxiety and loneliness are higher in this vulnerable group.

Our Leaving Care Team are 'in touch' with 92%* of care leavers up between the ages of 18-25. 92%* are in suitable accommodation.

However, despite the best efforts of their PAs, and support from the Virtual School and Learning and Skills services, 48%* of our care leavers

are not in employment, training or employment currently. They have been especially impacted on at the end of the furlough scheme, with many not retaining their jobs.

They also find it difficult to gain accommodation close to employment and training opportunities and face challenges with travel across the county, often only having their Personal Advisor as their supporter, being estranged from their own family and no longer in touch with those who looked after them as children.

**Data as at 06.01.22*

7.2 The National Care Leavers' Covenant

In October 2018 the Government launched the Care Leavers' Covenant. Unlike the 'Local Offer', buying in to the Covenant is not a statutory requirement. Rather, it is a voluntary indication of a desire to do their utmost to fulfil their role as a corporate parent to care leavers. The Covenant encourages local authorities to follow good practice in offering additional discretionary services in line with the recommendations of the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers.

The Covenant is a government initiative borne out of Keep on Caring, the care leaver strategy 2016. It seeks to create practical, specific offers, by organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors, to support care leavers aged 16-25 in living independently.

It was developed through a process of listening to the voices of care-experienced individuals in various fora. The government's 'MyCovenant' website and 'MyCovenant' App works by linking care leavers to the offers which includes discounts, financial support, exemptions, personal development, workshops, training, work experience, apprenticeships and internships available to them across the country.

This is achieved through supporting organisations in signing the Covenant and raising the awareness of local authorities and voluntary sector organisations working with care leavers.

All Central Government departments were asked to make specific pledges to care experienced young people in terms of how they would support care leavers nationally. The pledge is:

- *that all parts of society have a responsibility to help care leavers to avoid poor outcomes and make a successful transition to adulthood; and*
- *that action to support care leavers should be in their best interests. promote their health and well-being and secure the best possible outcomes for them.*

All Central Government departments signed up to the pledge, some making a generic pledge of support and some more detailed pledges from Housing, DWP, Health and Education.

Some national businesses have also made specific offers to care leavers under the Covenant- e.g. Severn Trent & Marstons Brewery, alongside many Universities.

Local Councils were encouraged to make the same pledge and to involve local businesses and services to join the Covenant. When a Council signs up to the Covenant then all their local offers are available to on the 'MyCovenant' website and 'MyCovenant' App for their care leavers to access.

7.3 Whole Council Shropshire Council Covenant

'MyCovenant' along with SOLACE – Society of Local Authority Chief Executives- have set out a "Whole Council Approach Strategy" under 5 main headings:

1. Raising Awareness of the Covenant
2. Council Tax Exemption and Suitable Housing
3. Training and Employment Opportunities
4. Social Value Policy
5. Economic Development

The strategy sets out to raises awareness and buy in from Local Authorities across all their departments to help ensure their care experienced young people:

- are better prepared to live independently;
- have improved access to employment, education and training;
- experience stability in their lives and feel safe and secure;
- have improved access to health support;
- achieve financial stability

Shropshire 'Whole Council Approach 5 Part Strategy

This Council has already committed actions that would fit under Parts 1, 2 and 3, as set out below:

1. Raising Awareness of the Covenant

A successful 'launch event' was held in Shropshire in November 2019 to raise awareness of the Covenant. 32 local businesses and partner agencies made a pledge to raise awareness of the Covenant and promote opportunities for Shropshire care leavers.

During National Care Leavers' Week (annually October) in 2020 and 2021 the Council promoted our Corporate Parenting responsibilities across the

council, celebrating our care leavers' successes, and raising awareness of their challenges. This will be an annual supported event.

All members now attend Induction Training about their corporate parenting responsibilities, presented by officers and our Care Leavers' Ambassador and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Peer Ambassador.

Our Care Leavers' Ambassador hosts a Facebook site for Shropshire Care Leavers and our Ambassadors organise events to bring care leavers together. Face to face events were 'on hold' mainly through the Covid pandemic, but when possible outdoor activities have taken place.

Our Ambassadors and Personal Advisors promote the national opportunities available for care leavers available to all care leavers through the Covenant community portal, [Connects](#) and the free **Covenant App: [Apple App Store](#) | [Google Play Store](#)**. Any officer of the Council and members can also support care leavers they come into contact with to access this.

2. Council Tax Exemption and Suitable Housing

Shropshire Council ensures that all Shropshire care leavers are exempt from payment of Council Tax up to the age of 25, whether they reside in Shropshire or another local authority.

In support of obtaining suitable housing Shropshire Council gives all Shropshire care leavers 'Gold' banding when they register for social housing at 18.

A Training Flat is available for 16/17 year olds to see what it may be like to live on their own and try out their independence skills in a supported environment ready for adulthood.

Care leavers are enabled to 'stay-put' with their foster carers or remain in supported accommodation post-18 where this meets their assessed needs if they are not ready for living in their own place or whilst they are awaiting an offer of their own place.

3. Training and Employment Opportunities

Shropshire Council has specific opportunities for care leavers and supports them to attain their goals and aspirations in respect of education, employment and training:

- Support to access work experience whilst still in statutory education, promoted through the Virtual School alongside a commissioned service from Aspire for more vulnerable learners who may be at risk of not accessing education, employment or training post-16.
- Support to access work experiences post-16, promoted by the Virtual School post-16 Advisor and the Learning & Skills Service.

- Links through the Virtual School post-16 Advisor with local colleges and the University to access their Covenant offers.
- Development Funding secured each financial year to support up to 2 Care Leavers into Apprenticeships on an aspirations-based approach to job/apprenticeship match.
- Supports up to 2 weeks paid work experience to determine whether the post is suitable for them; if so, will undertake a job aligned to Grade 3 salary
- Care Leaver will undertake an apprenticeship to support them to gain higher level skills (Level 3 Apprenticeship)
- Offer includes pre-employment support i.e. CV writing, interview preparation, workplace experience
- Process also includes a phased induction programme enabling the young person to adapt to the new working environment, processes and routines.
- Guaranteed interview for opportunities in the Kickstart Scheme.
- Support to access other work schemes-e.g. Step-Up
- Support to write a CV/application and prepare for interview.
- Provision of suitable clothing and travel expenses to attend interviews.
- Provision of incentives through vouchers, travel costs and lunch money to attend work experience opportunities.
- Support to purchase specific equipment for specialist training.
- Support to access higher education through help to access government student loans and specific university financial aid, a bursary, accommodation costs in holidays, travel costs, support to purchase equipment.

The Council's Learning and Skills Department is the lead service promoting opportunities for care leavers and has a Key Priority to support at least 5 care leavers to gain work opportunities within the Council each year.

7.4 Potential for further enhancing the Council's Covenant 'Offer' under a Whole Council 5 Part Strategy

1. Raising Awareness of the Covenant

Members and all Council staff who are corporate parents are urged to sign a pledge to raise awareness of the Care Leavers' Local Offer and the Care Leavers' Covenant with Shropshire care leavers they come into contact

with and also with local businesses and partners who could make an offer for care leavers.

Members are requested to sign their commitment to this today and to refresh their commitment to the SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS' CHARTER (Appendix 5).

2. Suitable Accommodation

In addition to properly preparing our children looked after for adulthood and to support themselves independently, as their corporate parent we have a duty to ensure there are services and people who can support them when they encounter bad luck, make a mistake or wrong decision- something which most of us take for granted with our own children at this age.

Under the Government Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (updated January 2021) all local authorities have a duty to ensure that care leavers are prepared and have suitable move on options as they reach adulthood to prevent them from being homeless or needing to declare themselves as homeless.

The Homelessness Code requires local authorities to develop a joint protocol between their responsible services (Housing, Childrens and Adult Services and any other relevant services) including arrangements pertaining in 2-tier authorities.

There are few young people who are ready to live completely independently at 18. Care leavers are especially disadvantaged as few have their birth family to fall back on.

Many local authorities are reconsidering what they offer to their young people at this vulnerable age. The benefit of a combined People Directorate including Housing, Adults and Children's Services could be used to commit to developing:

- A wider variety of 'move-on' options including bespoke supported accommodation and temporary accommodation for care leavers.
- The Council acting as rent guarantor for an agreed period of time.
- The Council paying a supplement to social or private landlords when care leavers are in training, higher education or not yet in employment/low-paid work for an agreed period of time.
- The Council expands its support to care leavers who become homeless by extending the automatic priority need category up to the age of 25 (legally its currently 21).
- Further to this, no care leaver would be made intentionally homeless from a care placement (ie, children's home, foster care, Supported Board & Lodgings [SB&L], Supported Housing in Partnership [SHIP], and Supported Accommodation And Independent Living [SAAIL]) and all care leavers would be placed

into gold banding (or equivalent due to the review of the policy) for HomePoint.

The benefit of supporting these options is that we reduce the risk of homelessness, and provide our young people with the chance to have a stable and secure home of their own.

