

# Care Leavers Annual Report

## 2023-2024



West Berkshire  
C O U N C I L

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## 1. Introduction and Overview

- 1.1. The aim of this report is to update West Berkshire Council on the performance of the Leaving Care Service for 2023 / 2024.
- 1.2. On March 31<sup>st</sup> 2024, there were 182 young people classified as Care Leavers. Of which 127 were aged 18-21 and 55 aged 22-25yrs.
- 1.3. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 introduced requirements on local authorities to plan for Children in Care to ensure that they have the correct support as they undertake their transition from care.
- 1.4. The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 placed a duty on the local authority to provide funding to Care Leavers in relation to a setting up home allowance. The independent review into children's social care in 2023 recommended that the minimum amount to be increased to the amount of £3000 from April 2023. This is now embedded into practice for West Berkshire Care Leavers.
- 1.5. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced a new duty on local authorities, to provide PA support to all care leavers up to age 25, if they want this support.
- 1.6. The Transitions guidance Volume 3: Planning transition to adulthood for Care Leavers reiterated the principles that it expects local authorities to consider when dealing with Care Leavers. These include:
  - Is this good enough for my child?
  - Providing a second chance if things don't go as expected.
  - Is this tailored to their individual needs?
  - No young person should be made to leave care before they are ready.
- 1.7. The Children and Families Act 2014 made it a duty for local authorities to support Staying Put arrangements which enables young people to remain with their foster carers beyond the age of 18.

## 2. Legal definitions of a Care Leaver

### 2.1. Eligible children

- 2.2. Eligible Children [paragraph 19B (2) of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 and Regulation 40 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010]:
  - An eligible child is a young person aged 16 or 17 who is looked after and has been looked after for at least 13 weeks which began after they reached the age of 14 and ended after they reached the age of 16. [Can become an eligible child at any point from 16th to 18th birthday as long as they have completed 13 weeks] [must complete 24 hours looked after age 16/17].
  - The 13 weeks can be continuous period or a series of episodes.
  - In calculating the 13 weeks no account is taken of pre-planned short breaks amounting to no more than 4 weeks and where a child returns to their parent, or someone with parental responsibility.

### 2.3. **Relevant children [Section 23A(2)]:**

- A relevant child is a young person aged 16 or 17 who was an ‘eligible’ child’ but is no longer looked after.
- Additional relevant children:
  - Detained, or in hospital on 16th birthday, and
  - Looked after for at least 13 weeks which began after they reached age 14 and looked after at point of being detained, or entering hospital.
- In calculating the 13 weeks no account is taken of pre-planned short breaks amounting to no more than 4 weeks and where a child returns to their parent, or someone with parental responsibility.
- A child who has lived with someone who has parental responsibility or a residence order for a continuous period of 6 months or more, and has ceased to be looked after (whether that period commenced before or after they ceased to be looked after) is not deemed a Relevant child (but is deemed a qualifying child):
  - If the above arrangement breaks down and the child ceases to live with the person concerned, the child becomes a relevant child.

### 2.4. **Former Relevant children:**

2.5. There are 2 cohorts of Former Relevant children (age 18 to 21, or until the education or training programme set out in the Pathway Plan and being undertaken on their 21st birthday is completed): [Section 23C (1), (6) and (7)]

- A young person who was previously an ‘eligible’ child or a ‘relevant’ child

2.6. Former Relevant children: PA to 25 (age 21, and under 25) [Section 23CA (1)]

- Young people who inform the local authority that they want to pursue education or training between the age of 21 and 25 and where previously a former relevant child.

### 2.7. **Qualifying Children**

2.8. For persons Qualifying for Advice and Assistance (aged 16 to 21, and under certain circumstances aged under 25):

- A Qualifying Young person aged at least 16, and under 21 who were subject to a special guardianship order and were looked after before the making of that order
- Young people who were previously subject to a private fostering arrangement
- Young people who successfully returned home for six months (aged 16/17) and were previously eligible and/or relevant
- Young people who were looked after for less than 13 weeks between the age of 14 to 18, but were looked after for at least 24 hours aged 16 and 17
- Young people aged 16, and under 21 who were looked after in a series of pre-planned short breaks.

## 3. **Local Authorities duties towards Care Leavers**

3.1. The local authority has particular duties it is expected to undertake in its support of Care Leavers. These vary according to the “category” of care leaver.

