

# Dorset Council's Care Leaver Strategy 2021-2023



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Strategy Author	Kirsten Hallett Team Managers Care Leavers
Report for	Corporate Director - Care and Protection, Sarah-Jane Smedmor

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## **DORSET CARE LEAVER STRATEGY**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This strategy relates to young people who are preparing to leave care between the ages of 16 and 17, or who have left care and are between the ages of 16 and 25.

Legislation and policy that has influenced our work with young people, our ambition for care leavers and the development of this strategy include:

- Children Act (1989)
- Housing Act (1996)
- Children Leaving Care Act (2000)
- Mental Health Act (2007)
- Children and Young Person Act (2008)
- Care Leavers Strategy (2013)
- Working together to Safeguard Children (2018)
- Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (2013)
- The Children and Families Act (2014)
- Care Act (2014)
- Future in mind promoting, protecting and improving our children and young people's mental health and wellbeing (2015)
- Care Leavers Transition to Adulthood - National Audit Office (2015)
- Keep on Caring – Supporting young people from Care to Independence (2016)
- Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation (2016)
- In Care, Out of Trouble (2016)
- Children and Social Work Act (2017)
- Rough Sleeping Strategy
- Pan Dorset Protocol to Reduce Criminalisation of Children and Young People in Care
- The National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers published his first annual report into the care leavers' landscape in December 2018.

Historically, many of our Care Leavers are children who have come into our care and have remained in care for longer. As a result of this we are now seeing an increasing number of young people with care leaver entitlements, and we expect these numbers to grow as responsibilities for care leavers were amended in the Children & Social Work Act 2017, extending corporate parenting responsibilities to all local authorities, and extending support to the age of 25.

Young people leaving care are one of the most vulnerable groups in our society. Research and shows they face greater health problems, lower education attainment than their peers and higher levels of unemployment. In common with other leaving care services, we know that many young people struggle to access support for emotional wellbeing and mental health. Through New Belongings the Care Leavers Team are listening to young people and working with the CCG and the Child in Care Health Service to provide a more responsive and earlier interventions to promote wellbeing and positive emotional health.

Dorset Council Care Leavers Team is currently supporting over 540 children in care and care leavers. This Care Leaver Strategy sets out the importance of providing care leavers with access to the same level of care and support that other young people get from their

parent, holding in mind our corporate parenting objectives to ensure services are “good enough for my child”.

Our Dorset Children Thrive model, launched in September 2020, brings together many services and supports for children and families into six integrated locality teams across Dorset, supported by a central team of specialist services. Dorset’s Care Leavers Team sits within central services and from September 2020 the service has extended to become a 16+ service, with personal advisers supporting 16 and 17-year-old children in care alongside their locality and permanence team Social Workers.

Dorset’s 6 priorities for children inform and shape both this strategy and Dorset’s Local Offer to care leavers.

- 1 Best Start in Life
- 2 Young and Thriving
- 3 Good Care Provision
- 4 The Best Education for All
- 5 Delivering Locally
- 6 Best Place to Live

## 1.1 Corporate Parenting Principles

The main principle behind corporate parenting is that the local authority has a legal and moral duty to provide the kind of support that any good parent would provide for their own children.

As the ‘Corporate Parent’ to the children in our care and care leavers we have a responsibility to make sure that we work together with our partners and provide the best possible care and protection for them.

We strive to be excellent Corporate Parents, having high aspirations for all our children in care and care leavers and encouraging them to achieve their goals and potential.

We are currently responsible for nearly 900 children in care and care leavers and we are accountable for keeping them safe; making sure their experiences in care are positive and improving their life chances. We approach this role with the same commitment as any other family would so that our children have the best opportunities that we can offer.

As part of our work we have adopted the seven corporate parenting principles introduced as part of the Children and Social Work Act in 2017.

1. To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of children and young people in care
2. To encourage children and young people in care to express their views, wishes and feelings
3. To take into account their views, wishes and feelings
4. To help children and young people in care gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners

5. To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for children and young people in care
6. To make sure that children and young people in care are safe, and have stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
7. To prepare children and young people in care for adulthood and independent living.