3. Training and Employment Opportunities

Many Local Authorities have created additional specific apprenticeship opportunities ring-fenced for care leavers (e.g. participation officers; additional peer ambassadors) and/or funded a number of apprenticeships where care leavers have expressed an interest and aptitude for a particular area of work. This is an area for development and further consideration by Shropshire Council.

The benefit of bespoke apprenticeships is that they build on the care experience of care leavers to enable generations of new children looked after to be better supported and prepared for adulthood and engaged in the development of the care they receive from the Council as their Corporate Parents.

The benefit of tailoring a number of apprenticeships for care leavers with an aptitude and interest in a particular area of work is that we are creating an opportunity for our own young people with talent to remain in and contribute to the economy of Shropshire.

4. Social Value Policy

Shropshire Council commits to review our Social Value Policy to ensure that meaningful offers of work, apprenticeship, internships and work experience for care leavers are a standard part of procurement practices. This will begin with a 'whole council' audit for each department to clarify what they can offer for care leavers. The details for this are in Appendix 4.

5. Economic Development

The 'launch event' in 2019 was highly successful. Sadly, no similar event has been possible face to face since the Covid pandemic started in 2020. However, this opportunity is now becoming available again and so it is recommended that Shropshire Council hosts an annual 'Social Value' event to bring together those who have made a pledge and to encourage other businesses and partners to join.

8. Additional Information

No additional information.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1. By signing up to the Covenant using the 'Whole Council 5 Part Strategy' as the basis of the Council Covenant 'offer' the Council is publishing to all our care leavers what we offer as their Corporate Parents.
- 9.2. By committing to enhancing the Whole Council Approach 5 Part Strategy the Council is signalling our aspirations as 'good parents' to our children looked after and care leavers.
- 9.3. By engaging with local businesses and partner agencies the support for care leavers can be further enhanced across the local authority.
- 9.4. Together we can set ambitious targets to enhance and enable more of our care leavers to successfully engage in employment, education and training opportunities and live in suitable accommodation in Shropshire.

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

Link to SOLACE 'Whole Council Approach' MyCovenant website-

<https://mycovenant.org.uk/>

Covenant advice to Local Authorities

[Local Authorities Engagement - Care Leaver Covenant \(mycovenant.org.uk\)](https://mycovenant.org.uk/)

Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities

[Chapter 22: Care leavers - Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/care-leavers-homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities)

[From Care to Where? Care Leavers and Homelessness \(stepbystep.org.uk\)](https://stepbystep.org.uk/)

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Kirstie Hurst-Knight

Local Member

All

Appendices

Appendix 1: Shropshire Care Leavers' Local Offer

Appendix 2: Care Leaver Covenant: Shropshire's Pledge and sign up (19.09.2019)

Appendix 3: List of Pledges made by local businesses and partner agencies

Appendix 4: Toolkit for incorporating Social Value

Appendix 5: Shropshire Council children in care and care leavers' charter

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Local Offer

Information and advice for Shropshire's Care Leavers aged 16 to 25





Leaving Care Local Offer

This Local Offer has been produced to give you, as a care leaver, an idea of what services and support Shropshire Council provides. It has been written with the aim of describing exactly what you can expect from us.

Our elected council members (your “Corporate Parents”) have made a Pledge to you:

- 1. Keeping You Safe** – We will keep you safe and ensure you are living in an environment where you feel valued, are supported and protected from harm.
- 2. Where You Live** – We will make sure you live in a stable home where you are happy, feel safe and are supported to become part of the community.

- 3. Your Friends & Family** – We will make sure that you are able to keep in touch with those who are important to you while creating opportunities and experiences where you can have fun, meet new people and gain skills
- 4. Your Health, Wellbeing & Lifestyle** – We will make sure you’re supported to live a happy and healthy life. If you ever feel that you need to talk to someone about how you feel, we will make sure you know what support is available and help you to access it.
- 5. Your Voice** – We will support you to express your views, wishes and feelings, and involve you in decisions that affect your life. We want to know what we can do better and will give you opportunities to help shape the support we offer.
- 6. Your Education, Work & Learning** – We will support you with your education and learning, to ensure that you have the opportunities to fulfil your potential. We will help you to gain the skills, qualifications and experience you need to start a career you’re passionate about.
- 7. Your Future** – We will support and prepare you for independence and ensure that you are equipped with the skills and confidence to live independently as part of the community. We will continue to support you into adulthood to ensure that you are happy, healthy and safe.

How We Can Help

Depending on your circumstances and the time you spent in care, the law describes four different groups of care leaver:

- Eligible child
- Relevant child
- Former relevant care leaver
- Qualifying care leaver

You are an eligible child if:

- You are aged 16 or 17; and
- You are currently in care;

and

- You have been in care for a period of 13 weeks (or episodes which add up to 13 weeks) since your 14th birthday and at least one day whilst you were 16 or 17 years old.

You are a relevant child if:

- You are no longer in care, but you have been eligible and;
- You are 16 or 17 years old

You are a former relevant care leaver if:

- You are aged 18 or above and;
- Immediately before you reached 18 you were an eligible or relevant care leaver or;
- At age 21, or before age 25 you either continue to be on an agreed course of education and/or training or wish to receive support to start a new course.

At age 21, or before age 25 you can also ask for advice and guidance from the Leaving Care Team, even if it is not connected with a course of education or training. You may be going through a difficult time in your personal life or want some practical support with something. If you are not sure about what help you are entitled to, please ask.

You are a qualifying care leaver if:

- You are aged at least 16 but under 21 and;
- You were looked after by the council prior to the making of a special guardianship order or;
- If at any time after you reached the age of 16, you were looked after for a period of less than 13 weeks and have not returned home.
- At age 16 or 17 you were an eligible child but were living with a parent for more than 6 months before you reached age 18 (unless you were there under a care order).
- Coram Voice has a useful link to help you work out if you are a care leaver <https://coramvoice.org.uk/young-peoples-zone/am-i-care-leaver>

Depending on the group of care leavers you are in, you have certain entitlements:

The type of help you can expect to receive

	Eligible	Relevant	Former Relevant	Qualifying	21+ in education and training
Regularly reviewed Pathway Plan based on what we agree you need	✓	✓	✓	Together, we will decide how much advice and support is required. If necessary, a plan will be drawn up with you. This may be in the same format as a Pathway Plan	Together, we will decide how much advice and support is required. If necessary, a plan will be drawn up with you. This may be in the same format as a Pathway Plan
Personal Adviser	✓	✓	✓	Depends on the support you need	Depends on the support you need
Take reasonable steps to keep in touch at least every 8 weeks	✓	✓	✓	Depends on the support you need	Depends on the support you need
Find and maintain suitable accommodation	✓	✓	✓	We will help you to find suitable accommodation	We will help you to find suitable accommodation
Help to meet your education, training or employment needs	✓	✓	✓	We will provide the advice you need	An assessment will be made to see if we can help you to support your course of education or training



Preparing for Leaving Care

Needs Assessment and Pathway Planning

Shropshire Council has a responsibility to prepare you to leave care at a pace suitable to you. As a young person moving towards independence, you should expect to receive the same level of care and support as any other young person would receive from a reasonable parent.

Your social worker will undertake a needs assessment and pathway plan with you within three months of your 16th birthday or within two months of being looked after if this is after your 16th birthday. Your social worker should consider what advice, assistance and support is appropriate to meet your needs with:

- Emotional and physical health
- Education, employment and training
- Accommodation
- Budgeting and bills
- Family and other relationships and the need to maintain these
- Culture and identity
- Practical skills

You will be fully involved in discussions and plans for your future. Your Pathway Plan will be reviewed:

- At six monthly intervals (if you are still in care, this will take place alongside your review)
- At your request, or that of your social worker or personal adviser
- If there are any significant changes your circumstances including a change of accommodation
- We must review the plan until you are 21 years old (and possibly up to your 25th birthday if we are supporting your education or training or supporting you with other things for a lengthy period)

Preparing for leaving care and your personal adviser

You will have a personal adviser as well as a social worker when you reach the age of 17. Your personal adviser will help you to develop skills and put into place the things in your life that will enable you to live independently in your own accommodation when you are ready.

The support will begin when you are still in care and you will be encouraged to develop skills in such things as cooking, budgeting, cleaning and looking after yourself before you are 16. Your personal adviser will provide you with support and advice on a range of things including:

- Developing your independence skills (being able to look after yourself)
- Access to training, education and employment opportunities
- Finding and managing suitable accommodation at a time that's right for you

- Helping you to manage your money, so that you have enough to pay your bills and buy things for yourself. We will make sure you know what money you are entitled to such as benefits and bursaries and entitlements from Shropshire Council
- Keeping in contact with family and friends
- Help to find specialist support when you need it, including counselling and advice on issues such as drugs and alcohol and your sexual health

Keeping in Touch

Your personal adviser will arrange to meet with you at a minimum of every eight weeks in your home to make sure that your accommodation is suitable. Accommodation will only be regarded as suitable if it is safe, secure and affordable.