### 3.2. **Eligible Care Leavers**

3.3. The local authority has the same statutory obligations to eligible Care Leavers as for every other looked after child including the duty to maintain a care plan, carry out regular

reviews of the case and appoint an independent reviewing officer (IRO). In addition, an assessment (16+ assessment) must be completed of the young person's views regarding what support, assistance and advice should be provided, this should inform the Pathway Plan. The Pathway Plan must be kept under regular review. The local authority must also appoint a personal adviser.

#### **3.4. Relevant Care Leavers**

3.5. For relevant Care Leavers the duties are slightly different and include taking reasonable steps to keep in touch, prepare an assessment and use this to inform the Pathway Plan, keep the Pathway Plan under review and appoint a personal adviser.

#### **3.6. Former relevant Care Leavers**

3.7. The local authority must take reasonable steps to keep in touch; keep the Pathway Plan under review; continue to allocate a personal adviser if their welfare requires it; provide financial assistance by contributing to expenses in living near a place of employment and if they attend higher education to pay a higher education bursary.

#### **3.8. Qualifying young person**

3.9. The duties include to advise, befriend and give assistance to the young person and to give financial assistance to secure vacation accommodation if the young person is in higher or further education.

### **4. 16+ Team and Care Leaving Team**

#### **4.1. Establishment**

4.2. The establishment consists of a Team Manager, 1 Senior Social Worker, 3 Social Workers, 4 Personal Advisers, 1 Senior Youth Worker, 1 Support Worker.

4.3. The numbers of care leavers the team work with continue to grow and this year we secured more staffing using extra grant money secured by taking unaccompanied asylum seeking children from hotels in Kent. We secured an extra £150k above our grant money and were able to staff the team at a level more able to meet demand.

4.4. The team during this year was made up of a Team Manager, 1 Assistant Team Manager, 4 Social Workers, 6 Personal Advisers, 1 Senior Youth Worker, 1 Support Worker. This constitutes an increase of 1 Assistant Team Manager and 2 Personal Advisers.

#### **4.5. Functions and legal responsibilities**

4.6. The team support young people until the age of 25. A Personal Adviser, who is also the allocated Social Worker is allocated to young people following their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday and meet both the Children Act 1989 requirements and the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 requirements up until the young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. A Personal Adviser is then allocated to the young person who works with them at least until they reach 21, at which point young people are given the choice to continue receiving support and at what level, this includes PA support. We attempt to keep in touch with all our care leavers and they can ask for support and advice at any time up to their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.

4.7. The Personal Adviser have particular functions as laid out in legislation. These functions include:

- To provide advice (including practical advice) and support,
- To participate in assessment and preparation of Pathway Plans,
- To participate in the review of the Pathway Plan,
- To liaise with the responsible authority in the implementation of the Pathway Plan,
- To co-ordinate the provision of services and take reasonable steps so that Care Leavers make use of available services; and to be kept informed about Care Leavers' progress and wellbeing,
- To keep full, accurate and up to date records of contacts with the Care Leaver and services provided.

4.8. Social Workers and Personal Advisers are focused on helping young people to make the most of their skills and abilities and to help them to access opportunities and services which will be useful to them in developing a positive pathway to adult life. For over 18's, the Personal Adviser acts as a focal point to ensure care leavers are provided with the correct level of support and to promote all of their entitlements as a care leaver. Personal Advisers will support in all aspects of Pathway Planning as outlined in the statutory guidance for care leavers.

#### 4.9. **Caseloads**

4.10. The caseloads of the workers has increased over the last couple of years due to the numbers of children entering care, mainly through the arrival of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) through the National Transfer Scheme. UASC make up approximately 50% of the leaving care population. The total number of young people open to the team in March 2020 was 132, of which 80 were over 18. For March 2024 we have seen an increase to 237 young people open to the team, of which 182 were over 18 years. This is an increase of circa 80% in 3 years. The average caseload for Personal Advisers is currently 37 young people.

4.11. On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 the Service was supporting 127 young people aged 18-21 and 55 young adults 22-25. It is expected this number will continue to increase.

