

Committee: Council

Date: 6 February 2013

Agenda item: 10

Wards:

Subject: Endorsement of the National Charter for Care Leavers

Lead officer: Yvette Stanley, Director of Children, Schools and Families

Lead member: Councillor Maxi Martin, Cabinet Member for Children Services

Forward Plan reference number:

Contact officer: Yvette Stanley Yvette.stanley@merton.gov.uk

Recommendation:

That Council endorse the 'National Charter for Care Leavers' attached at Appendix 1.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report presents to Council the Department for Education's 'National Care Leavers Charter' and asks Council to formally endorse the content.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. Merton is committed to giving its looked after children the best possible life chances and life choices. Our 'Looked After Children' (LAC) inspection in 2012 gave our LAC services a good rating overall and noted good outcomes for looked after children and high ambitions for their futures. We are, however, ambitious to do even better and our Corporate Parenting group (CPG), which included member representation, challenges and supports the contributions of the Council and its partners in their work to improve outcomes for these young people and has recommended that the Council signs up to the national charter for young people leaving care. The CPG particularly recommend that we continue to work together to ensure that care leavers are supported as they move into adulthood and independence.
- 2.2. Advised by the Cabinet Member for Children Services, the Leader has agreed that Council is recommended to formally endorse the content of the Charter.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. None for the purpose of this report.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. None for the purpose of this report.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. The National Charter for Care Leavers is to be presented to full Council at its meeting to be held on 6th February 2013.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. None for the purpose of this report.

- 7** **LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**
- 7.1. None for the purpose of this report.
- 8** **HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**
- 8.1. None for the purpose of this report.
- 9** **CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**
- 9.1. None for the purpose of this report.
- 10** **RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**
- 10.1. None for the purpose of this report.
- 11** **APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**
- ‘National Charter for Care Leavers’
- 12** **BACKGROUND PAPERS**
- 12.1. None



Department
for Education

Charter for Care Leavers

A Charter is a set of principles and promises. This Charter sets out promises care leavers want the central and local government to make. Promises and principles help in decision making and do not replace laws; they give guidance to show how laws are designed to be interpreted.

The key principles in this Charter will remain constant through any changes in Legislation, Regulation and Guidance. Care leavers urge local authorities to use these principles when they make decisions about young people's lives. The Charter for Care Leavers is designed to raise expectation, aspiration and understanding of what care leavers need and what the government and local authorities should do to be good Corporate Parents.

We Promise:

To respect and honour your identity

- We will support you to discover and to be who you are and honour your unique identity. We will help you develop your own personal beliefs and values and accept your culture and heritage. We will celebrate your identity as an individual, as a member of identity groups and as a valued member of your community. We will value and support important relationships, and help you manage changing relationships or come to terms with loss, trauma or other significant life events. We will support you to express your identity positively to others.

To believe in you

- We will value your strengths, gifts and talents and encourage your aspirations. We will hold a belief in your potential and a vision for your future even if you have lost sight of these yourself. We will help you push aside limiting barriers and encourage and support you to pursue your goals in whatever ways we can. We will believe in you, celebrate you and affirm you.

To listen to you

- We will take time to listen to you, respect, and strive to understand your point of view. We will place your needs, thoughts and feelings at the heart of all decisions about you, negotiate with you, and show how we have taken these into account. If we don't agree with you we will fully explain why. We will provide easy access to complaint and appeals processes and promote and encourage access to independent advocacy whenever you need it.

To inform you

- We will give you information that you need at every point in your journey, from care to adulthood, presented in a way that you want including information on legal entitlements and the service you can expect to receive from us at different stages in the journey. We will keep information up to date and accurate. We will ensure you know where to get current information once you are no longer in regular touch with leaving care services. We will make clear to you what information about yourself and your time in care you are entitled to see. We will support you to access this when you want it, to manage any feelings that you might have about the information, and to put on record any disagreement with factual content.

To support you

- We will provide any support set out in current Regulations and Guidance and will not unreasonably withhold advice when you are no longer legally entitled to this service. As well as information, advice, practical and financial help we will provide emotional support. We will make sure you do not have to fight for support you are entitled to and we will fight for you if other agencies let you down. We will not punish you if you change your mind about what you want to do. We will continue to care about you even when we are no longer caring for you. We will make it our responsibility to understand your needs. If we can't meet those needs we will try and help you find a service that can. We will help you learn from your mistakes; we will not judge you and we will be here for you no matter how many times you come back for support.

To find you a home

- We will work alongside you to prepare you for your move into independent living only when you are ready. We will help you think about the choices available and to find accommodation that is right for you. We will do everything we can to ensure you are happy and feel safe when you move to independent living. We recognise that at different times you may need to take a step back and start over again. We will do our best to support you until you are settled in your independent life; we will not judge you for your mistakes or refuse to advise you because you did not listen to us before. We will work proactively with other agencies to help you sustain your home.

To be a lifelong champion

- We will do our best to help you break down barriers encountered when dealing with other agencies. We will work together with the services you need, including housing, benefits, colleges and universities, employment providers and health services to help you establish yourself as an independent individual. We will treat you with courtesy and humanity whatever your age when you return to us for advice or support. We will help you to be the driver of your life and not the passenger. We will point you in a positive direction and journey alongside you at your pace. We will trust and respect you. We will not forget about you. We will remain your supporters in whatever way we can, even when our formal relationship with you has ended.