We will also keep in touch through:

- Emails
- Telephone conversations
- Text messages
- Meeting you in the community or office appointments

There will be circumstances when visiting you at home every eight weeks is not right for you. We will discuss this with you to find the right balance. Any changes to the way we work with you or the way or frequency that we keep in touch will be clearly recorded in your Pathway Plan and in your file.



Life and Accommodation

Once you have reached the age of 18 years you will no longer be in care but will continue to be supported by the Leaving Care Team. There will be a range of options available to you depending on how ready you are to live independently.

In some cases, especially where you have been living in foster care, it may be possible for you to remain after your 18th birthday in a Staying Put arrangement. This also includes being able to go back to this arrangement during holidays if you are attending university.

This will be explained and discussed with you and your foster carer as part of your preparation for independence. This will be done well in advance of your 18th birthday to give you time to think about what is best for you.

Where you will live will depend on what support you need. It may be possible for you to live independently in a flat or house or in accommodation with other young people. In the early stages of leaving care you might need extra help, so we can provide support and visit you on a regular basis or find supported accommodation where staff are based on the same site. We also have a supported lodgings scheme which will help you to prepare for living independently.

Through our housing department, we will make sure that an affordable tenancy in social housing or the private sector is available to you at the time which we agree is right for you. We will help you to make it ready with a Setting Up Home Allowance and can contribute to your costs by paying your council tax.

Financial entitlements

The type of financial help you receive from Shropshire Council will depend on whether you are an eligible or relevant child, former relevant or qualifying care leaver. Your personal adviser will help you to work out what you are entitled to. You can also see our full list of financial entitlements.

There are staff at the DWP jobcentres who we will contact on your behalf to help you to set up benefits payments and to help prevent problems from getting out of hand.

Shropshire Council Care Leaver Entitlements (wef 1 December 2018)

I am age ... and entitled to	16/17 living in foster or residential care (eligible)	16/17 living in semi-independent accommodation (eligible)	16/17 and have left care (relevant)
Weekly Maintenance	Yes. Provided by carers	Yes. At to the equivalent of JSA if you have no other income.	Yes. At to the equivalent of JSA if you have no other income and not living with a parent.
Cost of Daily Living	Yes. £5 per week while on remand.	Yes. £5 per week while on remand.	Yes. £5 per week while on remand.
Leisure Centre/Gym Pass	3 months pass at SC centres, renewable subject to attendance	3 months pass at SC centres, renewable subject to attendance	3 months pass at SC centres, renewable subject to attendance

16-20 (Qualifying) ¹	18/19/20 (Former Relevant)	21-24 on an agreed course of education or training ²	21-24 ³
No financial support is available.	No. JSA/UC can be claimed if no other income available. We will support you while you wait for your claim to be processed	No. JSA/UC can be claimed. We will support you while you wait for your claim to be processed. If at university, £15.50 per week term time, £58 vacations.	No financial support is available.
No financial support is available.	Yes. £5 per week while on remand.	No financial support is available.	No financial support is available.
Not available	3 months pass at SC centres, renewable subject to attendance	3 months pass at SC centres, renewable subject to attendance	Not available

¹We are unlikely to provide financial assistance to "Qualifying" young people but will consider requests.

²If you started your course before the age of 21 but it continues beyond age 21, any assistance as described in the pathway plan extends until the end of the course. If you stopped receiving a service from us at age 21 and you ask for support with education/training before age 25, we will carry out an assessment to see if the course or training is one we would agree to support. We will consider providing financial assistance if we agree that financial help would be necessary to complete the course.

³We are unlikely to provide financial assistance but will consider requests

I am age ... and entitled to	16/17 living in foster or residential care (eligible)	16/17 living in semi-independent accommodation (eligible)	16/17 and have left care (relevant)
Accommodation Costs	Yes.	Yes. Rent and support paid. You may have to pay a service charge for utilities and food.	Yes. Rent and support paid if not living with a parent. You may have to pay a service charge for utilities and food.
Rent in Advance, Deposit + Fees for 1st private tenancy	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Council Tax	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Passport & Birth Certificate	Full cost of first Passport, Birth Certificate and any other form of ID such as Provisional Driving Licence.	Full cost of first Passport, Birth Certificate and any other form of ID such as Provisional Driving Licence.	Full cost of first Passport, Birth Certificate and any other form of ID such as Provisional Driving Licence.

16-20 (Qualifying) ¹	18/19/20 (Former Relevant)	21-24 on an agreed course of education or training ²	21-24 ³
No financial support is available if benefits or student finance can be claimed. Top up subject to assessment	No financial support is available if benefits or student finance can be claimed. Top up subject to assessment	No financial support is available if benefits or student finance can be claimed. Top up subject to assessment	No financial support is available.
No financial support is available.	Yes – at affordable rent and when social housing not available	Not applicable	Not applicable
No financial support is available.	We will pay your tax liability	We will pay your tax liability	We will pay your tax liability
No financial support is available.	Full cost of first Passport, Birth Certificate and any other form of ID such as Provisional Driving Licence.	Full cost of first Passport, Birth Cert' and any other form of ID such as Provisional Driving Licence.	No financial support is available.

I am age ... and entitled to	16/17 living in foster or residential care (eligible)	16/17 living in semi-independent accommodation (eligible)	16/17 and have left care (relevant)
Essential Clothing Payments"	Yes. Provided by carers	Yes. Up to £100 summer and £100 winter (+ up to £150 for education or work-related clothing)	Yes. Up to £100 summer and £100 winter (+ up to £150 for education or work-related clothing)
Maternity	£250 in 3rd trimester in addition to state benefit entitlement	£250 in 3rd trimester in addition to state benefit entitlement	£250 in 3rd trimester in addition to state benefit entitlement
Further Education - Course Fees	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Travel Fares to College	Travel Pass if Shropshire resident. If not, fares paid	Travel Pass if Shropshire resident. If not, fares paid	Travel Pass if Shropshire resident. If not, fares paid

16-20 (Qualifying) ¹	18/19/20 (Former Relevant)	21-24 on an agreed course of education or training ²	21-24 ³
No financial support is available.	Yes. Up to £100 summer and £100 winter (+ up to £150 for education or work-related clothing)	Up to £150 for education or work-related clothing within 3 months of course ending.	No financial support is available.
No financial support is available.	£250 in 3rd trimester in addition to state benefit entitlement	No financial support is available.	No financial support is available.
Subject to assessment	Yes, but subject to assessment	Yes, but subject to assessment	No financial support is available.
Subject to assessment	Travel Pass if Shropshire resident. If not, fares paid	Travel Pass if Shropshire resident. If not, fares paid	No financial support is available.

I am age ... and entitled to	16/17 living in foster or residential care (eligible)	16/17 living in semi-independent accommodation (eligible)	16/17 and have left care (relevant)
Travel Fares up to 1st month employment	Travel Pass	Travel Pass	Travel Pass
Travel to Visit Family or Significant Adults	Bi-annual fares. Subject to assessment	Bi-annual fares. Subject to assessment	Bi-annual fares. Subject to assessment. Not available if living with parent
University Bursary	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
College/Uni Related Equipment	Via College Bursary. Top up subject to assessment	Via College Bursary. Top up subject to assessment	Via College Bursary. Top up subject to assessment

16-20 (Qualifying) ¹	18/19/20 (Former Relevant)	21-24 on an agreed course of education or training ²	21-24 ³
Subject to assessment	Travel Pass	Not applicable	No financial support is available.
No financial support is available.	Bi-annual fares. Subject to assessment. Not available if living with parent	No financial support is available.	No financial support is available.
No financial support is available.	£2000 split into equal instalments (annual) throughout duration of course.	£2000 split into equal instalments (annual) throughout duration of course.	No financial support is available.
Via College Bursary. Top up subject to assessment	Via College Bursary/trust funding. Top up subject to assessment	Via trust funding. Top up subject to assessment	No financial support is available.

I am age ... and entitled to	16/17 living in foster or residential care (eligible)	16/17 living in semi-independent accommodation (eligible)	16/17 and have left care (relevant)
Setting Up Home Allowance	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Part of setting up home allowance may be made available
Birthday & Festival Money	Yes. Provided by carers	Yes. At equivalent rate when in foster care	rate when in foster care unless living with a parent

16-20 (Qualifying) ¹	18/19/20 (Former Relevant)	21-24 on an agreed course of education or training ²	21-24 ³
No financial support is available.	If living independently. Maximum £2,000 for household fixtures and fittings + 1st TV licence; insurance; locks; fire safety; decorating allowance; initial food and cleaning stock. Available up to age 25	If living independently. Maximum £2,000 for household fixtures and fittings + 1st TV licence; insurance; locks; fire safety; decorating allowance; initial food and cleaning stock. Available up to age 25	If living independently. Maximum £2,000 for household fixtures and fittings + 1st TV licence; insurance; locks; fire safety; decorating allowance; initial food and cleaning stock. Available up to age 25
No financial support is available.	£75 for 18th & 21st birthday. £50 at age 19 & 20. Festival £75 (£100 if a parent) + hamper	Not Applicable	No financial support is available.