4.12. In general, the caseload within the Service has been rising which has created demands upon the Service. The caseload also continues to rise due the number of Care Leavers over the age of 21 opting to remain an 'open' and seeking local authority support until the age of 25 or, returning post 21 for support. The increasing cost of living has impacted considerably upon our Care Leavers and has led to an increase in demand for support in terms of supporting with emotional wellbeing, supporting with budgeting and general crisis management.

4.13. The lack of housing provision for care leavers for 18yrs old has also lead to increased financial pressure and demand as move on options for these young people is limited.

## 5. **Outcomes for care leavers**

### 5.1. **Ofsted Focussed Visit October 2023**

5.2. In October 2023, a Focused Visit for Care Leavers took place. The outcome letter was positive about the progress and experiences of care leavers, particularly the service provided by the Personal Advisors and the relationships they form with young people. The services to young people in specific circumstances- Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers, Care leavers who are parents and those in custody received praise. They found young people lived in homes where they felt safe and were supported to reach independence. However, the impact of the corporate parenting panel on driving the progress for children and young people was identified as an improvement area.

Actions are taking place into 2024 to improve the panel’s oversight and influence. The outcome letter can be found [here](#).

### 5.3. Pathway Plans

5.4. Every young person who is in care has have a Care Plan which is completed and updated by their allocated social worker. For eligible and relevant children, the pathway plan serves as the care plan. We aim to complete pathway plans with all our former relevant young people.

5.5. A pathway plan is a written to plan to show how young people will be supported in all areas of their lives and achieve independence. The pathway plan makes sure that care leavers get their entitlements in order to feel confident when living independently. This includes suitable accommodation; health support; finance management; family time and relationships; education, training and employment; as well as a focus upon careers goals and aspirations.

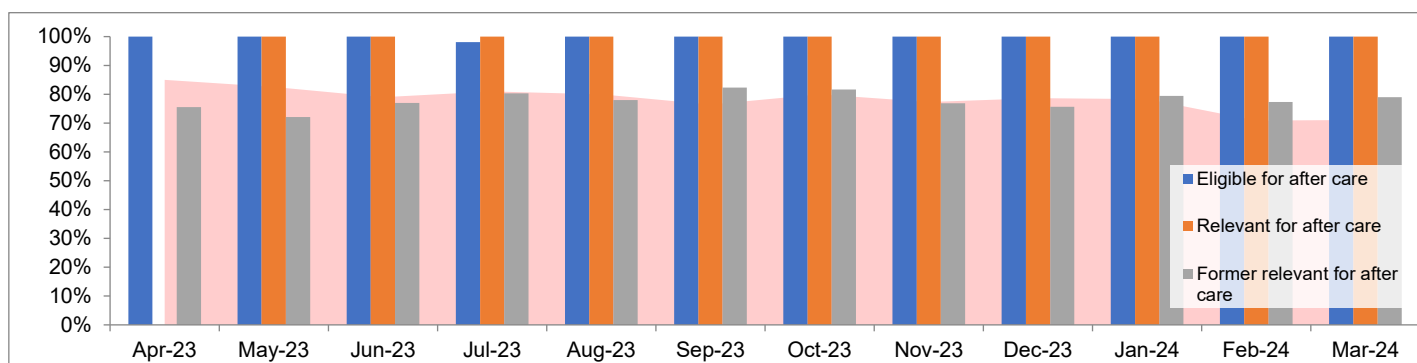
5.6. Pathway plans are quality assured by the Team Managers who endorse the plan.

5.7. Performance Board newly formed chaired by the Principal Social Worker, to ensure there is an opportunity to review performance, data and practice. It also enables a collective approach to Service Development and aspirational planning within the management group.

### 5.8. Completion of Pathway Plans:

**COMPLETION OF PATHWAY PLANS FOR LOOKED AFTER AND FORMER CHILDREN IN CARE**

	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24
Eligible for after care	100%	100%	100%	98%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Relevant for after care	NA	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Former relevant for after care	76%	72%	77%	80%	78%	82%	82%	77%	76%	79%	77%	79%



5.9. The completion rate of pathway plans for care leavers aged 19-21 years has remained pretty much static at around 80%. The number of young people not wishing to engage in pathway planning increases as they reach 21. We always try to encourage young people to work with their PA’s on completing a pathway plan. At 18 years old, nearly half of our young people take up the offer of having their allocated Independent Reviewing Officer continue reviewing the plan into adulthood.