To thrive, children and young people have certain needs that all good parents and in our role as Corporate Parents, will meet.

## **1.2 Partnership**

This strategy sets out our ambition for our care leavers. To deliver our strategy requires coordinated and sustained effort across the local authority and our partners to continue to improve service standards and everyday practice. It is important to recognise the role of all public services in meeting the needs of children and young people in care and care leavers, including partners in the statutory, private and third sectors.

### **Our key partners in Dorset are:**

NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group, NHS Dorset Healthcare University NHS Foundation Trust, Dorset Parent-Carer Council, Dorset Police, Dorset Combined Youth Offending Service, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue, 0-25 VCS Forum, Department of Work and Pensions Jobcentre Plus

Dorset partners are committed to fulfilling the needs of our care leavers as we would for our own children, and we share the values and principles to:

- Always put children and families at the heart of everything we do - including in how we develop and shape services
- Ensure no child or family left behind - we will strive for equity of outcomes for our children, young people, and their families
- Focus on early intervention and prevention aiming to help early in the life of a problem and provide a graduated response to need - the right help, in the right place at the right time
- Work restoratively, doing things with families instead of to them, for them or doing nothing
- Think Family and work together so that children and families receive a joined-up response and good transitions
- Focus on strengths within families and communities, understanding the lived experience of children
- Stay with families until outcomes are delivered, embedded and change is sustained
- Be inclusive - we want our children and young people to be able to get the help they need in the county that is their home
- Empower young people and families to use the information we give them to make decisions for themselves
- Deliver best value for money - spending the Dorset £ in Dorset on the things that get the best outcomes for children and families

Partnership is everything, we know we need to work together to deliver our strategic plans and shared vision so that “together we will make Dorset the best place to be a child; where communities thrive, and families are supported to be the best they can be”

The Dorset Strategic Alliance for Children and Young People has developed a three-year Children, Young People and Families Plan 2020-2023, which launched in September 2020. This strategy for care leavers sits alongside this plan.

Through these strategic plans we are developing and introducing new pathways that have better outcomes for children in care and care leavers

### 1.3 Governance

The Corporate Parenting Board is a multi-agency partnership led by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education. The Board report annually to Cabinet on the Strategy.

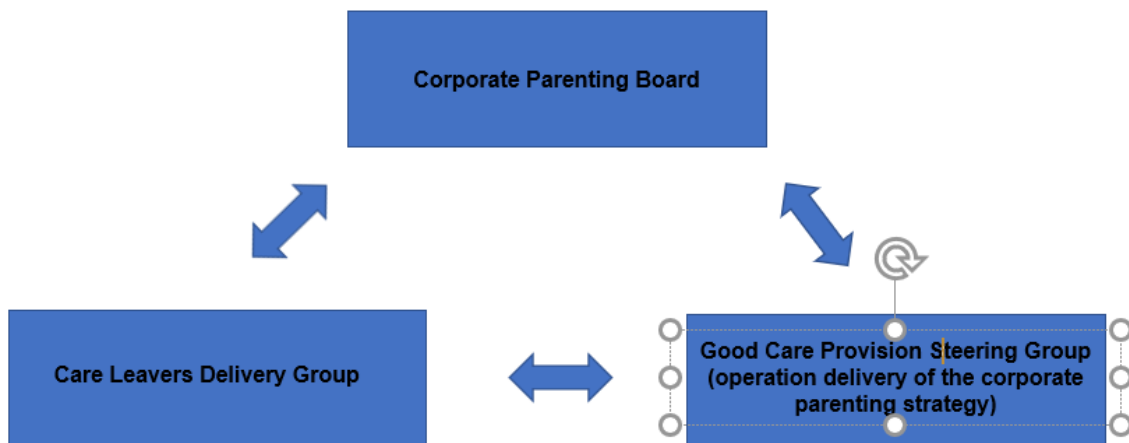
Following recent collaboration with the Care Leaver Covenant, and in the spirit of a whole council corporate parenting approach a Care Leavers Delivery Group has been developed.

