

# LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date:** 04/03/2024

**Subject:** Becoming a Partner of the National Care Leaver Covenant

**Report of:** Councillor Alex Sanderson, Cabinet Member for Children and Education

**Report author:** Amana Gordon, Operational Director – Children and Young People’s Services

**Responsible Director:** Jacqui McShannon, Director of Children’s Services

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## SUMMARY

The Care Leaver Covenant is a DfE-led national campaign aimed to support care leavers aged 16-25 to become healthy, thriving adults. Organisations that work directly with/for care experienced young people can become Partners of the national Care Leaver Covenant. Partners go beyond direct offers that care leavers benefit from, recognising their entire organisation’s role in supporting care-experienced young people in making a successful transition to adulthood. It is not a statutory requirement to become a Partner of the national Care Leaver Covenant; rather, it is a voluntary indication of a desire to do its utmost to fulfil its role as a corporate parent to care leavers.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet approves the decision for the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham to become a Partner of the national Care Leaver Covenant.

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## Wards Affected: All

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<b>Our Values</b>	<b>Summary of how this report aligns to the H&amp;F Values</b>
Building shared prosperity	Giving our care experienced young people the extra support they need in their transition to adulthood.
Creating a compassionate council	Recognising the inequality and unique challenges faced by care experienced young people by going beyond our statutory requirements and providing an enhanced offer of support to this group.
Doing things with local residents, not to them	Listening to our young people and responding to what they have told us.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	Investing in our young people’s future to

	enable them to live as thriving, inter-dependent adults.
Taking pride in H&F	Demonstrating our commitment to the young people who have been in our care and our aspirations for their futures and giving them the best start to adulthood.

## Financial Impact

There is no direct financial impact of becoming a Partner of the Covenant.

*Reviewed by: Barbara Ncube, Finance Manager, (Children's Services), 7 December 2023.*

*Verified by James Newman AD Finance, 23 January 2024*

## Legal Implications

The Council has statutory duties to support young people leaving care and who have left care, until the age of 25. These duties are set out in the Children Act 1989 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017. They include helping young people to gain access to and make the best use of services provided by the Council and its relevant partners.

Becoming a partner of the Care Leaver Covenant does not impose any additional legal obligations on the Council. However, it should assist the Council in enhancing its support to young people leaving its care and undertaking its duties towards them.

*John Sharland, Senior solicitor (Contracts and procurement), 4 December 2023*

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

## DETAILED ANALYSIS

### *Proposals and Analysis of Options*

#### **Option 1: Approval to become a Partner of the national Care Leaver Covenant (Recommended)**

LBHF formally recognises 'care experience' as a protected characteristic and is committed to advancing equality of opportunity for care experienced young people. Becoming a Partner of the national Care Leaver Covenant demonstrates our commitment to going beyond our statutory duty in supporting the young people leaving our care. As a partner, we will work as a whole Council alongside the Care Leaver Covenant to engage local businesses, community organisations and other

partner services, building an enhanced localised offer for our care leavers and supporting them to become healthy, thriving adults.

## **Option 2: Do Not Approve becoming a Partner of the national Care Leaver Covenant (Not Recommended)**

Without becoming a Partner, it will be difficult to influence others to sign up to the Covenant and, by extension, provide an even better 'offer' to our care experienced young people, and we would not benefit from the support of the Care Leaver Covenant in brokering these offers. Signing up to the Covenant is also a key commitment of the Pan London Care Leavers Compact and therefore not doing so would prevent us from fully implementing the recommendations of the Compact.

### **Reasons for Decision**

#### **Context**

1. In June 2023, Cabinet passed a decision to recognise 'care experience' as a protected characteristic. This marks an acknowledgement of the disadvantage faced by care experienced young people and a commitment to put in place policies and programmes which promote better outcomes for those in and leaving our care.
2. The London Innovation and Improvement Alliance (LIIA), working to the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS) has established **The Pan London Care Leavers Compact** project. The Compact is intended to bring about a consistent pan London approach to support for care experienced young people, improving equity and access. The Compact achieves this by setting out a framework for developing consistency, breadth and quality in the support offered to London's care leavers. London local authorities are invited to demonstrate their commitment to Care Leavers by signing up to the Compact; one of the recommendations included in the Compact is for local authorities to sign up to the national Care Leaver Covenant.
3. The Care Leaver Covenant is a DfE-funded national inclusion programme. Launched in 2018, it supports care leavers aged 16-25 to become healthy, thriving adults across five areas:
  1. Independent living
  2. Education, employment, and training
  3. Safety and security
  4. Mental and physical health
  5. Finance

The Covenant is a promise made by the private, public and voluntary sectors to provide support for care leavers aged 16-25 to help them to live independently.

