

## Supporting Care Leavers

Last year the Children’s Commissioner for Wales, Sally Holland, wrote a report about support to Care Leavers. The report was called ‘Hidden Ambitions’ and it highlighted that:

- Care leavers need the same sort of opportunities, assistance and support that all parents try to give their children as they start to make their way in the world.
- We cannot expect care leavers to achieve their ambitions if they are worried about where they will live, how they will pay their bills or how they can find out about what help is available to them.

The Children’s Commissioner called for local authorities, and others, to create a pledge, showing their commitment to you as Care Leavers. This letter sets out Flintshire’s pledge for our care leavers. The pledge responds to the findings of the Children’s Commissioner as well as what care leavers, and young people in care in Flintshire, have told us about the things that are important to them, such as safety, jobs, housing, support and engaging with peers. This is our pledge.....

<p><b>Practical and emotional support from a Personal Advisor</b></p>	<p><b>Support to find secure and stable housing</b></p>
<p>As a care leaver this means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ You will have an allocated Personal Advisor (PA) who can provide you support</li> <li>➤ This support can include social and emotional support, practical support to help you live independently as well as support to help you meet your education, employment or housing needs.</li> <li>➤ You will be able to access this support right up to the age of 25 if you feel you need it</li> </ul>	<p>As a care leaver this means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A Housing Pathway Officer will support you in finding suitable housing. Options may include 24 hour supported accommodation, supported lodgings, ‘move on’ flats or independent accommodation.</li> <li>➤ You will have ‘Band 1’ status for our Housing allocation process. This is the top band for people with housing needs in Flintshire.</li> <li>➤ If you are in a foster placement, it may be possible for you to stay living in the placement</li> </ul>
<p><b>Access to advice and support about money</b></p>	<p><b>Support to access employment, education and training</b></p>
<p>As a care leaver this means we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ensure that you know the financial support you are entitled to</li> <li>➤ Let you know about the grants you can access when you leave care</li> <li>➤ Let you know what financial support you are entitled to if you remain in Education</li> <li>➤ Offer practical support and advice to help you manage your finances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Your PA will look at how we can ensure that you access the employment, education and training opportunities that are right for you</li> <li>➤ If needed we will provide support to help you become ‘work ready’ including building confidence and self esteem</li> <li>➤ You will have the opportunity to apply for training, apprenticeships and job opportunities in the wide range of services we provide as a Council</li> <li>➤ We will work with you to provide practical and financial support if you enter into higher education</li> <li>➤ We will offer focused support if you are not in employment, education or training, or if you are at risk of this situation arising</li> </ul>

There is more information about our Pledge, and what it means for you, on the following pages. We expect our Pledge to grow as we develop and expand the support we can offer our care leavers. For example over the next 12 months we will:

- Consult on options for setting up discussion groups for care leavers. At the moment we have joint forums for looked after children and care leavers. This has its benefits but we recognise that what is of interest or concern to a care leaver may be different to what is discussed by children still living in care.
- Consider the work that Welsh Government is looking at to make Council Tax fairer for people in Wales. As this work develops we will consider what this could mean for young people leaving care in Flintshire and the potential of them having priority status for council tax support.
- Develop the way we use technology to provide you with information about your rights, the support you can access and to improve how we communicate with care leavers.

I hope you find our Pledge useful, and informative, in setting out our commitments towards you as young people in care, or leaving care. We take this responsibility seriously and commit to making sure you have the best life chances.



Craig Macleod  
Senior Manager: Children's and Workforce

## About our Pledge to Care Leavers

The following provides you with more information about what you can expect from Flintshire Council:

### **Pledge 1: Practical and emotional support from a Personal Advisor**

As a care leaver this means:

- You will have an allocated Personal Advisor (PA) who can provide you support
- This support can include social and emotional support, practical support to help you live independently as well as support to help you meet your education, employment or housing needs.
- You will be able to access this support right up to the age of 25 if you feel you need it

Examples of the support we are providing to our care leavers includes:

- Sessions that help you prepare for the practical side of independent living e.g. cookery skills, budgeting/finance, employment skills or even parenting skills.
- Support for the emotional side of independent living where you can work with your PA on any issues or worries that you may have, as well as opportunities to develop networks of support with your peers.
- We also offer a Skills for Living programme through Action for Children. This programme is for care leavers who may benefit from help to improve their social skills and to work on their thoughts and feelings. The programme provides emotional and mental health on a 1-to-1 basis over a period of 3 months, before moving onto a 14 week therapeutic programme. There are follow up sessions from assigned key workers. This is what one care leaver said about this programme:

*“The team went out of their way to help me. I found them very approachable and very easy to talk to which makes it easier to talk to them about problems. They don’t pressure you to open up, they take it at your own pace. “*

