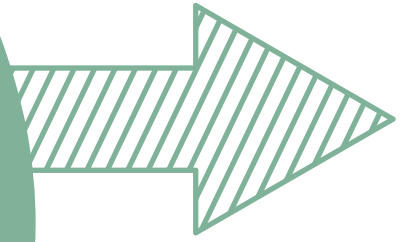


*If we keep on caring we can,
together, give care leavers
the optimism and the future
they deserve*



Care Leavers Strategy

2017 - 2019



THE LONDON BOROUGH

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Foreword

I am delighted to introduce the Bromley care leaver strategy 2017 - 2019. It is of great significance to the council and our wider partnership as it sets out our corporate parenting duties and aspirations for the 180+ care leavers that we support

The care of looked after children and care leavers is everyone's business. This has been set out in law in the Children and Social Work Act 2017, making it absolutely clear corporate parenting is a shared responsibility and we all have a role to play.

In Bromley, we believe that all children can do well and we want all of the young people we care for to have a happy, fulfilling life and to reach their full potential. This strategic plan is our roadmap for achieving this. We must move forward together in a positive way. We owe it to our young people - they deserve it.

In the words of Edward Timpson, former Minister of State for Children and Families, "if we keep on caring we can, together, give care leavers the optimism and the future they deserve" (National care leaver strategy, July 2016).


This is the theme of our care leaver strategy – we must keep on caring together.

We must support, nurture and guide our young people as though they are our own as any reasonable parent would. We must celebrate their successes and we must support them to get back on track if they make mistakes.

Together, through innovation, creativity and commitment we can bring about the changes needed to ensure that our care leavers have the very best opportunity to be supported in their transition to independence in a safe, supportive and nurturing environment, and to reach their full potential.

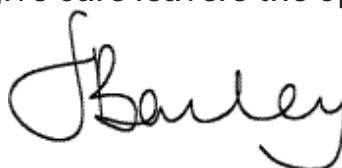
Thank you to all our partners for their contributions to this strategy and commitment to our care leavers.

Let's keep on caring, together. Let's give care leavers the optimism and the future they deserve.



Ade Adetosoye OBE

Deputy Chief Executive and
Executive Director of Education,
Care and Health



Janet Bailey

Director
Children's Social Care

Words from a Bromley care leaver

The lessons of self belief, hard work and the will to fight in adversity are some that I will never forget for the rest of my life

The constant support that Bromley has provided has allowed me to develop as my own person. Whether it be educational, emotional or physical. The support workers were always there – they have been huge benefactors in my success.

When I was a child there was a lot of ambiguity in regards to what services would be provided. I felt as if they were a disconnect from my family. Although there were a few individuals within the organisation that I didn't get on well with, the support workers that I had over the past 10 years have been some of the best people I've met in my life. After this period; I came to see some of the support workers as family, this is due to the fact that they care so much! It's not about money, but it's about belief in your second child without being cliché.

I have thrown tantrums like any other child at that age but I've seen the error of my way thanks to the lessons stated. All of these experiences have changed my way of thinking.

Without you guys my life would be unstable - I'm glad you put me back on track. Without you all, my success wouldn't be possible.

Words by Daniel, a Bromley care leaver



1. Our Vision

We want every Bromley care leaver to be happy, healthy and safe and to achieve their full potential in life.

We are ambitious and aspirational for all Bromley care leavers. We will do everything we can, as corporate parents, to support them and meet all of their needs as they mature and transition from our care into independence and adulthood.

This strategy uses the terms care leavers and young people interchangeably, referring to young people and young adults aged 16 to 25 years that we are legally responsible for as corporate parents.

2. Strategic objectives

This strategic plan is framed by the following objectives:

- 1. Bromley care leavers experience a positive and successful transition from our care to independence and adulthood.*
- 2. Bromley care leavers feel safe and supported, their needs are being met and they are reaching their full potential as individuals.*
- 3. All staff in Bromley council and partner agencies have a shared vision, values and priorities for working with care leavers and are working collaboratively and creatively to provide high quality support and services.*
- 4. Services for care leavers meet a good to outstanding judgment in all audits and external inspections of our services.*

3. The statutory context

As a council we are accountable for discharging parental responsibilities to all children and young people aged 0 to 18 years that come into our care under the Children's Act 1989. Our duties continue under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 to support young people as care leavers in their transition to adulthood until they reach the age of 25.

A wide range of legislation, regulation and statutory guidance provides the framework for statutory services and quality standards for corporate parenting and support to care leavers. The end-purpose of these is the same: for young people to secure nurturing, positive childhoods from which they can develop into confident adults reaching their full potential.

Local authorities have duties under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 to ensure that young people do not leave care until they are ready, and to provide young people with effective support. This involves assessing young people's need for support and assistance and agreeing with each young person how their needs will be met until the age of 21 (or up to 25 when the young person is in education or training). Statutory duties cover:

- Accommodation
- Practical life skills
- Education and training
- Employment
- Financial support
- Specific support needs
- Contingency plans for support if independent living breaks down

The 2010 care leaver regulations Volume 3: statutory guidance for local authorities on helping care leavers aged 16 and 17 prepare for adulthood has strengthened local authority and partner agency duties towards care leavers; the main aim being to make sure that care leavers are provided with comprehensive personal support so that they achieve their potential as they make their transition to adulthood [1].

[1]

The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations, Volume 3: planning transition to adulthood for care leavers, October 2010

These regulations and guidance are designed to ensure care leavers are given the same level of care and support that their peers would expect from a reasonable parent and that they are provided with the opportunities and chances needed to help them move successfully in to adulthood.

At a national level, the Department for Education (DfE) is prioritising the needs of care leavers and pushing for local authorities and central government to step up and provide better support to care leavers through the 2016 national care leaver Strategy, *Keep On Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence* (DfE, July 2016). The strategy identifies two key ways in which the government is driving improvements in leaving care services:

1. Developing and driving new innovation programmes to deliver better and more effective support for care leavers both in terms of what support is provided and how services are delivered.
2. Embedding a culture of corporate parenting across not just all of the services provided by local authorities, but the whole of society, pushing for more joined up services across the spectrum of support.