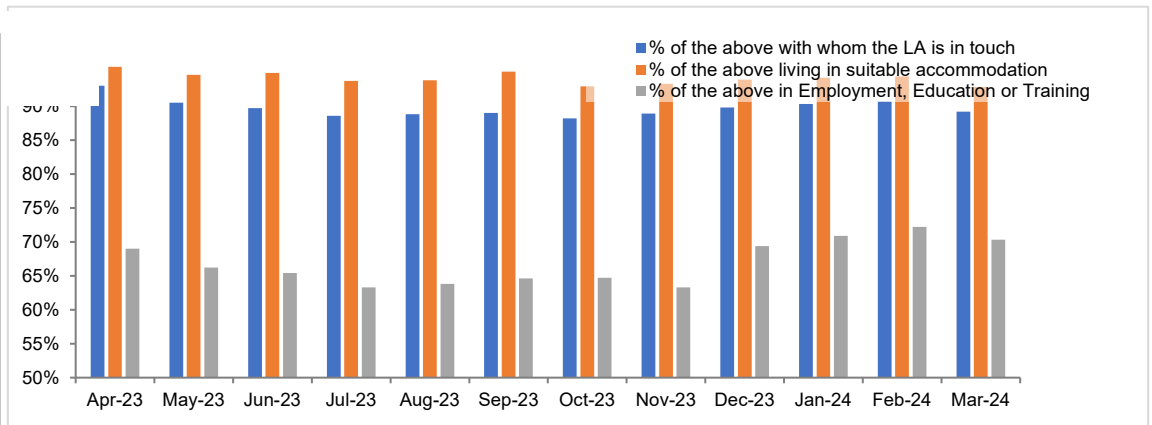
**5.10. Care Leaver KPI's**

5.11. The local authority are required to report to central Government on three KPI outcome areas for care leavers:

- In touch
- In suitable accommodation
- In Education, Training or Employment

5.12. The performance in relation to these outcomes for the year are:

CARE LEAVER OUTCOMES												
	Apr -23	May -23	Jun -23	Jul- 23	Aug -23	Sep -23	Oct -23	Nov -23	Dec -23	Jan -24	Feb -24	Mar -24
Number of Care Leavers aged 19-21	71	74	78	79	80	82	85	90	98	103	108	111
% of the above with whom the LA is in touch	93%	91%	90%	89%	89%	89%	88%	89%	90%	90%	91%	89%
% of the above living in suitable accommodation	96%	95%	95%	94%	94%	95%	93%	93%	94%	94%	94%	93%
% of the above in Employment, Education or Training	69%	66%	65%	63%	64%	65%	65%	63%	69%	71%	72%	70%



**5.13. Education Training and Employment**

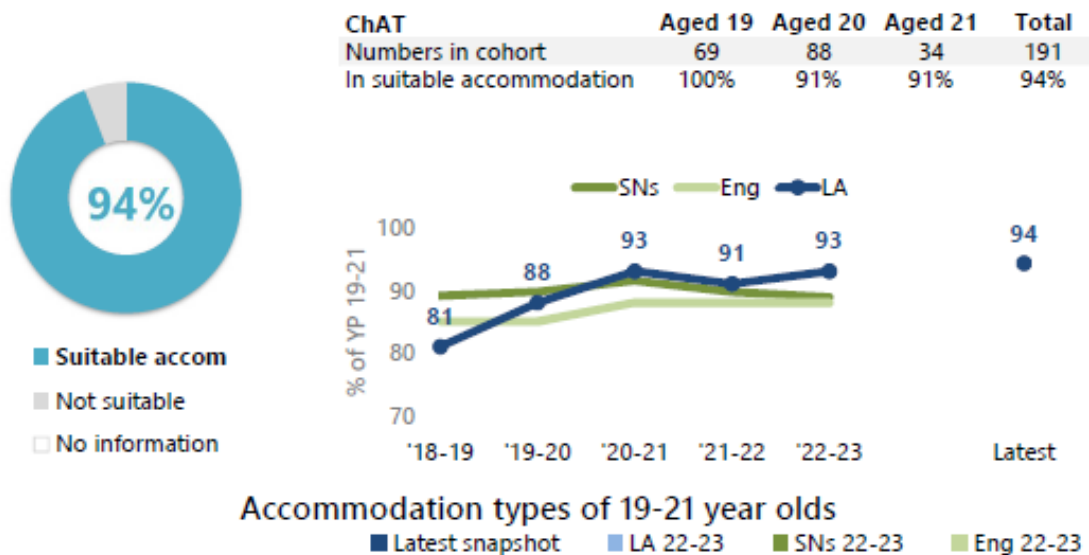
5.14. Our PA's support young people to attend interviews, providing interview clothing, support to complete applications forms etc but the reality of being in a new workplace, feeling vulnerable and low in confidence, is often the barrier that many of our young people struggle to overcome. We recognise that this feeling of helplessness and lack of perceived motivation often comes down to confidence and self-esteem. We meet the costs of any specialist equipment for vocational training or for work. This includes uniforms, tools and equipment. We explore