## **Pledge 2: Support to find secure and stable housing**

As a care leaver this means:

- A Housing Pathway Officer will support you in finding suitable housing. Options may include 24 hour supported accommodation, supported lodgings, 'move on' flats or independent accommodation.
- You will have 'Band 1' status for our Housing allocation process. This is the top band for people with housing needs in Flintshire.
- If you are in a foster placement, it may be possible for you to stay living in the placement

Examples of the support we are providing to our care leavers to meet their accommodation needs:

- The 'When I am Ready' scheme enables care leavers to continue living in their foster placement until they are 21, or 25 (if you continue in education). If this is something that you would like to consider we can explore this with you to see if it is an option that is suitable.
- We work with young people to develop a pathway plan to plan and make arrangements for young people as they move to becoming a care leaver. Housing are part of the service attend your pathway planning meetings. This will ensure a shared approach to understanding, planning for, and meeting your housing needs.
- If needed your PA can help you access support from the 'ODEL Involve' Project. ODEL stands for Opening Doors....Enhancing Lives. This is a project for young people with housing support needs. The programme can provide opportunities to develop young people's life skills and provide them with opportunities for volunteering, training and employment.
- If accommodation emergencies arise we have developed arrangements to provide temporary accommodation and support

### **Pledge 3: Access to advice and support about money**

As a care leaver this means we will:

- Ensure that you know the financial support you are entitled to
- Let you know about the grants you can access when you leave care
- Let you know what financial support you are entitled to if you remain in Education
- Offer practical support and advice to help you manage your finances

Examples of the support we are providing to our care leavers:

- we will arrange for you to have support from our Welfare Rights service to ensure you have information, and support, to access benefits and grants that you are entitled to as a care leaver
- staff at our Connects offices (Flint, Buckley, Connahs Quay, Holywell) can help you look at any financial support you could be entitled to, and help you fill out any forms
- based on individual circumstances we have provided young people with books and equipment to help with their University studies
- we offer sessions to help develop budgeting/finance skills

### **Pledge 4: Support to access employment, education and training**

As a care leaver this means:

- Your PA will look at how we can ensure that you access the employment, education and training opportunities that are right for you
- If needed we will provide support to help you become 'work ready' including building confidence and self esteem
- You will have the opportunity to apply for training, apprenticeship and job opportunities in the wide range of services we provide as a Council
- We will work with you to provide practical and financial support if you enter into higher education
- We will offer focused support if you are not in employment, education or training, or if you are at risk of this situation arising

Flintshire County Council provide a whole range of services and can offer real opportunities to help you prepare, experience and seek employment including:

- apprenticeships within the Council and within the business that we work with

- providing support to ensure that young people are 'work ready' including building their confidence and self esteem

Flintshire County Council's Apprentice scheme provides a structured approach to assist young people to move from education into a skilled and qualified profession. One:to:one guidance can be given to those needing assistance with the application and interview process. There are several apprenticeships available:

- Pre-apprenticeships
- Foundation apprenticeships
- Apprenticeships (level 3)
- Higher – level apprenticeship
- Graduate apprenticeships

The scheme has produced some positive outcomes, with 98% of those completing the scheme going into employment. 75% of those find roles within the Council, and others move into higher education. The scheme runs on annual basis and more information can be found on the Flintshire County Council website. You can ask your PA about the scheme if you are interested.

The 'We Mind the Gap' Programme is a 6 month paid traineeship that works in partnership with local businesses. Geared towards vulnerable young women between the 18 -26 year olds, the programme provides the opportunity to obtain life skills, opportunities, knowledge and work experience, with guidance from a skilled mentor and personal coach. The package looks at you as a person including your physical, wellbeing and emotional health, as well as working with you to overcome barriers in your life. The programme provides experiences in occupations that are widely available, with the main aim of developing transferable skills. Whilst this is an established scheme it is being run in Flintshire for the first time in 2017/2018. We will need to evaluate the scheme and if we decide to run it again our PA's will talk to young women who may benefit from this opportunity.

The BOOST project is a project being rolled in 2018 and looks at support and training for care leavers. BOOST- Be Optimistic about Opportunities for Support and Training, is a 12 week programme, where you will get to experience what it is like to work in your chosen industry. 1 day a week you will be allocated a mentor, who will use their skills and knowledge to support you through the programme, with interview skills or CV writing. This project is aimed at anyone 16 and over, who are leaving a care service and looking at career opportunities. The project will enable you to become a skilled member of the workforce.

Your PA can access support from an Organisation called Llamau who can offer:

- free accredited courses for any care leaver that has fallen out of education and has a lack of qualifications
- Support for care leavers who did not gain GCSE's as part of the Essential Skills Wales framework to support the development of skills needed for education, work and life.
- Work placements and possible employment opportunities

We hope that you find this Pledge helpful and informative.