The national strategy has driven significant changes in legislation with the publication of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 (see appendix one). The most significant legislative changes for local authorities and care leavers is as follows:

- A set of seven corporate parenting principles have been outlined, setting a benchmark for what is expected by local authorities in fulfilling their corporate parenting responsibilities (see section 9.1).
- Local authorities must publish a local care leaver's offer outlining the support available for care leavers. They are also legally required to consult with care leavers on the services they are offering.
- Local authorities must extend their support and assessment of needs to former relevant care leavers from 21 until the age of 25, regardless of whether they are in education or training. This means a Personal Advisor needs to be allocated and a full assessment and pathway plan put in place for care leavers meeting the criteria up to the age of 25.

Bromley Council is fully committed to the ambitions of central government to drive up standards of support for care leavers. We mirror these ambitions locally here in Bromley with our local plan, *Build a Better Bromley by 2020*. It is our hope that through this strategic care leaver strategy we will address the challenges in our own services and drive forward the necessary improvements with momentum, to secure good outcomes for Bromley care leavers.

4. Why care leavers need high quality specialist support

Most young people leaving care will have experienced some form of trauma in their lives before entering care including abuse, neglect and/or emotional distress. We cannot underestimate the impact of this on their health and social and emotional well-being.

This continues to be evidenced in research that outcomes for care leavers remain much worse than for their non-looked after peers. They are more likely to be undereducated, unemployed or underemployed, earning lower wages, having children at a younger age, involved in the criminal justice system, homeless at some stage, dependent on benefits, experiencing mental health problems and/or at a higher risk of substance abuse [2].

Research and practice show that those leaving care who are supported according to the following principles have the best chance of a successful transition to adulthood [3]:

- quality
- giving chances where needed
- tailoring to individuals' needs

This Bromley Care Leaver Strategy seeks to have these principles at the centre of decision-making and support for care leavers, recognising that they are a more vulnerable group of young people compared to their non-looked after peers, and they require higher levels of quality, specialist support to overcome this disadvantage and reach their full potential.

[2]

Achieving emotional wellbeing for looked after children, A whole system approach, Louise Bazalgette, Tom Rahilly and Grace Trevelyan, June 2015

[3]

The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations, Volume 3: planning transition to adulthood for care leavers, October 2010

5. Specific groups of care leavers

Additional challenges are faced by specific groups of care leavers who have multiple needs and may require input from a number of agencies. Section 6 of the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations for care leavers (Department for Education, 2010) focuses on three other groups that require additional specialist support including:

- disabled care leavers
- unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people
- care leavers in the youth justice system

Black and minority ethnic care leavers, young parents, and LGBTQ young people also face significant disadvantages and additional challenges.

The needs of these specific groups of care leavers are a priority for Bromley Council throughout this strategy and we are committed to addressing their needs and tailoring the support we provide to give them the very best chances of reaching their full potential in life.



6. About Bromley care leavers

Bromley is currently [4] responsible for:

186 *care leavers
aged 18 and over*

Some of the current challenges Bromley faces in respect of care leavers aged 18 to 21 years are:

1. supporting young people and young adults to engage in education, employment and training
2. supporting young people in to higher education
3. keeping in touch with young people who are harder to reach
4. reducing the number of care leavers who become young parents

[4]

May 2017 Performance data,
Bromley Council – care leaver
figures have been stable

7. The way forward

What do we need to do?

This section of the strategy sets out the priorities we must address here in Bromley. It covers all domains of a young person's life to achieve better outcomes and aligns to the statutory requirements of the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

This strategy is built upon the strengths and areas for improvement as identified through the following:

- Ofsted inspection of Bromley Council Children receiving help and protection, children looked after and care leavers outcome report and formal recommendations 2016
- Bromley Children's Social Care Service Improvement Plan 2016-2018
- Analysis of key performance indicators
- Analysis of complaints by care leavers

How are we going to do it?

The first step on this journey is outlining our agreed approach, priorities and plan based on the principles outlined in this document, which will allow for the significant changes required.

The second step on this journey is working in partnership with all those directly engaged in Leaving Care services – specifically, the young people themselves, and those that deliver and fund services for care leavers, to achieve the objectives outlined.



8. Our agreed approach – shared values

In our work with care leavers we agree to abide by the following values in the work we do to support our care leavers.

We will uphold our corporate parenting principles and values in all that we do, and we promise to provide care leavers with the same level of help and support that would be provided by any reasonable parent.

We will ask ourselves:

"If this were my child, would it be good enough?"

Needs led –

we respond to the developmental needs and interests of all care leavers as individuals

Participative -

we encourage and sustain engagement with all care leavers taking into account their individual needs

Supportive –

we form positive relationships with young people and treat them with respect and dignity. We help young people build a sense of security and enduring relationships with staff, carers and supportive adults whom they know well and whom meet their needs

Inclusive –

we proactively promote equality of opportunity, access to services and we value diversity. We give all our care leavers a voice including young people with disabilities, English as a second language and young people living in custody or within the criminal justice system. We challenge attitudes and behaviours that result in discrimination or harassment on the grounds of gender, race, ethnic or national origin, age, religion or belief, disability or sexuality

Aspirational –

we have high aspirations for all care leavers and help them to achieve balance in their lives, have optimism and hope, and move with confidence towards a brighter, happier future

Empowering –

we encourage and support care leavers to develop a sense of ownership over their lives; acquiring an understanding of their rights and responsibilities. We are determined in our efforts to engage young people who are finding things challenging and help them get back on track if they make mistakes - we won't give up

Planned and proactive –

we use engagement with young people, assessment, pathway planning and partnership-working to support young people to to achieve their full potential in all aspects of their lives, supporting their social, emotional, physical, mental and spiritual health and wellbeing

Developmental –

we support care leavers to acquire new skills and knowledge and provide opportunities for young people to develop the confidence and resilience they need to thrive

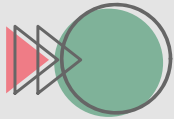
Reflective –

we reflect on what is working well and what needs to be improved; learning and improving from experience through an ongoing process of review, reflection and evaluation

9. Bromley care leaver strategic priorities



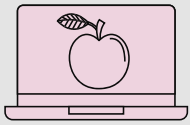
Priority one:
Corporate parenting and listening to young people



Priority two:
Pathway planning



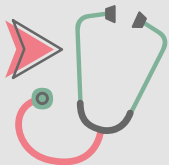
Priority three:
Our local offer - preparation and support to live independently



Priority four:
Education, training and employment



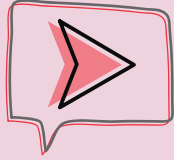
Priority five:
Housing stability and feeling safe and secure



Priority six:
Managing health and emotional wellbeing



Priority seven:
Achieving financial stability



**Priority one:
corporate parenting and listening to young people**

We are required to fulfil seven corporate parenting principles; a legal duty set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017. We commit to embracing these as the Bromley corporate parenting principles (see appendix one).