I am age ... and entitled to	16/17 living in foster or residential care (eligible)	16/17 living in semi-independent accommodation (eligible)	16/17 and have left care (relevant)
University Vacation Accommodation	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Immigration, Citizenship, Asylum Applications	Asylum attracts legal aid. Immigration and citizenship funding subject to assessment	Asylum attracts legal aid. Immigration and citizenship funding subject to assessment	Asylum attracts legal aid. Immigration and citizenship funding subject to assessment
Participation Payments	£30 per day (vouchers) pro rata + travel and refreshments. Minimum payment £15	£30 per day (vouchers) pro rata + travel and refreshments. Minimum payment £15	£30 per day (vouchers) pro rata + travel and refreshments. Minimum payment £15

16-20 (Qualifying) ¹	18/19/20 (Former Relevant)	21-24 on an agreed course of education or training ²	21-24 ³
Yes. At the equivalent of the local housing allowance rate.	Yes. At the equivalent of the local housing allowance rate unless returning to Staying Put arrangement or supported lodgings.	Yes. At the equivalent of the local housing allowance rate unless returning to Staying Put arrangement or supported lodgings.	No financial support is available.
No financial support is available.	Asylum attracts legal aid. Immigration and citizenship funding subject to assessment	No financial support is available.	No financial support is available.
£30 per day (vouchers) pro rata + travel and refreshments. Minimum payment £15	£30 per day (vouchers) pro rata + travel and refreshments. Minimum payment £15	£30 per day (vouchers) pro rata + travel and refreshments. Minimum payment £15	£30 per day (vouchers) pro rata + travel and refreshments. Minimum payment £15



Page 24 How payments will be made

If you are entitled to personal allowance and accommodation payments, your social worker or personal adviser will organise these as follows:

- Payment of personal allowances will be made to a bank or building society
- A birthday payment will be made in the week before your birthday
- A Christmas or festival payment will be made in early December or at a time suitable to your festival

Education, Training and Employment

Your personal adviser or social worker will help you to achieve the best possible opportunities for education, training and employment and will work with anyone else who can help you. We have a dedicated adviser from the Virtual School who will be happy to offer you careers advice whenever you need it. She is available through your personal adviser or you can drop in and see her at The Vicarage.

Apprenticeships

Shropshire Council has created apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers in several parts of children's services and within the wider council. For more details, please contact the Leaving Care Team Manager on 01743 254590.

Help with the cost of full time education or attending university

Your personal adviser will discuss the financial and any other support that we will provide you with to support you whilst you are in full time education or attending university.

If you are a former relevant care leaver and you enter a higher education course, we will provide you with financial support. The support available will be discussed with you. You will however, always be provided with the following if you need it:

- A weekly living allowance
- A bursary of £2,000 divided over the length of your course
- Help and support with the cost of accommodation during holidays.
- Support to communicate with a nominated support worker at the university to ensure all necessary support is provided
- Support with educational equipment/materials

There is also a 16 -19-year-old bursary. Young people in care and care leavers are guaranteed a £1,200 bursary if you stay in full-time further education. We will help you to get in touch with education provider (school or college) to find out how to claim the bursary.

Health and Well Being

Every young person will have different support needs when it comes to health and it will be for you to ask your Personal Adviser for help where you need it. If you feel there are things that you really need to talk to someone about, then your Personal Adviser can direct you to services and perhaps attend some of the initial meetings with you if you'd like some moral support.

However, there are some key things that you might want to consider asking your Personal Adviser to help you with:

- Registering with a GP, Dentist and even an Optician if you have not done so already or if you have moved to a new area. You have the right to choose your primary healthcare providers and cannot legally be refused treatment based on any outstanding application for leave to remain in the UK. To check for your nearest health service, go to the NHS Service Search tool <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search>
- Signposting you to appropriate services for your physical, mental and sexual health.
- Attending hospital appointments with you for non-routine health concerns, as these can often be stressful and so it is good for you to have someone there with you. Also, if you do end up as a patient at hospital then your Personal Adviser should come in and see you.
- Advice on healthy living which will include anything from being smart about having safe sex all the way through to having a balanced diet.
- During the coming year, the NHS will ensure that young people due to leave care will be offered a copy of a health passport describing their medical history.



<https://beeu.org.uk/im-young-person/im-16-or-over/> BeeU can put you in touch with services when you feel that you need support with your emotional or mental health.

<https://kooth.com> provides free, safe and anonymous online support for young people via a social platform for young people.

<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/beam/shropshire> Beam is an emotional health and well-being service for children and young people across the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin areas so if you're under 25 and have something on your mind, they are there to listen and support you.

Don't forget The Samaritans, who provide emotional support if you are struggling to cope or having suicidal thoughts.
Freephone: 116 123

Relationships

We know how important it is to have close friendships and family support so we want to do as much as we can to help you to keep people you value close to you. We will support you with the cost of seeing close family and other people important to you and make it possible for you to make new relationships through things like leisure passes and the Care Leavers' Forum. We will also support you when things are not going well with your close relationships by either talking things through with your personal adviser or by putting you in touch with other people we know.

Complaints and Advocacy

We will always try to give a high standard of support. If you are unhappy with the service you have received, you might want to talk to someone you trust who might be able to help you sort the problem.

This could be a parent, carer, key worker, personal adviser, social worker, designated teacher or an advocate.

You may also want to give feedback about the following:

- Anything good about the service you received.
- Any ideas which you may have about how we can do things better or do things in a different way.

You are entitled to let us know if you are not happy and, if necessary, to make a complaint if you are not satisfied with the support you are receiving or feel that you have not been listened to.

If you have tried to speak to someone or feel unable to and there is still a problem and you want to make a complaint, make a suggestion or give a compliment you can contact us in several ways:

Email: customer.feedback@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 0345 678 9000

You can download this leaflet which explains everything:

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/media/10601/childrens-feedback-leaflet-aug-2018.pdf>

You have the right to have an advocate. An advocate is someone that can help you to get your voice heard. They are separate from Children's Services and work for you. Advocates will listen to you and help you to put your views and wishes across. If you need help or support in making your complaint, you can contact Coram Voice on their freephone number 0808 800 5792 or email them help@coramvoice.org.uk or download their leaflet https://coram.org.uk/sites/default/files/resource_files/Coram%20Voice%20Advocacy%20and%20You.pdf

Getting in touch with us:

Your social worker and personal adviser will provide you with their direct dial extension, mobile number and email address.

The Leaving Care Team, The Vicarage, Shirehall, SY2 6ND

If your social worker or personal adviser is unavailable, you can contact the duty personal adviser who will help you:

Leaving Care duty personal adviser - 01743 254590

You can email the leaving Care Team at:
LeavingCare16Plus@Shropshire.gov.uk

If you need to urgently contact us during the evening, at night or at the weekend, contact our out of hours team on 01743 244197



Access to records and data protection

The law says that you have a right to see information that is written about you. This includes social services files. You can ask to see any information held by the council about you. Please ask your social worker or personal adviser for further information.

Getting Involved

The Care Leavers' Forum meets regularly to support the Leaving Care Team to improve what we do. In fact, this booklet was put together with the help of the forum. For more details about how to get involved, please contact your Leaving Care Ambassador on 01743 254590.

Local Offer

Information and advice for Shropshire's Care Leavers aged 16 to 25



For more information contact us at:
LeavingCare16Plus@Shropshire.gov.uk
01743 254590

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Care Leaver Covenant: Shropshire's Pledge and sign up

Responsible Officer

e-mail: Karen Bradshaw

Tel: 01743 254201

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

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Catherine Armstrong Shrewsbury colleges	Sharing covenant with 520 staff at SCG and asking if anyone wants to act as mentor
Friends of Flax mill Maltings	Continuing conversation about Ditherington care leavers with Barbara
Jennifer English English care	Offer of apprenticeships in our care, house keeping potentially in construction Shadowing/work experience
Andrew Coxill Tesco	Locally -CV skills, interview skills, application support, work sample, signposting roles, customer service skills. Nationally- Engage with leadership form around covenant
Catherine Connery Start software Telford	Work experience, job shadowing, mentoring, interview experience. If offering apprenticeships can you let know in case they are of interest
Sue Atkins Housing plus group	Promising to discuss this with our leaders in housing plus group to pledge/work on covenant.
Mandy Thorn Marches care LTD	Work placements and job opportunities.
Shropshire chamber of commerce	Engage with more businesses to enable start up support
Ollie Blakeman Beth Phage	Work placements and shadowing, experience - discuss further with E.M.T