5.15. To assist in developing the confidence and employability of our Care Leavers, we are working with training providers and the voluntary sector to provide opportunities; we have recently been working with the Canal Trust to provide outdoor opportunities which also support our young people to develop routines, employability skills and an understanding of different employment opportunities that may be available to them.



- 5.16. We are also working with adult learning to create bespoke packages of maths and English for our Care Leavers in the recognition that many struggle to engage in more formal educational settings. It is our aspiration to have a Care Leavers Hub where this offer can continue to grow, with further engagement with employers envisaged with targeted groups of Care Leavers.
- 5.17. We have four care experienced young people working at the council in apprenticeships and we aim to expand this next year including ring fencing apprenticeship posts to care leavers. Where young people are not engaged in ETE, the most common reasons are because of a disability or being a young parent.
- 5.18. **Bursary for Higher Education**
- 5.19. The council continues to offer financial support for Care Leavers who attend university. Care Leavers receive a statutory bursary of **£2075** as well as an additional financial support of **£5000** per year (over 3 years) The Council also fulfils its legal requirement of vacation accommodation costs when they are required. We have supported 9 young people at University throughout the year and we anticipate this will grow next year.
- 5.20. We are also working in collaboration with the virtual school to explore the Higher Education (HE) route for looked after children and what “wrap around” approach is needed to increase figures of carer leavers successfully moving on to University.
- 5.21. **In touch**
- 5.22. Local authorities are required to report on whether they are ‘In-touch’ with Care Leavers. This requires the LA to have seen the young person in the 4-month period around their birthday.
- 5.23. In March 2024, 95% of Care Leavers aged 19-21 years were in touch with the Local Authority (based on last Care Leavers details update). The in-touch figure demonstrates the strength of the relationship between Personal Advisers and Care Leavers.
- 5.24. There are a small percentage of young people who have requested to remain not ‘in touch’. We are able to evidence how we have encouraged keeping in touch and attempted to maintain contact with this cohort of young people. At 21 years, young people are asked what kind of service they would like going forward, including the level of contact. For all care leavers we say we will attempt to contact them on or around their birthday up to the age of 25 to check in and see they are OK.
- 5.25. **Accommodation**
- 5.26. Part of the duties of the local authority is the requirement to ensure that Care Leavers are in suitable accommodation. For former relevant Care Leavers this falls outside of the powers of Children’s Social Care and relies on robust partnerships in order to ensure sufficient accommodation options are available for young people leaving care.
- 5.27. We have consistently performed better than the England and West Midlands statistics in terms of suitable accommodation and have done since 2015-16. We were slightly behind our Statistical Neighbour Average for 2019-20 but improved by 9% when compared to 2018-19. Our latest position at March 2024 is 94% for Care Leavers aged 19-21.