Consultation and participation of our young people is a fundamental right of care leavers and is at the heart of our corporate parenting approach in Bromley, as per the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and Children's Act 1989. We recognise and support the need for all Bromley care leavers to have a direct say in shaping and influencing the services that affect them and we are committed to creating more participation opportunities for this to happen. We must listen and respond to the views, wishes and feelings of all our care leavers including young people with disabilities, unaccompanied minors and those in the youth justice system. We are advocates for our young people and must ensure equal opportunities, participation and inclusion.

The Bromley Living in Care Council (LinCC) meets fortnightly to help shape services in Bromley and young people meet with senior leaders and elected members throughout the year to voice their views. We deliver a range of group work meetings and positive participation activities to engage our care leavers and help build friendships and support networks.

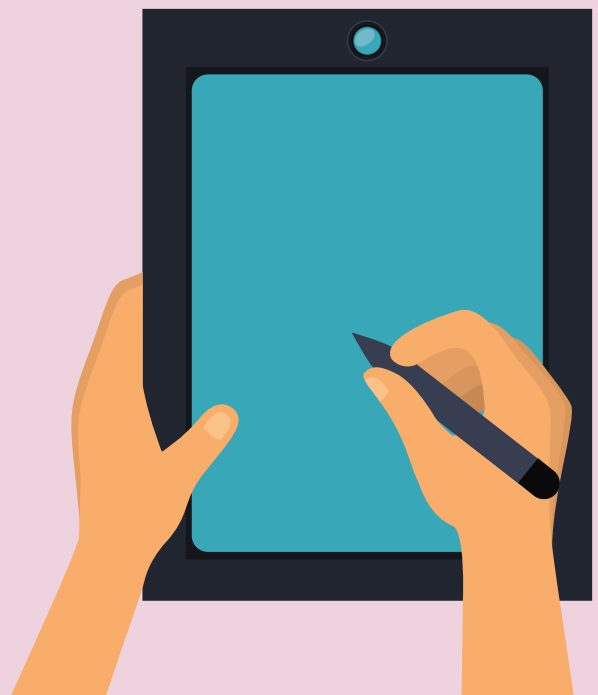
We will extend these by exploring participation opportunities for care leavers, consulting them to gain their views about the wide range of initiatives in this strategy and giving them an opportunity to work with us to directly shape and influence the design of our Local Offer for care leavers. We believe that by co-designing services with our care leavers we can truly embed corporate parenting across all of our services.

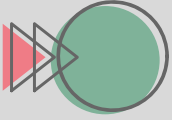
What have we done...

- *Developed a pledge for children looked after and care leavers*
- *Signed up to the national charter for care leavers in December 2016*
- *Meet regularly with the Living in Care Council*

What will we do...

- *Co-design a local pledge/charter for care leavers that builds upon the national charter but is specific to the needs of Bromley care leavers*
- *Develop a consultation plan - to consult directly with care leavers to gain their views about the wide range of initiatives in this strategy and give them an opportunity to work with us to shape and influence the design of our local offer for care leavers*
- *Plan a schedule for care leavers to meet directly with senior managers and elected members as part of the care leavers consultation plan*
- *Revise and publish a new corporate parenting strategy for children looked after and care leavers that sets out an overview of the support that we and our partners will provide*
- *Develop a corporate parenting pledge that all partners and local agencies will be asked to sign up to as part of the care leaver covenant and our corporate parenting strategy*
- *Deliver an annual consultation with care leavers to assess the impact of this strategy*
- *Develop a specific care leavers consultation group to compliment the work of the LinCC and give a greater focus to care leaver issues*





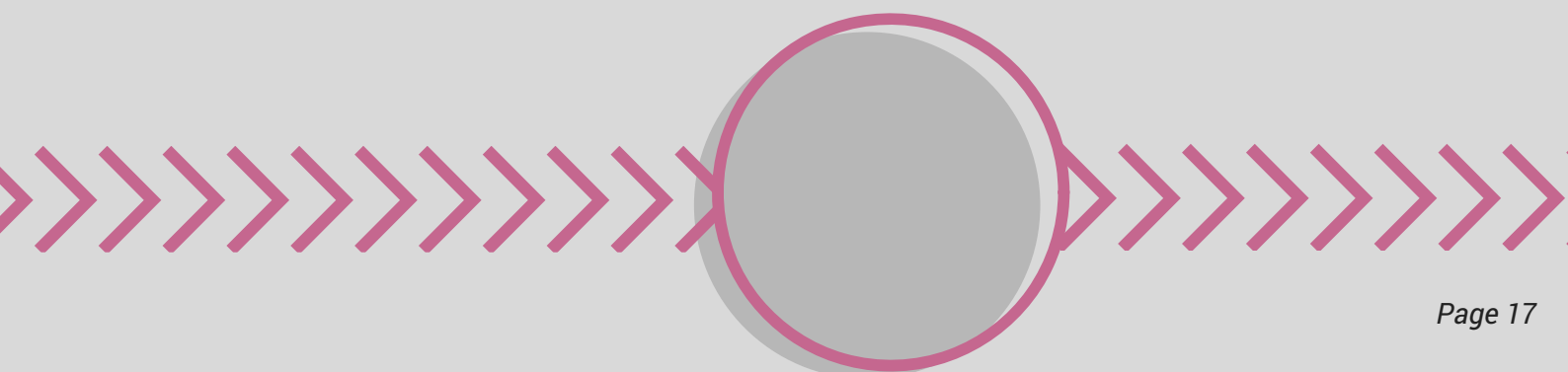
Priority two: pathway planning

At the heart of this plan is our recognition that optimal outcomes for young people are more likely to be achieved when we get the pathway planning process right. It needs to be gradual, well-supported, with a comprehensive assessment of each individual's needs. It requires positive engagement with young people, flexible written plans, monitoring of progress, and regular reviews to update planning in response to changing circumstances. If we get this right, with realistic contingency plans in place, our young people should have the support in place and safety net they need during this important transition to independence.