Vicky Martin Syspal	Regularly recruit apprentices or trainees.
Ben Vaughan DWP-Oswestry	Use links with employers in Shropshire to support care leavers, will contact team to discuss mentoring specifications
Selina Graham Willey estate	Helping to look for opportunities, idea, mentors, work experience and job opportunities
Lizzie Hatchman National Trust	I will contact a number of key potential partners we could work with
David Clarke University centre shrewsbury	Work with virtual school to raise aspirations around H.E. Mentoring schemes with existing uni students Build on Shropshire councils partnership- accommodation, graduate employment.
Alan Mosely Shrewsbury council Friends of flaxmill maltings	Council to sign covenant, volunteer opportunities and possible apprenticeships and work experience.
Kim Chadwick Harper Adams uni	We are currently working with the covenant but would LOVE to make strong connections with Shropshire council
Jen Green Affinity Homecare	Continuing to recruit care leavers, support them and give them any opportunities available within our organisation
Richard Parkes SYA	Training offer to train care leavers as young health

	champions and young youth club leaders
Jess Bailey Team 4 you	Assisting with interview skills, CV writing, employability skills and networking with local businesses on behalf of young people.
Tembi Tshuma Promises of care	Providing appropriate accommodation and support to gain independence skills, apprenticeships, social support/activities
Rabinder Dhami Shropshire fire and rescue service	Provide fire safety education 16-25 Provide a safe and well visit to 18-25 Look at opportunities where young people could support the service at events
Kate Evans Berrys	Helping with recruitment-CV services, interview practice, shadowing, budgeting and financial advice.
Edward Potter Oak Apple Catering LTD	Work experience placements for young people who are looking at a career in catering and hospitality
Paul Whitehead Balfour Beatty	Career talk on site upto 4 on site with foreman Work experience Work opportunities on Shropshire projects
Chief Inspector Sarah Corteen Police	Offering help and support to care leavers who are thinking of a career in the police service

Richard James and Clair Shepperd Ricoh UK productions Ltd	Discussing how we can support further, providing opportunities for apprenticeships and work experience
David Turner Shropshire council	Providing job interview experience
Olivia Hames The hive	Starting to develop our work experience offer – set up meetings with staff regarding mentoring roles
John Pitchford Barclays Bank	Barclays has an award winning programme of support - barclayslifeskills.com – maybe we can look to see how we can use this to support the local offer
Ben Lyle Enterprise	Access to virtual car clubs for care leavers-need a meeting with children's services to set it up -gives cheap hourly car rental rather than buying one
Katie Morris Morris and company group	Involving care leavers in our stepping stone and apprenticeship/work experience programmes
Catherine Armstrong Shrewsbury colleges group	Proving access for opportunities to have hair and beauty treatments and eat in origins restaurant, use of gym

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SOCIAL VALUE TOOLKIT

A guide to supporting
care leavers through
procurement.



READY WHEN YOU ARE





1 FOREWORD

For any young person, moving into adulthood and starting to make their own way in the world can be extremely daunting and a huge learning curve.

Imagine how difficult it is for those young people that don't have the backing of a supportive family to help them along the way and to be there for them when things don't go to plan.

For young people that have grown up in the care system, leaving care and striking out on their own can be a massively challenging time. As corporate parents to care leavers, local authorities have a responsibility to make sure that these young people are as ready for the next stage of their lives as they possibly can be and continue to get support along the way.

But this responsibility shouldn't just sit with children's services and care providers. To be truly effective, the role of corporate parent should extend across the whole commonwealth of towns and cities and include partners across the private, public and voluntary sectors. Just imagine the range of opportunities that this could offer to vulnerable young people to help them feel valued and more prepared to take their first steps into independence.

Just having access to the same kind of opportunity and support that their peers have could make a huge difference to many young people and have a really positive impact on preparing them to live independently, achieve financial stability, give them practical and emotional support, help them to establish stability in their lives and be able to achieve their ambitions.

I am proud to be the first local authority champion of the Care Leaver Covenant and, in this role, I actively encourage colleagues in every council to engage with the Covenant and champion how it can improve outcomes for care leavers.

Please sign up to the Covenant and help care leavers navigate a path into further and higher education, employment and training and ultimately be able to live independently.

If you are wondering how your council can enhance its local offer, you will find lots of information in this document about developing a 'whole council' approach and forming partnerships with public, private and voluntary sector partners so young people can live settled, happy and successful lives.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tom Riordan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Tom Riordan, CBE

Chief Executive, Leeds City Council
Care Leaver Covenant Champion

2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Care Leaver Covenant is a programme developed under the Department for Education's (DfE) *Keep on Caring*¹ policy and it aims to improve outcomes for care leavers. It seeks to create practical, specific, offers by organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors to support care leavers aged 16-25 in living independently. Whilst many councils have developed excellent local offers to support care leavers, we believe that the procurement process can provide many further opportunities to improve outcomes for care leavers.

2.1 CARE LEAVERS

A care leaver is a young person aged 16-25 who has been looked-after for at least 13 weeks in total since the age of 14. Those aged 16 or 17 are 'eligible' (still looked-after) or 'relevant' (no longer looked-after) children. Those aged 18-25 are 'former relevant children'. Compared with their peers, children in care face multiple challenges. They are more likely to underachieve in education, be lured into crime and suffer more emotional and health problems.

On leaving care, these young adults are three times more likely to be NEET and experience financial hardship. They are at a greater risk of homelessness, substance abuse and poor mental health and most will lack the social networks to support them in leading independent, fulfilling lives. The number of care leavers continues to rise whilst the negative impact on financially challenged councils grows ever larger. As corporate parents, councils must make a local offer to care leavers. But wider society – civic, civil and business – also has a duty to act as a 'lifelong family'.

2.2 THE CARE LEAVER COVENANT

To address these challenges, the 'mission' of the Covenant is to promote five key outcomes, so that care leavers:

- ★ are better prepared to live independently;
- ★ have improved access to employment, education and training;
- ★ experience stability in their lives and feel safe and secure;
- ★ have improved access to health support;
- ★ achieve financial stability.

The DfE has set out five underpinning objectives for the Covenant:

- Care leavers aged 16-25 across England have access to a wide range of support and opportunities through the Covenant, wherever they live, to help them achieve the five key outcomes.
- Councils and care leavers know about and understand the Covenant and what support care leavers can get from signatories.

- Personal advisers, independent fostering agencies, charities, and others working with care leavers and those about to become care leavers have the information they need in order to take advantage of covenant offers'.
- A wide range of businesses and charities across England sign up to make offers of support to care leavers that help them achieve the five key outcomes.
- The Care Leaver Covenant is a recognised and valued brand, and the accepted framework for designing and delivering exceptional interventions that enable care leavers to make a successful transition into independent living.

2.3 CROSS-GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

The Covenant is not just a DfE initiative. In an example of cross-departmental collaboration, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government are also involved. These departments have all signed the Care Leaver Covenant and reviewed their current policy and practices with a view to making them more 'care-leaver friendly', and impacting on one, or more, of the five key outcomes.

2.4 COVENANT IN ACTION

In 2018, Spectra First was appointed to manage the Covenant through encouraging organisations to sign the Covenant, supporting those organisations once they have signed the Covenant and raising the awareness of councils and voluntary sector organisations working with care leavers. Organisations signing the Covenant undertake to make an offer of support which addresses one or more of the five key outcomes. Ideas for Covenant offers of support were developed through a process of listening to the voices of care-experienced individuals in various events and workshops. The offers include: discounts, financial support, exemptions, personal development, workshops, training, work experience, apprenticeships and internships. During the first phase of the Covenant (up to the end of March 2020), Spectra First has focused on delivering:

- 270 organisations to sign the Covenant;
- 5,000 meaningful offers created for care leavers;
- 1,000 internships created for care leavers; and
- 152 councils with Children Services departments to support the Covenant

Spectra First and the Covenant have worked with six council Champions - Leeds, Doncaster, Lewisham, Somerset, Staffordshire and Wolverhampton - each of which has adopted a dynamic and progressive approach to developing their local offer for care leavers. These Champions use their powers and duties under the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 to consider care leavers' needs at the pre-procurement stage.

¹ DfE (2016) *Keep on caring: supporting young people from care to independence*

² The Covenant website address is www.mycovenant.org.uk

2.5 COUNCIL CASE STUDIES

City of York Council

has taken various actions to promote successful **independent living** for care leavers. This includes the “Pathway Life-Skills Toolkit” used by carers and key workers. ‘Staying put’ is an option for all care leavers and all those on residential placements outside of York are brought back before their 18th birthdays as part of the ‘Make York Home’ initiative. The option of a four-week stay in a ‘taster flat’ gives them the chance to experience independent living.

The Royal Borough of Greenwich

has worked with the charity MyBnk to ensure that care leavers get good quality **financial education** to assist them when they are moving into independent accommodation. A week-long, tailor-made money management course has helped them in sustaining tenancies.

Leeds City Council

has established a partnership with ENGIE (Places and Communities Division). The company volunteers have undertaken a range of projects to support **independent living and feeling secure** including: redecoration, paint donations, garden clearing, plumbing, joinery and DIY projects.

For the *London Borough of Islington* **health**

improving support for the mental health of care leavers is a key goal and they have facilitated weekly, drop-in health sessions with free counselling from a local mental health charity. The council has also appointed a specialist mental health social worker to support care leavers.

