

**CABINET RESPONSE TO A REPORT OF THE CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE SEPTEMBER 2014
ENTITLED LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S TRANSITION TO
INDEPENDENT LIVING**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
AGENDA ITEM:10**

**PORTFOLIO: EARLY YEARS CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (COUNCILLOR
LENT)**

Reason for this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to enable Cabinet to respond to the report of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee arising from the work of a Task and Finish Group convened by the Committee.

Background

2. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee took evidence from wide range of stakeholders including children's services and housing staff; Children's Commissioner for Wales and the Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales.
3. The report provides an effective and accurate insight into the challenges faced by care leavers as they move towards independent adulthood.
4. The report welcomes and acknowledges a number of developments that have been introduced to improve performance overall in children's services and to enhance the capacity of children's services to meet the needs of care leavers in particular. This includes
 - The recruitment of additional Personal Advisors
 - Joint work between Children's Services and Housing
 - Work to strengthen working arrangements with Adult services
 - The extension of Independent Visitor support
 - The strengthening of the role of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee
 - The Council LAC Traineeship Scheme

5. However the report identified a number of areas of concern including
 - The current level of the “leaving care grant”
 - The need for a better rent guarantor scheme
 - The need to modernise and improve information and advice to care leavers
6. The following responses to each of the report's 10 recommendations are set out for consideration in the appendix to this report.
7. Whilst the recommendations are welcomed overall, the current financial position which the council is confronting makes it more difficult to respond as fully as it would otherwise be able to do. However the service recognises the important messages within the report and will utilise the new 2015/16 Directorate Business Plan as the vehicle for responding to each of the key recommendations in more detail.

Reasons for Recommendations

8. To enable Cabinet to respond to the report of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee arising from the work of a Task and Finish Group convened by the Committee to consider Transitions for Care Leavers.

Legal Implications

9. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report

Financial Implications

10. Any costs including the additional £60,000 arising from the impact of changes to the care leavers grant in 2015/16 will be met from within the overall budget allocated to Children's Service with further costs arising in respect of 2016/17 and 2017/18 being considered as part of the Council's budget setting process for those years. Any financial implications arising from the development of a rent guarantor scheme will be considered as part of the feasibility review.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to agree the responses set out in the appendix in relation to the September 2014 report of the Task and Finish Group convened by the scrutiny committee to consider the needs of care leavers in Transition.

TONY YOUNG

Director
13 March 2015

The following appendix is attached:

Appendix 1 – Response to Recommendations

RESPONSE THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE SEPTEMBER 2014 ENTITLED LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENT LIVING

R1 - Ensure that the process for the transition of Looked After Children to independent living is made as flexible as possible; preparation should start early and support must also be available after children have left care. This could include a drop-in centre for care leavers.

Response - This recommendation is agreed.

The Operational Manager for Looked After Children will review the overall flexibility and effectiveness of preparatory programmes for care leavers and incorporate new developments into the 2015/16 Directorate Business Plan.

R2 - Immediately undertake a review of the Care Leavers Grant and set it at an appropriate level to enable care leavers to set up home. Members suggested that it should be set at £2,000. Care leavers should also be encouraged to open a Cardiff Credit Union account to enable them to access savings advice and financial support.

Response - This recommendation is agreed with effect from 1st April 2015 at a projected additional cost of £60,000 for 2015/16.

It is noted that this is based on known care leavers for 2015/16 and may be subject to minor change. The comparable additional costs for 2016/17 and 2017/18 are £47,000 and £92,000 respectively. The Operational Manager will consider the potential for engagement with Credit Unions.

R3 - Instruct officers to develop and implement appropriate processes to enable a tenancy guarantor to be in place for care leavers who require a private tenancy.

Response - This recommendation is agreed

Steps will be taken to explore the feasibility of establishing a rent guarantor scheme.

R4 - Instruct officers to develop and implement a communication strategy to include relevant information, advice and support, together with internet access for care leavers. The advice should cover finance management, access to benefits, loneliness, access to training and jobs, further education and general living skills. Internet access should be supported to enable care leavers to access online services, benefits and advice.

Response - This recommendation is agreed.

Opportunities to exploit existing council web and customer care resources more effectively will be considered as part of the Directorate Business Plan.

R5 - Instruct officers to undertake a review to consider the benefits, of having a multi-agency team for care leavers (including youth offending), thereby ensuring that all services and support are co-ordinated and provided from a single site.

Response - The need to promote a more integrated approach with partners and within the council is agreed. Options will be considered as part of developing the Directorate Business Plan 2015/16.

R6 - Ensure that the Youth Offending Service develops and implements good practice guidance around working with Looked After Children services.

Response - This recommendation is agreed and is the subject of work currently to strengthen the YOS and Children's Services interface.

R7 - Ensure that officers develop future Pathway Plans that are "live" documents for the young person, written in a young person friendly style, portable, reviewed and updated at least six monthly, with comprehensive contact details, and be fully shared (where appropriate) with Housing, Careers, Further Education, Probation and Youth Offending Team.

Response - This recommendation is agreed and will be provided for within the Directorate Business Plan 2015/16.

R8 - Support Children's Services staff to improve the working relationship with Cardiff & Vale College to optimise care leavers' options to access further education.

Response - This recommendation is agreed and will be provided for within the Directorate Business Plan 2015/16.

R9 - Ensure that the current transitions protocol and processes for young people who have high needs are reviewed and clarified, to ensure that they are fully prepared for the transition to adult support provision

Response - This recommendation is agreed and will be provided for within the Directorate Business Plan 2015/16.

R10 - Produce an action plan to demonstrate how they will seek to implement the above recommendations

Response - As indicated above the Directorate Business Plan 2015/16 will provide the vehicle for responding to the 10 recommendations. The Operational Manager for Looked After Children will report progress to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee.