

SIX EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN CARE LEAVER SUPPORT

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A year after being appointed, the government's national implementation adviser for care leavers has published his first annual report looking at the quality of support across England.



Mark Riddell, previously manager of leaving care services at Trafford Council, which became **the first to have its support for care leavers rated "outstanding" by Ofsted in 2015**, said that over the last 12 months he has visited more than 40 local authorities to offer advice on introducing the new duties brought in through the Children and Social Work Act.

These duties include extending support to care leavers from a personal adviser until they are 25, rather than 21. Councils are also required to publish a "local offer" of support for **care leavers**.

"It has been heartening to see how positively the sector is responding to the challenge. During those visits I have learned a huge amount and seen some excellent ways in which local authorities are improving their offer to care leavers, which I have pulled together in this report," he said.

CYP Now looks at some **examples of work he wants to see replicated** across the country.

BARNSLEY COUNCIL

Riddell is impressed that **Barnsley Council** has formally agreed to be "pushy parents" for their looked-after children and care leavers and are encouraging their care leavers to be just as "pushy".

A young person with experience of care is now a "full and equal" member of its corporate parenting panel. Other care leavers are also invited to meet with councillors and officers to further hold the council to account.

This is already proving effective, with the council changing its housing policy after listening to a care leaver's account of how she was forced to leave a flat, after being pestered by a neighbour who had a criminal record of offences against children.

The social housing provider initially refused to rehouse her as she had made herself intentionally homeless. The council agreed that this "was not good enough for their children" and the social housing provider no longer applies this "intentionality" reason to care leavers.

LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY

Care leavers are heavily involved in deciding what is included in the **London Borough of Bromley's** local offer to them. This is through specially set up "local offer meetings" with the council and other agencies.

"In doing this, Bromley quickly realised that there were significant disparities between what each agency was offering and in reality what care leavers actually needed," says Riddell.

Riddell is also impressed with a commitment to providing a relevant local offer from the borough's chief executive, Doug Patterson.

"As the offer is being driven at the highest level there is a greater strategic buy-in," adds Riddell.

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Councils need to actively promote new duties to care leavers, such as having access to a personal adviser until they are 25, especially those that may have left care some time ago.

Cheshire East Council decided to invest in a postal campaign in which all their care leavers were sent a recorded delivery letter explaining the new duty. They are now in contact with most of their care leavers, with 25 per cent requesting a personal adviser.

WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Setting up a drop-in centre for care leavers, as well as unaccompanied asylum seekers, is a useful way of keeping in contact with these groups of young people. Warwickshire's centre provides care leavers with the chance to access social care support as well as relax, play games, watch TV and access the internet.

"The plan is to develop the service so that the hub can be a one-stop shop and agencies such as housing, health, child and adolescent mental health services and the Department for Work and Pensions will also run surgeries and training events from this venue," says Riddell.

In addition, **Warwickshire County Council** offers apprenticeships for care leavers to work within the council. There are currently eight in posts across the authority.

STOCKPORT BOROUGH COUNCIL

Supporting the emotional needs of care leavers is crucial to helping them live independently, says Riddell. Stockport's leaving care team works with local care leaver support charity **Pure Insight** to deploy volunteer mentors to ensure young people have such support at evenings and weekends.

"This combats the isolation and loneliness that is reported by young people living in their own tenancies," says Riddell.

Also on offer to care leavers in **Stockport** is a drop-in café, Sunday lunch club, mums and toddlers groups and access to leisure facilities. In development are plans for a peer mentor scheme and free travel across Greater Manchester.

LONDON BOROUGH OF WANDSWORTH

The **London Borough of Wandsworth** employs a dedicated housing officer for care leavers who works with housing associations to ensure there is sufficient suitable accommodation for this group of young people.

Since November 2015, no care leaver has been placed in temporary bed and breakfast accommodation.

Riddell is also impressed with the standard of care leaver accommodation, which includes flexible, individual support. Care leavers also inspect properties and deliver feedback to the council via a young inspectors scheme.