2.6 WHOLE-COUNCIL APPROACH

Councils have a legal obligation to support care leavers. Under the Children & Social Work Act 2017 they are required to publish a 'local offer' setting out what services are available in their area to support care leavers. This means accepting that their responsibility for being a corporate parent does not solely reside with those people and departments that have 'care leaver' in their job descriptions.

We would argue that cabinet members and councillors, as well as internal departments and teams such as economic development, social services, community investment, health, housing, corporate services and procurement teams should form a self-organising group to take the Covenant agenda forward. This would constitute a Whole Council Forum (WCF). Some councils are leading the way in changing the membership and focus of the Board to increase its effectiveness in improving outcomes for care leavers. In Telford and the Wrekin, the Council Leader has made sure that the Covenant has been included in the manifesto to ensure accountability in delivering key outcomes for care leavers.

As part of their review of current practice, councils are strongly encouraged to engage with the Covenant. Unlike the 'local offer', signing the Covenant is not a statutory requirement for a council, rather, it is a voluntary indication of a desire to do its utmost to fulfil its role as a corporate parent to care leavers. The Covenant encourages councils to follow good practice in offering additional discretionary services. Establishing a WCF would enable an integrated response and for their procurement practices to be used to effectively create a range of new opportunities for care leavers.

In order to facilitate the establishment of a WCF in councils, Spectra First has worked with The Governance Forum on model terms of reference³ which can be found at www.thegovernanceforum.com

The Local Government Association has published guidance for councils on care leavers which makes strong references to the role of the Covenant⁴. The guidance sets out a number of lines of enquiry for councillors:

- *What do we know about our care leavers – both existing, and coming up?*
- *How are we making sure that the voice of the young person is heard and reflected in the pathway plan? What are care leavers telling us?*
- *How are we making sure that young people are able to take advantage of 'staying put'?*
- *Do we have a suitable range of accommodation options for care leavers, and how are they supported in each? What happens if something goes wrong?*
- *How are we preparing care leavers to live independently?*
- *How are we working with our partners to support care leavers?*
- *How do we help care leavers to find, and remain in, employment, education and training?*
- *How are we promoting the Care Leaver Covenant?*
- *How are we ensuring that the corporate parenting principles are being applied to care leavers?*
- *How are we making sure care leavers have access to services they need for their health and wellbeing?*
- *Are there particular considerations for unaccompanied asylum-seeker care leavers?*
- *Are there particular considerations for other children in care immigration issues?*

These questions can also be usefully addressed by the WCF along with the additional question:

- *How can we use procurement processes to tackle some of these questions and to increase the opportunities available for care leavers?*

It is this question that we discuss in the rest of this Toolkit.

TELL.SHOW.INVOLVE.

³ Care Leaver Covenant (2020) Whole Council Forum Terms of Reference

⁴ Local Government Association (2019) Support for care leavers: resource pack

2.7 WORKING WITH THE COVENANT

Decision Making & Implementation

Councils are politically-led, place-shaping organisations, focused on meeting the needs of their communities – through their own activities and in partnership with others locally, regionally and nationally. The elected administration sets the vision and policies for the place and is supported in this endeavour by scrutiny boards, experienced officers and partners who provide support, challenge and advice.

The Covenant, therefore, in the first instance would like to work with council leaders or mayors and the lead member/s responsible for Care Leavers, alongside the responsible officer/s to outline the plan and opportunities to fulfil a ‘whole council’ approach.

Internal relationships

It would be beneficial for the Covenant to develop a network of three internal key stakeholders. This working group would operate from the core working areas of the Council.

Firstly, a lead Cabinet member responsible for ‘Care Leavers’ would provide the political leadership from within the Council. They would also work in tandem with the leader or mayor, the wider cabinet, and the controlling group (or coalition) to encompass the political and officer support/will necessary to facilitate the delivery of the Covenant’s core aims. It will also be important to determine the extent to which there is an opportunity to work cross-party on this agenda. Councils, whilst party political, also have many areas of work where there is a consensus across groups about the priority of the work. Supporting Care Leavers better is likely to be one of these.

Secondly, a lead officer/director of the service area responsible for ‘Care Leavers’ – and who reports directly to the Director of Children’s Services and/or the Chief Executive – would provide an operational, logistical and management oversight of any proposals. Working with senior management, departmental staff and partners to deliver the core aims of the Covenant.

Thirdly, the opportunity to involve the relevant Scrutiny Chair and their respective Board responsible for ‘Care Leavers’ would facilitate an effective additional political commitment, whilst also providing a unique opportunity for Care Leavers themselves to engage. Ideally, this role would be fulfilled by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board which brings together all chairs, a platform from which ‘Whole Council’ working could develop.

Contact details

To get involved in the Care Leaver Covenant:

t: 0800 077 3557 e: localgov@mycovenant.org.uk
Care Leaver Covenant, 38-39 The Chubb Buildings,
Fryer Street, Wolverhampton WV1 1HT

3 INTRODUCTION TO THE GUIDE AND TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed to assist councils adopt a “whole council approach” and include their executive officers, social services, community investment, health, housing, corporate services and their procurement teams in the creation of social value objectives, many of which can be aligned with the core outputs of the Care Leaver Covenant, and which can be secured through their procurement processes.

In particular, the toolkit seeks to provide guidance and example wording which councils can use and adapt to encourage bidders to incorporate social value initiatives into their bids which will help to achieve the core outcomes of the Care Leaver Covenant.

Many councils will already incorporate social value requirements in their procurements and the suggestions in this toolkit are not designed to replace those existing social value requirements, but to supplement what those councils are already doing around social value in the context of supporting care leavers.

The toolkit can be used by anybody in a council who is involved in the procurement process, and broadly covers:

- ★ **Who is subject to the public procurement rules?**
- ★ **Which contracts are covered by the framework?**
- ★ **What are the consequences of breaching the public procurement rules?**
- ★ **What prevents social value from being realised in public procurement procedures?**
- ★ **How can social value be effectively incorporated into a council’s procurements?**

Additionally, the toolkit includes suggested drafting which a council can adopt in its future procurements to ensure that each stage of the procurement process encourages bidders to consider and incorporate its social value objectives into their proposals.

4. GUIDANCE: INTRODUCTION TO THE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT RULES

4.1 WHO DOES THE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT RULES APPLY TO?

The public procurement rules apply to all “contracting authorities” as set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (the **REGULATIONS**).

Councils and care leavers know about and understand the Covenant and what support care leavers can get from signatories. However, it may be that certain contracts fall outside the scope of the Regulations, so it is important that a council knows which contracts are and are not subject to the Regulations. The following sections explain which contracts will need to be advertised in accordance with the Regulations, and when a council will not necessarily need to advertise an opportunity.

4.2 WHICH CONTRACTS ARE SUBJECT TO THE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT RULES?

The Regulations apply to certain contracts for works, services or supplies when the estimated value of those contracts exceeds a certain financial threshold.

The financial thresholds are set by the European Commission every two years and are subsequently published by the Cabinet Office. At present (and up to 31st December 2021, if not altered sooner), the financial thresholds (net of VAT) for regional and local authorities are:

- ★ **Works contracts: £4,733,252**
- ★ **Services and Supplies contracts: £189,330**
- ★ **Concession contracts: £4,733,252**

Following the UK's withdrawal from the EU, the thresholds will be set and published by the Cabinet Office and the requirement to advertise above threshold contracts is likely to be retained, with a new domestic advertisement portal being made available ("Find a Tender Service") in the event of a "no-deal" Brexit⁵.

4.3 ARE THERE ANY EXEMPTIONS?

Contracts with a value falling beneath the above stated thresholds do not need to be advertised in the Official Journal. Instead, if a council is procuring a below threshold contract it will need to follow certain requirements set out in the "below threshold regime" found in Part 4 of the Regulations. This means that if a council is procuring a contract with a value exceeding £25,000 and has advertised the contract by any means, it will also need to advertise the opportunity on Contracts Finder. Where it has not advertised such an opportunity (for example, if it has gone directly to obtain quotes from suppliers) it will not need to advertise the opportunity on Contracts Finder.

If a council is procuring a contract which is below the £25,000 value then there is no requirement to advertise at all (although it will need to comply with any internal requirements and Standing Orders).

Additionally, there are certain contracts which do not require councils to advertise (including, for example, transactions for the sale or transfer of land and employment contracts).

If a council is procuring service contracts which relate to social care, health or education up to a value of (currently) £663,540 then the procurement will be subject to the "Light-Touch Regime", and it will not need to follow the full procurement process set out in the Regulations. Instead, it will only need to undertake a procurement process that is transparent, non-discriminatory, and treats bidders fairly.

4.4 WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF A COUNCIL NOT COMPLYING WITH THE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT RULES?

If a council breaches the Regulations then it may find itself subject to a legal challenge by an "aggrieved" economic operator by way of a challenge to the High Court.

Should such a challenge be successful, remedies against a council could include:

- ★ **An order of the Court prohibiting it from entering into the contract; or**
- ★ **A declaration of ineffectiveness which renders an awarded contract void, along with a civil financial penalty; and/or**
- ★ **Damages.**

Other, non-judicial, scrutiny and publicity can be created by a disappointed bidder reporting a council or its procurement process to the Cabinet Office's Public Procurement Review Service, who publishes both the complaint and its findings on its website.