## Accommodation suitability of 19-21 year olds (former relevant)



- 5.28. 17% of Care Leavers aged 19-21 remained with former foster carers in a 'Staying Put' arrangement which, provides an opportunity to ensure that young people can remain with their former carers until they are prepared for living independently, much like other young people. It allows them to experience a transition akin to their peers, avoids social exclusion and is more likely to avoid a subsequent housing and tenancy breakdown.
- 5.29. We have no young people aged 19-21 years currently in custody. There are four 22-24 year olds in custody and none of these young people were in care prior to custody and have become 'looked after' due to their remand status.
- 5.30. We have a well established 'Supported Lodgings' service provided by a local charity 'Step by Step'. They offer young people the opportunity to live with host families up to the age of 19. They currently provide 26 beds and 3 emergency beds. The service is currently out to tender for an extended provision of 30 beds plus 3 emergency beds. This provision is particularly used by unaccompanied asylum seeking children and enables us to move newly arrived children allocated to West Berks by the National Transfer Scheme quickly and safely to good quality provision.
- 5.31. There are concerns for a small percentage of Care Leavers turning 18 and their ability to manage their own tenancy. This cohort are at an increased risk of eviction and homelessness. These young people are supported by their PA's, housing and sometimes adult social care to remain in their properties and maintain their tenancies. We have a particular need for move on accommodation at present, there are very few private social housing options for young people moving on from supported living. We are working with our housing colleagues to secure private rented options in the local community and in Reading, where many of our young people live.
- 5.32. 5% of all social housing offered in West Berks is ring-fenced to Care Leavers as part of the local offer. This was introduced in 2021 and has led to a significant increase in the numbers of our Care Leavers securing their permanent homes and supported to live in the local community.
- 5.33. **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children**
- 5.34. The numbers of UASC has increased over the past 12 months, the majority of requests are through the National Transfer Scheme with 3 spontaneous presentations. Currently there are 26 UASC aged 14 -17 and 43 aged 18 – 24. This equates to just under half of our leaving care population. There is a higher take up of leaving care support over 21 by

young adults who were UASC and this is leading to an increasing population. The increase in leaving care numbers is further compounded by the fact that the majority of new arrivals are approaching their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

5.35. UASC are supported to attend ESOL courses at a number of colleges across Berkshire (English for speakers of other languages), however due to rising numbers, local colleges are now often oversubscribed, this is a particular problem for Reading College as UASC provision tends to be in that area and accessed by many local authorities. During the early part of the year, as an interim measure, the virtual school set up classes in house with a private tutor.

5.36. **Community Club:**

5.37. Community Club is a monthly group for our unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people. The aim of the group is for the participants to gain new skills and develop a sense of community and belonging.

5.38. The types of activities we deliver are as follows:

- Sports & Fitness Activities
- Outdoor Education such as Team Building Activities & Rock Climbing
- Cooking & Independence Workshops
- Music & Drumming Workshops
- We also work with partner agencies such as Housing, Thames Valley Police and the children in care nursing service to deliver workshops on things like accessing Health Services and Staying Safe in the Community

5.39. The group consists of Senior (Care Leaver) Leaders that help plan the programme and act as interpreters for the new young people plus a number of young people that have only been in the country a short time. We can have up to 10 different nationalities at any particular session.

5.40. **Mentoring & Peer Support:**

5.41. The 16 Plus & Leaving Care Team deliver a Mentoring Scheme for our asylum seeking young people. Our Mentors will meet and welcome new asylum seeking children and take them out to things like visiting their local Mosque, to their first day at college or around their local town. We also find during these sessions they are introducing skills such as how to use public transport, shopping and our currency.

5.42. An outcome from the scheme is that as our Mentors skills develop so does their roles & responsibilities as a Mentor, we now have young people supporting others with things like how to find employment, how to manage their tenancies in Social Housing and attending Child in Care Reviews.

5.43. **Outcomes from the UAS Programmes**

5.44. We have had a wide range of outcomes from the scheme but the main ones are:

- Our young people feel settled in placement much earlier and develop a sense of community & belonging
- The young people now want to stay local and no longer want to move to big cities
- West Berks have the best statistics for keeping our asylum seekers in the local area within the South East Region
- The young people also continue to support each other years after their engagement in our programmes, we now have 10 young people from our original club all living in the same neighbourhood in Social Housing

## 5.45. **Leading the Way**

5.46. West Berkshire are now leading the way with working with asylum seeking young people in the South East Region. Last year we delivered a number Regional Training Events delivering presentations alongside the Department for Education and National Transfer Scheme to showcase our way of working to other Local Authorities. This year we delivered follow up workshops to both Milton Keynes and Bracknell Forest Council to introduce West Berkshire Council's 16 Plus Team's UAS engagement programmes.

## **6. Participation and Engagement**

### 6.1. **Care Experienced Young Mum's Group**

6.2. The mother and baby group has four mothers who regularly attend and 5 babies/toddlers. The group is for care leavers who are mothers up to the age of 25. The group originated from two care leavers who were parents and didn't feel confident to attend mother and baby groups in the community and wanted peer support from other care leavers who are parents. The group meet monthly and communicate regularly through the WhatsApp group chat and the mothers decide where they would like to go. The group aims are:

- To provide peer to peer support with other care leavers who are mothers.
- To socialise with other mothers and babies/toddlers
- Provide fun enrichment activities for the children.
- Improve wellbeing and learning around parenting

6.3. The group currently enjoy the social element of the group and choose to do fun activities rather than have professionals visit the group, e.g. health visitor to talk about nutrition etc. This may evolve over time as the group are given the opportunity each month to decide what they want to do for the session.

6.4. The group have participated in the following: An easter egg hunt at Shaw House, a visit to the Blue Reef aquarium, Southsea beach, pumpkin picking at Wasing park. The group like to regularly attend Tiny Town café. This provides a safe environment where the children enjoy imagination play, and the mothers can interact with them as well as socialise and talk with the other mums and the staff. One child already attends nursery and three are due to start in September 2024.

### 6.5. **Total Respect Training**

6.6. Care leavers have delivered the Total Respect training to West Berkshire Staff in April, May, July August and October 2023. There are currently four care leavers in the training team (that also include children in care) and they have delivered the training to over 40 West Berkshire Council Staff this year. The trainers deliver the day course as well as do the prep work beforehand and are supported by WBC staff in both. The aims of the course are to:

- Encourage participants to think about the assumptions that are made about young people
- Allow participants to understand the experiences of young people who use their service (get them to walk in the young people's shoes)
- Gives the participants time to think about young people as individuals (not as cases/numbers)

- Concentrate on skills needed when working with children who use services (active listening; effective communication; observation; report writing)
- Support participants to know how to promote participation for individual young people in their care planning and in wider policy and service development

#### 6.7. **Care Leaver Interview Panels**

6.8. There have been three young people's interview panels that care leavers have been part of that helped recruit to the following positions in West Berkshire Council: The Virtual School Headteacher, Service Director for Children's Social Care and Service Director for Education and SEN. One care leaver sat on the main interview panel with West Berkshire Staff for the Service Director for Children's Social Care. The care leavers had a prep session before each one to come up with the interview questions and organise the panel.

#### 6.9. **Annual Summer Party**

6.10. We held our annual Summer Party to celebrate the achievements of our care leavers, this year we had Music provided by a DJ, a Pizza Street Food Company, a Rock Climbing Tower and sports activities. A highlight was a rapping performance from one of our young people currently engaging in our Music Recording Studio. The event was well received and attended with over 60 care leavers attending.

#### 6.11. **Care Experienced Personal Trainer:**

6.12. We have a Care Experienced Personal Trainer who offers free sessions to our care leavers, improving fitness and confidence. Carl delivers a bespoke Fitness Programme for our young people, this includes group sessions such as Boxercise & Fitness Bootcamps plus one to one fitness sessions that include Mentoring. For many years we have been investing in Carl's professional development and supporting him to develop his business.

#### 6.13. **Music Programme**

6.14. The 16 Plus Team have a Music Programme, the aims for these sessions are for our young people to develop skills such as confidence and communication. The music sessions also give the young people and opportunity to express themselves through their music, we also give our young people opportunities to perform their music at events. Our Music Tutor delivers the following sessions:

- Music & Drumming Workshops for Groups
- Guitar & Drumming Lessons
- Singing & Rapping in a Recording Studio
- DJ Lessons
- Lessons in Producing, Recording & Sound Engineering
- Performances at events such as our Celebration Event for Education and the annual Community Club Summer Party

#### 6.15. **National Care Leavers Week**

6.16. Amongst the celebrations for National Care Leavers Week in October 2023 we held an activity and diversity afternoon where we had young people from Albania, Eritrea,

Sudan, the UK and Afghanistan. During the session we celebrated with specially made cakes from around the world followed by a fun Sports Session.

#### 6.17. **The Participation Ladder**

6.18. We follow the Participation Ladder Model when delivering our programmes, see below examples of how our young people can progress through our schemes and hold positions to support service delivery and direct work with young people.