Bromley recognises that we are not doing enough to engage all care leavers, particularly young people who have disengaged from our services and/or display more challenging behaviours and vulnerabilities. This is a priority in our strategy.

In embracing the vision and values set out in this strategy, we will be reflective, and consider what's happening from each young person's perspective to tailor our response.

We are committed to developing the skills and toolkit of our staff and managers to engage more creatively and effectively with all our young people.



What have we done...

- *Each care leaver has their own dedicated young person advisor*
- *Our staff provide good support to young people and young people that engage are making good progress and take increasing responsibility for themselves*
- *Our staff act as effective advocates for young people with other agencies to ensure young people receive their benefits and entitlements*

What will we do...

- *Extend the role of the personal advisor to provide support, assessment of needs and pathway planning to all former relevant care leavers up to the age of 25 as per the requirements in the recently published Children and Social Work Act 2017*
- *Train and support our front-line staff to improve the quality of the pathway planning process so that all young people are directly involved, written plans have clearer objectives and actions, plans are responsive to changing circumstances, and plans provide a safety net with clear contingencies that are based on assessment of need*
- *Increase the frequency and quality of contact we have with all care leavers aged 18 to 25*
- *Implement the caseload promise to ensure that our leaving care social workers and young person advisors have sufficient time to support the young people they work with*
- *Recruit a dedicated Independent Reviewing Officer for post 18 care leavers to chair Pathway Plan reviews for all care leavers where the plan is not progressing appropriately, providing an additional level of scrutiny, oversight and support for each young person*
- *We will undertake training and develop an engagement toolkit to reach out to those people who are more challenging to engage with and/or have disengaged from our services*
- *We will explore programs and interventions that help to break the cycle of reoffending of care leavers in the youth justice system, taking into account the complex social, economic and emotional issues that lead to offending behaviours*



**Priority three:
our local offer - preparation and support to live independently**

Young people need to be supported to develop the skills and confidence they need to successfully transition to independence. The recent Children and Social Work Act 2017 now requires all local authorities to publish a 'local offer to care leavers', to include the full spectrum of services available to support them in this transition (see Appendix one). The local offer must cover the following areas:

- Health and wellbeing
- Relationships
- Education and training
- Employment
- Accommodation
- Participation in society

We are committed to providing a holistic local offer that meets the wide range of needs of our young people including those with additional support needs. For instance, we will provide tailored support to care leavers who are young parents to ensure they receive the right information, advice and guidance around finances, housing, education and employment and health services taking in to account their additional responsibilities and support needs.



What have we done...

- *Established a weekly drop-in support service at the Bromley and Downham Youth Club, called the Leaving Care Hub, which brings a range of multi-agency partners together to support care leavers. This includes a specialist nurse from the Looked After Children Team to discuss any health issues, partners from Housing, and the Employment, Education and Training worker. Advice and support on legal and tenancy issues is offered. A cooker, washing machine, tumble drier and iron is available for young people to us*
- *Established a weekly care leavers' panel to review the suitability of each young person's accommodation, support and transition arrangements*
- *Developed an eight week rolling program of life skills training, Care to Independence, covering all areas of independent living including practical skills such as cooking, paying bills, budgeting, as well as managing your health needs, social networks and community engagement*
- *Offer designated Moving on workshops to care leavers to help young people understand their responsibilities when moving into their own tenancies*
- *Involve young people in decision-making about housing options post 18 and given them a choice to remain in their current foster placement*
- *Young person advisors provide practical support to care leavers in one to one sessions including budgeting support, managing their own affairs and living independently*

What will we do...

- *Encourage care leavers to attend the Care to Independence program*
- *Improve the quality of the 'moving on' workshops for care leavers*
- *We will produce and publish our Local Offer for care leavers that sets out what help and support all care leavers can expect from Bromley, partner agencies and other relevant universal services when they reach 18*
- *We will explore new technologies in order to be innovative in the way we publish our local offer and provide support, advice and guidance to our care leavers, communicating in a language young people are familiar with*



Priority four: education, training and employment

A good standard of education is a key driver towards achieving positive future employment outcomes in adulthood. A priority for Bromley Council is to ensure that children in care and care leavers get the support they need from schools, colleges, universities and local authorities to maximise their educational attainment and employment opportunities.

We are legally required to provide support, services and opportunities for care leavers to access education, training and employment. This includes work experience, high quality information, advice and guidance, and apprenticeships [5].

The Virtual School has a key role in advocating for our young people and providing direct support. Our dedicated Education, Employment and Training Officer provides an additional level of support above and beyond the support provided by social workers and young person advisors.

We are aware of the high number of care leavers that have not been in education, employment or training, the number of year 12 students not remaining in education, and the low numbers at higher or further education. This strategy seeks to significantly improve these figures and support care leavers to access appropriate education and employment opportunities, including work experience and apprenticeships.

[5]

*Guidance for local authorities
under the Children's Act 1989,
Volume 3: Planning Transition to
Adulthood for Care Leavers
(Department for Education,
2010)*

What have we done...

- *The traditional Virtual School offer has been extended to support care leavers with a range of services to support and encourage their ongoing engagement in education and training*
- *he Virtual School works closely with neighbouring colleges and universities to help them understand the needs of our individual care leavers*
- *The Virtual School helps young people prepare job applications and resumes; and assists with study skills and interview preparation*
- *Our care leaver Education, Employment and Training advisor provides dedicated support to all young people in the leaving care team*
- *All care leavers have a dedicated personal education plan that sits alongside their pathway plan to improve the focus in this area*
- *We celebrate achievements with our care leavers through the annual Celebration Event*

What will we do...