Further, a council may have concerns about the governance and vires issues, as well as the reputational damage that may be created by a procurement process being declared non-compliant.

4.5 WHAT PREVENTS SOCIAL VALUE FROM BEING REALISED IN PUBLIC CONTRACTS, AND WHAT CAN A COUNCIL DO TO ENCOURAGE THE INCORPORATION OF SOCIAL VALUE INITIATIVES IN BIDS?

Delivering social value objectives under a contract results in additional costs to the supplier. Given this, during the procurement process, bidders may have concerns about the cost of including required social value initiatives and whether it is best placed to deliver the required social value outcomes. Conversely, a council may have concerns about asking for particular social value outcomes or a certain level of social value to be delivered through an outsourced contract, and therefore whether such initiatives are cost-effective and/or affordable.

Given the challenge for a council in specifying a proportionate level or type of social value outcome for a particular outsourced contract, it is best practice, when possible, to carry out pre-market engagement with potential bidders, end users of the service, community engagement team and internal partners at the council in order to gauge not only what should be delivered, but also whether the potential market-place is able to deliver those social value outcomes during the project being procured.

⁵ <https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/>

With the knowledge of its supply chain and what it is procuring, a council might sometimes take the view that it knows enough about its social value requirements without carrying out specific pre-market engagement, and that what it requires can be delivered by contractors in the market.

Pre-market engagement may also identify such issues as the desirable length of the contract, or the form of contract needed to unlock the social value outcomes. We've set these out in more detail below.

4.5.1 LENGTH AND VALUE OF CONTRACT

Where a contract has a shorter term and a lower value, bidders may consider that the additional costs of incorporating social value into their proposals are disproportionate and too expensive as when compared with the overall value of the contract. It follows that a bidder may be more enthusiastic to include ambitious social value outcomes in its bid where the costs are spread over a longer period of time and where it can expect a greater return on its investment.

If a council is procuring a lower value and short term contract, it may be able to gain a better understanding of whether bidders are prepared to incorporate social value into their bids through the pre-market engagement exercise. If it appears that there is likely to be little appetite amongst bidders to deliver all of the desired social value requirements, a council might decide to re-engineer the opportunity into one that is longer term and higher value, or of the same duration/value but with moderated social value requirements, to attract a wider pool of interested bidders who are able and willing to deliver the social value requirements.

4.5.2 FORM OF CONTRACT

Bidders may be more inclined to incorporate social value initiatives into their bids if they are bidding for a contract, rather than a framework agreement (which should be limited to a maximum term of four years and under which there does not have to be a guarantee of work). As a framework agreement is not a guaranteed pipeline of work, bidders might therefore be less ambitious in the social value commitments contained in their bids.

A council might also consider splitting a contract opportunity into lots. This may encourage participation from SMEs, whereas larger contractors are more likely to find larger, higher value, contracts more attractive. Nevertheless, a council may consider that the appointment of SMEs has an "inherent" social value (see *National Procurement Strategy, Key Area: Local small and medium enterprise (SMEs) and micro-business engagement*) and may consider a shorter, smaller, contract more appropriate in order to achieve a diverse range of social value outcomes.

4.6 HOW CAN SOCIAL VALUE BE INCORPORATED AT EACH STAGE OF THE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PROCESS?

The public procurement regime enables a council to anticipate and incorporate social value considerations into each stage of the procurement process. This section sets out the detail of each stage.

4.6.1 MARKET ENGAGEMENT

With Care Leavers:

Councils should engage on a regular basis with their local care leavers in order to obtain a list of specific wants/needs that should then inform the council's social value requirements. Councils could do this by using the template Stakeholders and Beneficiaries Survey included in "Engaging with stakeholders: the National TOMS 2019". In any event, there are significant benefits in councils undertaking a comprehensive market engagement exercise ahead of commencing a procurement process. The results of the care leavers' market engagement exercise can then be shared with potential bidders and interested stake-holders who can provide additional ideas and feedback which can then help to scope the procurement-specific requirements.

The requirements should be framed in such a way that they are easily understood and interpreted by all bidders, in order to ensure that those bidders who were consulted as part of the market-engagement are not unduly favoured by that prior involvement in the ensuing bid process.

With potential bidders:

Councils can conduct a Needs and Priorities Survey with local stakeholders to identify the key challenges and needs facing care leavers in their area. The feedback from this survey can then be used to create a Social Value Action Plan for each contract to include in the tender documents. The National TOMS Framework provides a template survey for engaging with local stakeholders that would be suitable for this. A council can also ask bidders, as part of the tender, to put forward suggestions of their own, provided that it sets out clearly how such bidder proposals will be evaluated on a like-for-like basis. It is therefore likely that the social value requirements will fall into two categories:

- ★ **Those requirements that the council identifies in its Social Value Action Plan, along with targets and forms of measurement for their implementation; and**
- ★ **A requirement to put forward additional social value outcomes that go over and above the council-scoped requirements and provide "added value" or innovative proposals.**

A council should spend a sufficient amount of time scoping its social value requirements for each outsourced contract it lets, in order to ensure that the tendered requirements will secure the outcomes it desires during the currency of the contract.

4.6.2 ADVERTISEMENT

All procurements that are subject to the Regulations will need to be advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union and Contracts Finder. As this is the “advert” for the outsourced contract, it is important to highlight any particular social value outcomes to set the scene for the ensuing procurement and contract and so that it attracts bidders capable of delivering such social value outcomes. Suggested wording to include at section III.2.2 of the Contract Notice or section III.2.2 of a Prior Information Notice (used as a call for competition) is set out in Appendix 1.

4.6.3 SELECTION STAGE

A selection stage (where a council shortlists a number of bidders) is not permitted where it is procuring via the Open Procedure or procuring a below threshold contract, but is the first stage in the Restricted Procedure, the Competitive Dialogue Procedure and the Competitive Procedure with Negotiation.

In these procedures, a council will first issue a Selection Questionnaire to applicants. The Selection Questionnaire (for services contracts it is a standard form document issued by the Crown Commercial Service, and for works contracts PAS:91 Selection Questionnaire is recommended) evaluates the past performance, financial standing and good standing of the applicants who submit a response. It is a requirement (for services contracts) to use the standard form Selection Questionnaire, but a council is permitted to add project specific questions.

It is therefore open to a council to ask questions about the applicants’ previous experience in delivering social value objectives, and their experience in participating in social value initiatives on projects of similar nature. As part of a council’s project specific questions, it could also require applicants to explain how they ensure that their supply-chains also deliver social value on similar contracts.

Example wording to be included in the Selection Questionnaire is set out in Appendix 1.

4.6.4 INVITATION TO TENDER

In all procedures, it is possible to include social value objectives as part of a council’s requirements for contract delivery.

At this stage, a council can set its required standard for how social value is to be delivered in the project and/or request that bidders put forward their own social value proposals. The council’s required standard could either be expressed as a minimum standard (failure to accept or sign up to deliver that minimum requirement would effectively result in a tender being failed and rejected) or as a desired standard, both of which would be accompanied by relevant key performance indicators and a monitoring and evaluation regime as part of the contract stage. This is also an opportunity to evaluate and explore how bidders will ensure that their supply-chain will incorporate social value into the project, and how key supply-chain members will help in the delivery of the required standards.

If a council wants to investigate and evaluate social value proposals at the tender stage, it must ensure that it also sets out the evaluation criteria and the relevant weightings for the social value requirements. It is also recommended that a scoring table, including guidance as to how the council will allocate the scores, is included. In the event that it wants bidders to put forward their own social value proposals, the council will also need to make sure that such evaluation criteria will allow it to evaluate what could be very different proposals on a like for like basis, and that the scoring guidance supports this.

Where a council is establishing a framework agreement (either a multi-party or sole provider framework) it may also want to include a general commitment to work with the local authority in relation to care leavers throughout the term of the contract. The council will then need to make sure that it includes contractual commitments and targets in the individual call-off contracts under those framework agreements.

Suggested wording to be included in the tender documents is set out in Appendix 1.

Contract management

Once the contract has been awarded and the procurement process is over, it is important to ensure that a council effectively manages the contract throughout its duration so as to make sure that the social value initiatives and objectives identified in the procurement process are clearly recorded in the contract and delivered.

Effective contract management requires preparation throughout the procurement procedure, and a council will need to ensure that the suite of contract documents contains provisions which obligate the successful bidder to deliver the proposed and agreed social value requirements.

In procurement procedures involving a negotiation stage, and where the bidders are given the opportunity to mark-up the contract documents, it is important that the council clearly sets the parameters as to what is required in the contract to ensure that the contractual provisions for delivery of the social value objectives are retained and the efficacy of them is not undermined.