#### **Becoming a Partner**

4. Whereas most organisations will become signatories to the Care Leaver Covenant and provide a specific 'offer' to care leavers that is tailored to its area of expertise, organisations that work directly with/for care experienced young people can become Partners of the Care Leaver Covenant. Partners go beyond direct

offers that care leavers benefit from, recognising their entire organisation's role in supporting care-experienced young people in making a successful transition to adulthood.

5. There are three pillars of the partnership approach:
  - i) Opportunity take-up  
*Promoting existing Covenant opportunities and offers to care experienced young people.*
  - ii) Awareness raising  
*Promoting the Care Leaver Covenant wherever possible, including supply chains, through the procurement and commissioning of services or within professional networks, encouraging organisations to sign up to the Covenant and commit to supporting care experienced young people.*
  - iii) Policy collaboration and system change  
*Developing a 'Whole Council Approach' to improving outcomes for care leavers and influence key partners and local organisations/businesses.*
6. The 'Whole Council Approach' recognises that being a corporate parent does not solely reside with Children's Services and is a responsibility which should be shared across the Council. The 5 Part Strategy of this approach is as follows:
  - Raising awareness of the Covenant
  - Council tax exemption (already in place in LBHF)
  - Training and employment opportunities
  - Social value policy
  - Economic development
7. By becoming a partner, we will work in collaboration with the Care Leaver Covenant to develop an enhanced, localised and bespoke offer for our care experienced young people and demonstrate our commitment to doing our utmost to supporting the young people leaving our care and preparing them for adulthood.

### **Progress towards adopting a partnership approach**

8. We are already working towards the partnership approach:
  - i) Opportunity take-up  
*The Leaving Care service is already promoting Covenant offers to our young people. We plan to widen this promotion across our services and the HUB.*
  - ii) Awareness raising  
*Economic Development is leading on updating the priority measures we use to define and quantify social value outcomes secured through procurement; we have been working with them to include targeted measures for care leavers in this updated version, with the aim of utilising social value to provide employment, training and other opportunities that will benefit the young people leaving our care. We also hope to encourage partners and suppliers to become signatories to the Covenant.*
  - iii) Policy collaboration and system change

*We have started developing a 'Whole Council Approach' through our close working with Housing on enhancing our offer to care experienced young people. The Virtual School has been working with People and Talent and Economic Development on Promoting the Achievement of Care Leavers (PACL) in partnership with UCL to support care experienced young people into education and employment.*

### **Next steps**

9. The process of becoming a partner of the national Care Leaver Covenant requires the following:
  - Establishing who will be the H&F Care Leaver Covenant Ambassador and organisational leads for partnership work with the Covenant
  - Submitting the pro-forma capturing the work we are doing the three pillars of the partnership approach to the Care Leaver Covenant
  - Formally launching the partnership
  - Start working with the Care Leaver Covenant to build an enhanced localised offer for our care leavers alongside local businesses, community organisations and other partner services.

### **Equality Implications**

The recommendations outlined will have positive equality implications for our young people in care and leaving care (up to the age of 25). Care experienced people face significant barriers that impact them throughout their lives, often facing discrimination and stigma across housing, health, education, relationships, employment and in the criminal justice system. Recognising and making allowances for this by becoming a partner of the Care Leaver Covenant and enhancing the offer of support available will positively impact on care experienced young people and support them to become thriving adults. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed and is attached in Appendix 1.

*Sophie Veitch, Commissioning and Transformation Lead, Children's Commissioning, 27 November 2023*

### **Risk Management Implications**

There is a reputational risk to LBHF should the commitments in becoming a Partner of the Covenant not be met. This risk is relatively low given that the Council is already working towards some of these commitments and expectations around what partnership looks like are not fixed. This risk can be mitigated through continuous and open contact with the Care Leaver Covenant to assure compliance.

*Jules Binney, Risk and Assurance Manager, 01 December 2023*

### **Climate and Ecological Emergency Implications**

There are no direct climate and ecological emergency implications to this decision.

*Hinesh Mehta, Assistant Director of Climate Change, 7 December 2023*

### ***Local Economy and Social Value***

The Council is committed to securing social value through our procurement in line with our Social Value Policy and Sourcing Strategy. As part of the 'Whole Council approach' outlined above, the Economy department will work with colleagues in Children's Services to secure commitments from our suppliers to providing employment, training and other opportunities for care-experienced young people to support the aims of being a partner of the Care Leaver Covenant.

*Andrew Munk, Assistant Director of Economic Development, 7 December 2023.*

### ***Procurement Implications***

Procurement will work in collaboration with the economic development team to include a measure to monitor the commitments made in relation to care within the Added Value Matrix. This will mean that benefits will be secured for care in our borough when we procure goods, services or works.

*Sophie Uddin, Procurement Lead, 5 December 2023 verified by Joanna McCormick, Assistant Director Procurement and Commercial 5 December 2023*

### **LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 - Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA): Becoming a partner of the Care Leaver covenant