- *Develop an ambitious education, employment and training strategy which sets out our offer of appropriate initiatives for care leavers including work readiness support, work experience and apprenticeships*
- *Increase the number of work-related learning opportunities available for care leavers in Bromley within our departments and across partner agencies and commissioned providers*
- *Improve access to the dedicated Education, Employment and Training Officer in the leaving care team, and extend the availability of this position to increase engagement with care leavers*
- *Improve partnership working with education and training providers to increase the number of opportunities available to care leavers*
- *Extend the role of the Virtual School to take a lead role in reviewing the personal education plans for all care leavers not engaged education, employment or training (NEET) and/or at risk of disengaging to put in place clear, realistic and targeted plans for each individual young person*
- *Publish information for care leavers on the range of education, employment and training opportunities and support that is available to them within our Local Offer and make sure young person advisors are up to date on this offer so they can guide young people through the options available*



**Priority five:
housing stability and feeling safe and secure**

Having somewhere safe and secure to live is central to young people successfully transitioning to independent living and is a statutory requirement for all care leavers. A secure housing base is critical to young people progressing in other areas of life, such as education, training or employment, improved mental health, relationships and building of social networks [6] (Barnardos, 2016).

Most young people will require support as they develop their skills, learn from experience and react to their changing life circumstances as part of their transition to independence and adulthood.

The national care leaver strategy highlights that young people who have been in care can be particularly vulnerable as they transition into adulthood, particularly vulnerable to being drawn into crime or becoming a victim of crime, including in some cases falling victim to grooming and exploitation online or offline. We have a duty of care to assess any risks in the community and to put plans in place to reduce the risk of or actual harm. We will continue to work with care leavers so they are supported to take responsibility for their own behaviours and to give the highest priority to young people that go missing.

We are concerned about the high number of care leavers at risk of homelessness due to having exhausted housing options and failing to manage their own tenancies. We have prioritised reviewing our housing pathways to create more safe options for young people who are not ready for their own tenancy and require more support, as well as creating a safety net for those who have tried but have not successfully managed the transition to independent living.

We are committed to being innovative and are exploring 'training' tenancies and other evidence-based options. We are also committed to being more rigorous in promoting our 'staying put' policy. We aim to increase the number of care leavers remaining with their foster carers post 18 where deemed to be in their best interests. We recognise that staying put can bring greater stability for care leavers, particularly those who are studying and/or not ready to live independently.

[6]

*Care leavers accommodation
and support framework,
Barnardos 2015*

What have we done...

- *We give young people a choice in finding permanent and affordable accommodation when applying for their own tenancy through a bidding process.*
- *Set up strong partnerships with Housing which involves daily liaison to discuss young people's housing and benefit needs and joint reviews of commissioned services.*
- *Reviewed the housing pathway for care leavers and developed a more suitable offer of safe accommodation options for care leavers that considers different levels of support to meet young people's assessed emotional, practical and independent living needs.*
- *Set up a process for emergency placements for care leavers to ensure that all of our young people are in suitable accommodation.*
- *Offer supported housing and floating support to care leavers, supporting those not ready to live in their own tenancies. There is daily communication between the provider, housing and procurement services to ensure early issues are identified and young people are supported well.*
- *Improved the way we assess risk before young people move into new accommodation to ensure it is a safe and secure option that best meets their needs, and use safety plans where any concerns about risk exist.*
- *Employed a placement officer to visit care leaver properties, carry out health and safety checks and provide housing support to care leavers if they have concerns about the safety or suitability of their accommodation.*
- *Monitor all 18+ care leaver placements in regards to the suitability of accommodation, support services and each young person's needs.*
- *Offer a supported lodgings scheme for up to 24 care leavers at any one time, offering low to high levels of support and guidance for young people depending on their needs.*
- *Offer a staying put scheme for care leavers to remain in their foster care placement post 18.*

What will we do...

- *We will work with each care leaver in the pathway planning process to identify their specific requirements and put in place tailored housing-with-support packages that meets their emotional and practical needs*
- *Seek to increase the number of young people living in 'staying put' arrangements to increase stability and support for young people*
- *Develop supported housing options as a safety net and alternative to bed and breakfast accommodation for the most vulnerable and disengaged care leavers who have exhausted all other housing options available to them*
- *Continue to avoid the use of bed and breakfast accommodation*
- *Explore a pilot initiative of 'training tenancies' for care leavers that require high levels of support in advance of permanent independent accommodation*
- *Be proactive in identifying risks of tenancy breakdown so that alternative plans can be put in place at an earlier stage to prevent homelessness*
- *Review the Bromley homelessness strategy to outline the new housing pathways and alternatives to bed and breakfast accommodation to ensure full compliance of this policy.*
- *We will seek to develop local staying close arrangements for young people leaving care who wish to live close to the residential homes they were previously in*
- *We will work to prevent offending and reoffending of care leavers by offering stable and secure accommodation and practical assistance, alongside positive long-term relationships with social workers and young person advisors*
- *Improve systems in place to work with our partners to assess the risk of care leavers that go missing, or are at risk of going missing and/or exploitation, and to take action to safeguard and promote their welfare*





Priority Six:
managing health and emotional wellbeing

The national care leaver strategy has raised concerns about the number of young people leaving care that report poor emotional health and wellbeing, lack of support, and that are not receiving therapeutic input because they don't meet the threshold for adult mental health services [7].

This strategy seeks to better support the health, social and emotional wellbeing of young people leaving our care. We will work closely with local authorities and health services to develop appropriate support for care leavers based on a robust understanding of their individual health needs. We acknowledge that without supporting the emotional wellbeing of our care leavers, we are placing them at risk of failing in their transition to independence [8].

We know we need to support more of our care leavers to access and engage in the health provision that is offered to them by the Looked After Children Nursing Team, particularly those aged 18+. We are also aware of the need to ensure all of our young people leave care with a copy of their health histories.

We have high numbers of care leavers who are young parents, raising their own children. We will continue in our efforts to work with them in developing effective pathway plans that takes into account their family needs, and more specialised support.

[7]

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Keep On Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence, DfE, July 2016, p43

[8]

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Achieving emotional wellbeing for looked after children , A whole system approach, Louise Bazalgette, Tom Rahilly and Grace Trevelyan, June 2015

What have we done...