Tools which a council can rely on include key performance indicators and targets to measure the successful bidder's performance. Linked to this, it may want to consider whether financial incentives (such as a pain-share or gain-share mechanism), which may focus the bidder's attention towards achieving its social value proposals, would be appropriate for the contract in question. Clearly such a mechanism needs to be managed and the council should confirm at the outset whether its internal payment/IT systems and team members are able to implement the monitoring and reward systems and processes agreed.

5 KEY RESOURCES AND FURTHER READING

For more information and further reading please see the following:

- ★ Local Government Association "Support for care leavers resource pack"
- ★ National TOMS Framework 2019 for social value measurement guidance
- ★ Engaging with Stakeholders, the National TOMS 2019

APPENDIX 1 – THE TOOLKIT

1. Example wording for the Contract Notice/Prior Information Notice

The following are two examples of the wording that can be inserted in the council's Contract Notice/Prior Information Notice when seeking to secure social value outcomes via a procurement.

The first example is some generic wording, focussing on the Care Leaver Covenant, for use on all procurements. The second example is for those procurements where the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies.

EXAMPLE 1: The following should be added to Paragraph III.2.2 for works, services and supplies contracts, framework agreements etc:

"Under this [project] [contract] [programme] the [contractor] and its supply chain will be required to actively participate in the achievement of social policy objectives relating to recruitment and training and supply chain initiatives in order to further the core outcomes of the Care Leaver Covenant. Accordingly the contract performance conditions may relate in particular to social considerations, and how the contractor will ensure that it and its supply chain will further the core outcomes of the Care Leaver Covenant."

EXAMPLE 2: The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires "contracting authorities" to consider their obligations under that Act. Where this is applicable, the following words should be inserted at Paragraph VI.3 - Additional information:

"Under the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 the contracting authority must consider:

- a. *How what is proposed to be procured might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area where it exercises its functions; and*
- b. *How, in conducting the process of procurement, it might act with a view to securing that improvement.*

Accordingly, the subject matter of the contract has been scoped to take into account the priorities of the contracting authority relating to economic, social and environmental well-being. These priorities include the core outcomes of the Care Leaver Covenant, including:

1. *Better access;*
2. *Independent Living;*
3. *Safety and Security;*
4. *Financial Stability; and*
5. *Health.*

These outcomes are described more fully in the procurement documents [and are reflected in the evaluation criteria for the award of the contract]."



2. Example wording for a Selection Questionnaire

The following questions can be inserted in a council’s Selection Questionnaire (for example, in Part 3, Section 8 of the CCS Standard Selection Questionnaire “Additional questions”, or as supplementary or additional project specific questions within the PAS 91 Selection Questionnaire). The questions asked at Selection Questionnaire stage should be “backward looking” and refer to the bidder’s experience, capacity and delivery of similar outcomes on previous contracts. It should include questions relating only to those social value requirements which are being included in the procurement. This means the questions it asks and the experience it requires are relevant in particular to the Care Leaver Covenant’s core outcomes, as well as any other social value initiatives it wants to incorporate. These should assist in assessing a bidder’s technical experience and ability in relation to the skills needed to deliver the social value requirements for the proposed project.

A council might seek to ask a series of questions focussing on individual social value outcomes, or seek to ask only one generic question covering “social value”. This example wording specifically addresses the care leaver agenda.

EXAMPLE:

“Please detail your organisation’s previous experience in implementing social value outcomes which support better access for care leavers; promote and encourage independent living for care leavers; focus on the safety and security of care leavers; promote financial stability of care leavers; and/or focus on improving the health of care leavers, including implementation of the same through your supply chain on similar programmes or projects. Please provide details of the value and scope of any such initiatives in relation to the value of these programmes or projects. Please also indicate if you are able to provide references for these initiatives, and if so, relevant contact details (eg name, address, job title, phone number and email address).

Provide details of how your organisation achieved and implemented each initiative on a project-specific basis, whether pursuant to contractual commitments or otherwise, and how it measured and evidenced your performance. Did it fail to meet any agreed targets or commitments relating to any of the above and, if so, why?”

Guidance can be issued alongside questions to demonstrate how an excellent response should look. An example is provided below:

“An excellent answer is one that shows that the organisation has direct and relevant experience of delivering and implementing successful programmes of a similar value and scope to the proposed contract which include the detailed social value outcomes, and has implemented initiatives in accordance with its contractual obligations and met all its agreed targets.”

Scoring grids should also be provided to explain how each standard is to be scored. An example is provided below:

Comment	Judgement	Marks
Meets the requirements as to experience fully and exceeds them in some or all aspects.	Excellent	5
Meets the requirements as to experience fully but does not exceed them.	Good	4
Meets the requirements as to experience in the majority of them but not all	Satisfactory	3
Meets some of the requirements as to experience but fails to meet the majority	Unsatisfactory	2
Significantly fails to meet the requirements as to experience.	Poor	1
Does not meet the requirements as to experience at all.	Failed	0

Example wording for invitation document

The example wording provided below can be inserted into an Invitation to Tender (e.g. the tender document for an Open or Restricted Procedure). When using Dialogue-based/Negotiated procedures, please note that these can also be used in Invitations to Submit Outline Solutions and Invitations to Submit Final Tenders, but they should be tailored so that they reflect the specific requirements of each stage of the procurement process.

The questions are phrased in a way which require a council to have included a “social value requirements document” as part of the tender documents. In this document, a council should set out which of the Care Leaver Covenant’s core outcomes it wants the bidders to incorporate into their bids, along with other desired social value outcomes to be achieved through the contract and areas for potential innovation/additional social value outcomes (“additionality”). It should also set out any relevant benchmarks for delivery or minimum outcomes required. We presume that this information will be taken from the overall social value action plan compiled by the council on an organisation-wide basis.

Tender Action Point 1: Social Value Requirements Method Statement

Bidders are required to provide a detailed method statement setting out how they intend to implement the social value requirements document (including any additionality proposed by the bidder). The Social Value Requirements Method Statement should cover the following:

1. *The outcomes that are to be achieved by the bidder if awarded the contract, including details as to how they link in with the council’s social value requirements, the programme for delivery across the contract period, and any pre-conditions relevant to the social value requirements.*
2. *Who in the organisation will be responsible for managing the delivery of the relevant social value outcome(s)?*
3. *Which third party providers (if any) are to be involved in delivering the outcome(s)?*
4. *[How will your results against the outcome(s) be measured?]⁶*
5. *How will it ensure it achieves or exceeds the outcome(s) (including the delivery, timing and milestones of each outcome)? Any timing of delivery should be detailed on a [weekly/monthly/quarterly] basis.*
6. *How is your supply chain going to be involved in the delivery of the outcome(s)?*
7. *How will all relevant and related health and safety issues be managed?*
8. *Set out your proposals in respect of any further outcomes (“additionality”) to be delivered in relation to the Project? Please provide details of specific proposed social value outcomes to the level of detail required by question 1 to 7 above.*

Details about the benchmarks for delivery are provided in the social value requirements document and set out the minimum outcomes for the method statement to address. Bidders are to use their own judgement as to what additional outcomes they consider are achievable in relation to the Project.

⁶ *This may not be needed if the council intends to measure the outcomes with no further input from the provider*





READY WHEN YOU ARE

Care Leaver Covenant
38-39 The Chubb Buildings
Fryer Street, Wolverhampton WV1 1HT

t: 0800 077 3557

e: info@mycovenant.org.uk

w: mycovenant.org.uk



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SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS' CHARTER



Charter for Children in Care & Care Leavers

The council should use these priorities when they are making decisions that will affect young people's lives. This document aims to raise expectation, aspiration and understanding of what the council should do to be good corporate parents. This charter will try to ensure that all children in care and care leavers have equal access to services, support and life opportunities.

My Health

Offer me advice and opportunities to help me be healthy. Give me easy and open access to health services, including sexual and mental health.

Education, Work and Training

Provide me with a suitable education, a budget if I choose to go onto university, and help seeking employment, training or education. Shropshire Council should continue to provide young people in care the chance to do work experience with the council as if it was the 'family firm'.

My Social Life

Make my life fun! Provide opportunities and activities for me to take part in.

Support

Support me in my endeavours. Offer me practical and financial support. Give me access safe people to turn to when I am upset or angry, and the chance to talk things through with someone who is not part of the council.

Inform Me

Explain to me what my rights are. Tell me what I'm entitled to and what I can ask for at different points of my life. Give me clear information about myself and my time in care when I want it.

Moving On

Plan for the future with me clearly, and be ready to put support in place if things go wrong. Prepare me before it's time to move on, with things like life skills, cooking, driving and money management.

Generally

Respect me and treat me fairly, and as an individual. Be honest and don't make promises you can't keep. Do your best to promote children in care and make sure they don't get a bad name. Acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of children in care.

My Voice

Listen to my views and opinions. Put my needs and feelings at the heart of all decisions about me. Ask me what I think and I want to do. If you don't agree then tell me why.

My Home

Give me carers who are people-friendly and a home that is appropriate to my individual needs. Offer me a home where I can be safe and happy, not just a bed. Don't forget about me if I live far from home. Help me to move onto independent living when I am ready.



www.safeguardingshropshireschildren.org.uk/lac
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