- New young people attend groups, trips and activities
- Senior Leaders are used to help plan & deliver the activities and support others
- Senior Mentors help young people move into independent living and find employment
- Young people have a direct influence on our service such as attending Corporate Parenting Panel and Interviewing new West Berkshire staff members
- We also have young people volunteering for us, working for West Berks on apprenticeships and a Care Experienced young person that is now a Supported Lodgings Host

#### 6.19. **Summer activities**

6.20. In the summer holidays care leavers attended three trips, which were Thorpe Park, Southsea beach and Guildford lido. Twenty-two care leavers accessed these trips and positive outcomes were that people made new friends, they were able to access trips that they wouldn't normally get to do due to finances and transport, and participation opportunities were promoted to them.

#### 6.21. **Newsletter**

6.22. A participation newsletter is completed 3 times a year to share what young people have been doing in the participation groups as well as promote opportunities that care leavers can get involved in.

#### 6.23. **Plans to build on participation for care leavers April 24 – March 25**

- Care leavers to be involved in consultations and to coproduce WBC local offer and make it available online.
- Write business plan and set up the Reverse mentoring - Reverse mentoring is a scheme where young people aged 16 – 25 who have a range of experience of working with West Berkshires Children and Family Services act as mentors for senior leaders. The mentors meet regularly with their designated leader to have their voices heard about their own experiences as a service user and to work with those in leadership make positive changes within the service. The mentors would also form a care leavers forum.
- For two care leavers to help run and support R:Vue (Children in Care Council) as young leaders.
- Train another one/two care leavers to deliver the Total Respect training.

### **7. Corporate Parenting Principles**

7.1. This Act makes it a duty on local authorities to:

- act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- to consider the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

## 7.2. Local offer for Care Leavers

7.3. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 ensures that all Local Authorities establish a Corporate Parenting Board/Panel, and publish a 'local offer for Care Leavers', setting out the services on offer from both the local authority and other agencies.

7.4. There is a requirement to publish information about:

- services which the local authority offers for Care Leavers as a result of its functions under the Children Act 1989;
- other services which the local authority offers that may assist Care Leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living. This includes services relating to:
  - health and well-being;
  - relationships;
  - education and training;
  - employment;
  - accommodation;
  - participation in society
  - The Local Offer has now been reviewed and is to be published on the new council's website very soon. The Local Offer has followed the government guidance and also consulted with care leavers. A presentation to the Corporate Parenting Panel took place in February displaying the co-produced format to panel members.

## 7.5. Offer of advice and support to 25

7.6. In accordance with legislation, the Council continues to provide support to Care Leavers until they turn 25, if this is their wish.

7.7. Below is a chart showing the percentage of Care Leavers open to the service post 21.

Current Age	Number of Care Leavers	Percentage of overall Care Leaver cohort:
21	33	18%
22	35	19%
23	8	8%
24	9	4%

## 8. Summary

- 8.1. This annual report is our first in West Berkshire for Care Leavers and is intended to give colleagues across the council an overview of the legislation, duties and responsibilities as a corporate parent and enable oversight of our young people.
- 8.2. West Berkshire is very committed to supporting our children in care and our care leavers and we passionate about learning and development to ensure the service continues to develop and provide high quality support and a high quality service.

## 9. Actions

- 9.1. The Service consists of a devoted team who are knowledgeable and passionate about the outcomes for Care Leavers. We continue seek ongoing improvement and development.
- 9.2. Actions and Priorities for 24-25

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Delivery dates</b>
Undertake a Care Leaver Survey	September 2024
Review survey and consider learning, responding with a you said we did paper	October 2024
Increase Audit Activity in the service to measure impact and outcomes	June 2024
Children's Services will work with Housing and Adult Services to jointly commission a range of Supported Accommodation that Care Leavers can stay in until they are 21 years and can meet the range of needs that our young people have.	July 2024-March 2025
Review Care Leavers Offer	July 2024
Relaunch the West Berkshire Care Leavers Offer with a new website	September 2024
Development of a Care Leavers Newsletter	July-September 2024
Ensure all PA's have access to specialist training in relation to the role	March 2025
Explore introducing reverse mentoring for council leaders and care leavers	October 2024
Complete the tendering processes and implementation for Supported Lodgings Service and Supported living 16-25 years	March 2025

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**September 2024**



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