- *We have processes in place to assess and meet the health needs of care leavers through the specialist Looked After Nursing Team and pathway planning process*
- *We work with our key health partners to ensure physical, mental and emotional health needs are assessed and met so that children in care and leaving care receive the high quality health care support they are entitled to*
- *Any health care needs that require ongoing attention into adulthood are attended to and included within the pathway planning process*
- *All care leavers are offered a face-to-face meeting with the specialist Looked After Nursing Team before leaving care to discuss their health history and receive a record of this in the form of a health summary*
- *We have partnerships in place to provide child and adolescent mental health services, adult mental health provision, therapeutic help and services for learning or physically disabled young people as they are needed*
- *We provide advice and guidance on health and well-being in the Care to Independence program for care leavers*
- *We are working with Adult Mental Health services and Adult Social care services to improve the pathways into their services to ensure that care leavers have a smoother transition*
- *We are working across the partnership to develop a joint Mental Health Strategy for Bromley. The strategy will include a new vision for transitions within mental health services, to improve the pathways into their services for care leavers*
- *Transition arrangements are in place for care leavers with moderate to severe disabilities to ensure they receive the adult social care services they are entitled to*
- *We offer specialist support to address substance misuse issues through Bromley Changes*
- *We are working closely with Bromley Wellbeing to improve access to mental health support for care leavers up to the age of 25*
- *We support all pregnant care leavers parenting for the first time to access specialist services from the Family Nurse Partnership*
- *We are helping to shape emotional wellbeing and mental health services through developing a joint Local Transformation Plan*

What we will do...

- *As part of the pathway planning process we will work with each young person to help them identify and strengthen their support networks, identifying how these can help boost young people's resilience and support good emotional wellbeing during their transition to independence*
- *Develop a local strategy with the Clinical Commissioning Group setting out how the holistic health needs, including emotional well-being and mental health of care leavers will be assessed, monitored and supported*
- *Commission a range of evidence-based services to respond to their needs, aligned to national strategic drivers Future in Mind and Implementing the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health*
- *Develop a toolkit for mapping social networks in a young person's life as part of the pathway plan process and make sure every care leaver has at least one consistent, supportive adult identified in their lives*
- *Commission joint training for staying put foster carers and frontline workers to further develop their knowledge and skills in supporting the emotional and social well-being of care leavers*
- *Make sure all young people leaving our care have access to their health summaries at the point of turning 18, providing them with details of their personal health history and important health information*
- *Assess and respond to the health needs of care leavers through our specialist Looked After Children Nursing Team and work closely with the Leaving Care service to provide advice and support as needed*
- *Co-locate the designated nurse for care leavers within the Leaving Care team to improve access to young people and their workers*
- *Undertake consultation with our care leavers about health and well-being to help in the design and commissioning of health services that meet their needs*
- *Encourage care leavers to get involved in physical activity to promote health and wellbeing.*
- *We will explore evidence based initiatives and consider group-based support options for young people to help build additional support networks*
- *Be proactive in supporting young people to develop positive social networks and relationships*
- *Provide health and parenting advice, guidance and support to young parents*



**Priority seven:
achieving financial stability**

We are committed to ensuring that care leavers are adequately supported financially in their transition from care to adulthood.

Bromley Leaving Care service provides a range of financial support to care leavers. This encourages young people to continue in education, including higher and further education. It also supports young people in setting up their first independent home post 18 with the setting up home allowance.

In our work with care leavers we will encourage them to become self-sustaining to reduce their dependence on benefits in future adulthood and to enhance their self-esteem, by promoting their engagement in education, employment and training.



What have we done...

- *Established a leaving care hub which provides support and advice on financial matters*
- *Good quality benefits advice is provided to care leavers by our Income and Tenancy Officer*
- *Facilitate access to income support and other financial entitlements*
- *Employ an Income Officer who is responsible for monitoring the benefits and financial entitlements that are claimed by our young people and supports young people with applications and the process for receiving all of their entitlements*
- *Provide a Setting Up Home Allowance of up to £2500 to support care leavers to purchase the essential items needed in their individual tenancies*
- *Have set up preferred providers of white goods to ensure care leavers get value for money when using their Setting Up Home Allowance*
- *Budgeting support is provided by each young person's personal advisor*
- *My Bank workshops are offered to young people to help them with financial planning and budgeting*

What will we do...

- *Be more proactive in providing access to the Setting Up Home Allowance and/or care leaver grant for eligible care leavers at the point of preparing to move into their accommodation and avoid any delay*
- *Arrange training for social workers and young person advisors to be more confident in providing good quality advice on personal finances*
- *Explore the feasibility of care leavers being exempt from paying council tax until age 25 as is achieved by other boroughs in England in line with recommendations in the National care leaver strategy*
- *Explore the feasibility of free travel passes on buses, trains and the underground for care leavers that are actively engaged in full-time education, employment and/or training as recommended as good practice in the National care leaver strategy*
- *Strengthen partnerships with Job Centre Plus and agree a local protocol to help care leavers better understand the conditions around receipt of benefits and remove sanctions where possible*
- *Explore part-time co-location of the local Job Centre Plus lead within the Leaving Care Service as is recommended as good practice and achieved in other boroughs, to provide direct advice and guidance to care leavers*

10. Reviewing our progress

The Senior Management Team (SMT) will provide managerial oversight of this strategy, with the Head of Service for children looked after and care leavers producing a progress update to SMT on a quarterly basis.

The Children's Executive Board will review progress of this plan semi-annually to ensure momentum is sustained. The priorities and actions as set out in this strategy align to the wider Children's Services Improvement Plan. Additions within this strategy will be included within the Service Improvement Plan for consistency of reporting.

One meeting per year will be an open meeting at which care leaver representatives from the Living in Care Council will be able to ask questions about progress and next steps.

The Executive Working Group: Child Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting and Corporate Parenting strategy group has a crucial role in overseeing the effectiveness of help and support for care leavers and will take on strategic responsibility for overseeing progress in implementing this strategy. They will oversee the effectiveness of this care leaver strategy and, in particular, hold the council and partner agencies to account for their part in implementing this through regular reporting to the board. Bi-annual reports on progress of the care leavers strategy will be scheduled for the Executive Working Group: Child Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting.



11. Measuring our success

We have developed a set of key performance indicators to help us measure the impact of this strategic plan.

In 2018 we will undertake an in-depth consultation with our care leavers to obtain their first hand views on the quality of the care and support they are receiving from us and the impact of this on their lives. We will use this as a baseline for measuring our progress. We will also use a range of performance measures to assess the progress made for our young people.

Performance measures have been assigned to each strategic priority to demonstrate our willingness to be held accountable and enable us to effectively assess our progress. We will use quantitative measures to provide evidence of our efforts and the impact for care leavers. The goals we have set for the next two years will challenge us to improve our services at a fast, but necessary, pace.

We acknowledge that many of our core values are harder to quantify and as such, we are committed to undertaking audits of case work, and annual surveys with our care leavers to find out firsthand what support and guidance they are receiving from us, and the impact of this strategic plan. Below we have identified quantitative and qualitative measures for each strategic priority.

Leaving Care strategy - key performance measures

<i>Priority</i>	<i>Quantitative measures</i>	<i>Qualitative measures</i>
Priority one: Corporate parenting and listening to young people	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of care leavers engaged in consultation in the past 12 months 2. All agencies are signed up to the corporate parenting strategy. 	<p>Young people feel their views have helped shape or influence the local offer in Bromley.</p> <p>Young people report they know what the care leaver pledge/charter is and what it means for them.</p>
Priority two: Pathway planning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of care leavers with an allocated personal advisor up to age 25. 2. Number of pathway plans reviewed on time. 3. Number of disengaged young people refusing a leaving care service post 18. 4. Number of young person advisors that have attended pathway planning training in the past 12 months (target = 100%). 5. Number of contacts with each care leaver aged 18 to 25. 6. Caseload levels for young person advisors within maximum levels. 7. Number of pathway plans reviewed by IRO 	<p>Case audits identify improvements in the quality of assessments, plans and reviews</p> <p>Care leavers feel actively involved in planning for their future Care leavers understand their pathway plan and what it means for them</p>
Priority three: Our Local Offer - Preparation and support to live independently	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of care leavers that have attended the Care to Independence programme. 2. Number of care leavers accessing advocacy service. 3. Number of care leavers that access support from the tenancy advisor. 4. Number of care leavers who attend the Leaving Care Hub. 5. Number of care leavers that access ETE worker 	<p>Care leavers feel that the support offered to them meets their needs</p> <p>Care leavers have heard of the local offer and know what services are available to them.</p> <p>Young people report that the Care to Independence program helped them to develop independent living skills and confidence in moving to their new accommodation.</p>

<i>Priority</i>	<i>Quantitative measures</i>	<i>Qualitative measures</i>
Priority four: Education, training and employment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Academic achievement (number of GCSE's). 2. Number of care leavers in further education. 3. Number of care leavers in higher education. 4. Number of young people in contact with the Virtual School. 5. Number of care leavers that have attended work experience. 6. Employment, education and training of care leavers. 7. Number of care leavers in apprenticeship placements. 8. Number of care leavers with up to date PEP. 9. Number of PEPs formally reviewed by the Virtual School head teacher 	<p>Care leavers report feeling supported whilst at further education college or university</p> <p>Care leavers report that they know what education, employment and training options are available to them including work experience.</p>
Priority five: Housing stability and feeling safe and secure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accommodation for care leavers. 2. Number aged 18+ living in staying put arrangements. 3. Number of care leavers in their own tenancy who have accessed their full Setting Up Home Allowance. 4. % of care leavers in custody. 5. % of cases with clear risk assessments at point of moving into new accommodation. 6. Number of tenancy breakdowns. 7. Number of care leavers missing for more than 3 days. 8. Number of care leavers deemed at risk of CSE 	<p>Care leavers report they feel they moved into independent housing at a time when they were ready.</p> <p>Care leavers report they feel safe where they live.</p> <p>Care leavers report they were offered staying put as an option in their pathway planning process.</p>

<i>Priority</i>	<i>Quantitative measures</i>	<i>Qualitative measures</i>
Priority six: Managing health and emotional well-being	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of care leavers receiving a service from adult mental health services. 2. Number of young people that were receiving a CAMHS service but not eligible for adult mental health services. 3. Number of care leavers that access the specialist Children Looked After Nursing Team. 4. % of care leavers issued with a Health Summary. 5. % of care leavers registered with a GP; Number of care leavers offered therapeutic support. 6. Number of care leavers receiving therapeutic support. 7. Number of care leavers who are young parents. 8. Number of young parents who are in the Family Nurse Partnership Program 	<p>Care leavers report they are receiving high quality ongoing support and they do not feel lonely and isolated.</p> <p>Care leavers report that they know where to access support and services in relation to their health needs.</p> <p>Care leavers report they have a trusted adult they can confide in if they are worried about something.</p>
Priority seven: Achieving Financial Stability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of care leavers with bank accounts. 2. Number of care leavers aged 18 with savings. 3. Number of care leavers accessing the My Bank workshops. 4. Number of care leavers in rent-arrears for two consecutive months in the past 12 months. 5. Number of care leavers receiving setting up home allowance at the right time. 6. Number of young person advisors attending training on financial management. 	<p>Number of care leavers that report that they are confident in managing their income, reducing the risk of falling into debt.</p>

Appendix one

Children and Social Work Act 2017 - What this means for Bromley Council

Corporate Parenting

1. A set of seven corporate parenting principles have been set out, requiring local authorities and partner agencies to have regard to the following seven principles:

- (a) to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
- (b) to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- (c) to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- (d) 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;
- (e) to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- (f) for those children and young people to be safe and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;
- (g) to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

A Local Offer

2. Local authorities must publish a Care Leaver's Offer and consult with care leavers on the services they are offering:

A local authority in England must publish information about –

1. services which the local authority offers for care leavers as a result of its functions under the Children Act 1989;
2. other services which the local authority offers that may assist care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living relating to:

- health and well-being;
- relationships;
- education and training;
- employment;
- accommodation;
- participation in society.

3. Where it considers appropriate, a local authority in England must publish information about services for care leavers offered by others which the local authority has power to offer as a result of its functions under the Children Act 1989.

4. Information required to be published by a local authority under this section is to be known as its "local offer for care leavers".

5. A local authority must update its local offer for care leavers from time to time, as appropriate.
6. Before publishing its local offer for care leavers (or any updated version) a local authority must consult relevant persons about which of the services offered by the local authority may assist care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living.

Advice and support to care leavers up to 25

Local authorities must extend their support and assessment of needs to former relevant care leavers from 21 until the age of 25, regardless of whether they are in education, employment or training. This means a Personal Advisor needs to be allocated and a full assessment and pathway plan in place up to the age of 25. The criteria for this is set out online: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/section/3/enacted>

This section applies to a former relevant child if –

- (1) (a) he or she has reached the age of 21 but not the age of 25, and
(b) a local authority in England had duties towards him or her under section 23C (whether or not some of those duties continue to subsist by virtue of subsection (7) of that section).
- (2) If the former relevant child informs the local authority that he or she wishes to receive advice and support under this section, the local authority has the duties provided for in subsections (3) to (6).
- (3) The local authority must provide the former relevant child with a personal adviser until the former relevant child –
(a) reaches the age of 25, or
(b) if earlier, informs the local authority that he or she no longer wants a personal adviser.
- (4) The local authority must –
(a) carry out an assessment in relation to the former relevant child under subsection (5), and
(b) prepare a pathway plan for the former relevant child.
- (5) An assessment under this subsection is an assessment of the needs of the former relevant child with a view to determining –
(a) whether any services offered by the local authority (under this Act or otherwise) may assist in meeting his or her needs, and
(b) if so, what advice and support it would be appropriate for the local authority to provide for the purpose of helping the former relevant child to obtain those services.
- (6) The local authority must provide the former relevant child with advice and support that it would be appropriate to provide as mentioned in subsection (5)(b).
- (7) Where a former relevant child to whom this section applies is not receiving advice and support under this section, the local authority must offer such advice and support –
(a) as soon as possible after he or she reaches the age of 21, and
(b) at least once in every 12 months.

Appendix two

Bromley pledge for children looked after and care leavers

Underlying principles

We aim to be good as parents and will care for you as an individual person. We will therefore do the following:

- Provide you somewhere safe and caring to live;
- Mark your birthdays;
- Help you to celebrate your religious festivals;
- Make sure you receive a copy of your school photo and reports.

We will only promise you things that we know we can do and we will make sure that you know who is responsible for delivering these promises. If these promises are broken the Director of Education, Care and Health Services, the Portfolio Holder for Care Services and the Living in Care Council would like to know, so they can investigate it.

- We will consider your needs, especially those relating to disability, race, culture, religion and sexuality.
- We will consider anything that is leading to you being treated unfairly and will give you support to overcome it, including anyone treating you unfairly because you are in care.
- We will try to always involve you in the decisions that are made for you, at a level that is right for your understanding.
- We will respect your right to make choices about your life. Our first priority will always be to make sure you are safe and happy.
- We want you to be healthy, safe, have fun and gain achievements for yourself.
- We want you to have stability in your life, to make a positive contribution to your community and to leave care able to make your way successfully in life. We will support you to achieve all this.
- We will have expectations of you as well and we will make these clear to you through your LAC Reviews, Personal Education Plan meetings and during your Pathway planning.
- We will ensure that you have an allocated worker that best suits your needs and that you will have the opportunity to talk to your worker alone every time he/she visits you.
- We will ensure that you receive your full set of rights, as set out in relevant law and guidance and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Bromley Pledge - 2015 Edition

Staying Safe

1. If you ask us we will provide you with an independent person to talk to if you are worried and do not want to talk to your carer or social worker.
2. We will involve you in choosing the staff working with or for children and young people and the training of new social workers and foster carers.
3. You will be given an input in the choice of your foster carer where that is possible and in planned moves we will make sure that you get good information about new carers and a proper introduction to them.
4. If you get into trouble with the police and are arrested we will make sure that the most suitable person comes along to support you, preferably someone you know wherever this is possible.
5. We will do our best to reduce the number of changes of social workers you have while you are in care and make sure you are provided with the reasons why if this needs to happen.

Being Healthy

6. To ensure that looked after children in and out of Bromley have the best chance of being healthy, we will provide as appropriate the following:

- Access to a Looked After Children's nurse
- Access to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health services and counselling services
- Access to a healthy varied diet
- Support to attend all medical appointments
- Providing parents and carers with information and support
- Ensuring that you have all of your vaccinations, dental and other health checks
- Relevant sexual health information

7. If you are looked after and a teenage parent we will provide you with access to parenting classes to support you to build your parenting skills

Enjoy and achieve

8. We will work with all education providers to ensure that you are supported in your education. We will support you to achieve your full academic potential by providing you with personal education plan meetings (PEPs).

9. We will, along with your PEP, provide you with educational materials which will help you to succeed in your education. This will include:

- Access to a computer from year 9 until you finish your education
- Books
- Stationary
- Revision guides

10. We will support you financially to participate in extra curriculum activities through the following ways:

- Foster carers allowance
- Pupil Premium

11. We will make a financial contribution to your studies whilst at university or when training towards a specific career.

12. Bromley Youth Support Programme will provide appropriate opportunities to looked after children in and out of borough to attend events.

13. Tuition will be provided if the need is identified by your personal education plan.

14. We will offer support to access good quality leisure activities where ever you live.

Make a positive contribution

15. We will ask for your views about all services we provide you, via these ways:

- Bromley's Living in Care Council
- Support to attend the All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers
- Giving you the opportunity to nominate for the Foster Carer awards
- Asking care leavers for their views of their care experience

16. We will promote and support the Living in Care Council with an annual budget so that they can actively engage with you the care population.

17. We will help you to celebrate and promote achievements by providing you with an annual celebration of achievement awards.

18. As well as your social worker we will make sure that there is another way to tell us if you are unhappy or have a complaint. We will do this by providing you access to:

- An advocate
- The Living in Care Council
- An Independent Visitor
- A complaints form

19. We will work with others to provide you with information about volunteering and access to opportunities to help others. The opportunities will be on www.linkinbromley.co.uk

Achieving economic wellbeing

20. We will work with your parents or carers to ensure that you have a passport or know why you don't have one or have access to it.

21. We will explore options for opening bank accounts for all children in care and will discuss with you how your pocket money is managed. Your social worker will be provided with an annual statement from your carers to share with you.

22. Where needed, we will support you to learn to drive where this will help you get into training and the right job.

23. Once you enter the Leaving Care Team we will work with you to help you become an independent adult. Before you leave care we will make sure that you have a good understanding of your:

- Accommodation needs
- Support network
- Managing your finances
- Paying bills
- Housework and cooking

24. We will ensure that when you leave school you have been given an offer of education, employment or training.

25. As your corporate parents we will provide work experience opportunities and apprenticeship.

26. We will support you to stay put with your foster carers until the age of 21, if this is what you and your foster carers want and the arrangement means that you have a better chance of succeeding.

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