This group will meet a minimum of 7 times a year and will report to the Corporate Parenting Board. The group will assist Dorset Council and its partners to understand and fully comply with legal duties and responsibilities across all services as they discharge their duties to care leavers. It will promote member and workforce engagement commitment and understanding of the corporate parenting principles introduced by the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

The group will hold to account the council and its partners in their role in the delivery of services and statutory responsibilities to care leavers. Ensuring the local authority is an active strong and committed corporate parent in line with the corporate parenting principles.

The Care Leavers Delivery Group is chaired by Cabinet Lead Member for Safeguarding – and has core attendance from the Corporate Director of Children’s Social Care, Corporate Director for Housing, Head of Service Children in Care and Care Leavers, Service Manager for Corporate Parenting and Care Leavers, Care Leaver representative and HR Business partner. Although not a full member of the group the Cabinet Member responsible for Children Services(s) is invited to attend all meetings.

The Care Leavers Delivery Group reports into the Corporate Parenting Board via the Good Care Provision Steering Group which drives the priorities of the Corporate Parenting Strategy. Please below Care Leaver Delivery Group governance overview.



## 1.4 Outcomes for Care Leavers

In delivering our Care Leavers Strategy there are the seven strategic outcomes we want for all our children in care and care leavers in Dorset:

- To have the best start in life
- To be safe from harm and have the help they need
- To have healthy and active lives
- To be prepared for adult life
- To feel they can have their say and are listened to
- To enjoy growing up in Dorset
- To have a settled and happy education which enables them to achieve their full potential

These are closely aligned to the 5 key outcomes set out by Keep on Caring and adopted by the National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers.

**Outcome 1:** Improve access to education, employment, and training.

**Outcome 2:** Care leavers should experience stability in their lives and feel safe and secure.

**Outcome 3:** Improved access to health support.

**Outcome 4:** Care leavers should achieve financial stability and independence

**Outcome 5:** Experience strong family networks and be the best they can be

## 2.0 Local context

Dorset is a beautiful coastal county situated in the South West region of England. Over half of Dorset is covered by the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation and 7% of Dorset is protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The Dorset rural idyll can conceal hidden deprivation, with significant pockets found mostly in urban coastal areas. But there is also some rural deprivation due to isolation and difficulty accessing housing, transport, and essential services. The Children's Society estimates that 23% of Dorset Children are living in poverty.

There are ten areas (out of a total of 219) in Dorset within the top 20% most deprived nationally for multiple deprivation, down from 12 in 2010<sup>1</sup>. Nine of these are within Weymouth and Portland and one is in the West Dorset District area. 20 of Dorset's neighbourhoods are in the 20% most deprived nationally in relation to education<sup>1</sup>.

46% of Dorset's population live in rural areas<sup>3</sup>. Barriers to housing and essential services are significant in Dorset reflecting rurality and distance from services. 66 Dorset neighbourhoods fall in the 20% most deprived nationally for this measure: in the former council areas, 21 are in West Dorset and 20 in North Dorset.

Crime is low in Dorset, with domestic abuse, criminal exploitation, and rural crime identified as priorities for partners.

Earnings are below average and house prices are high with affordability issues for many young people and keyworkers. Dorset has relatively low birth rates and younger people often move away from the area.

The total population of Dorset is 378,508 (2019 mid-year estimate), this includes 74,765 children and young people aged 0-19 representing 20% of the total population (89,573 aged 0-24 years).

There are 33 different languages spoken in Dorset schools. 9% of school age children are from black and minority ethnic communities compared to 34.6% nationally.

We pledge that we will support young people that have been in care to be ready for adulthood, by planning early and having a clear offer for Care Leavers. Partners will offer care leavers work experience and apprenticeship opportunities

We have an increasing number of care leavers and are pleased to be one of eight authorities to participate in the national New Belongings programme which seeks to improve our support to care leavers. Through this work we will improve our listening and ensure the voice of our young people influences service development.

The Dorset Care Leavers Team transformed in September 2020 into a 16+ service whereby a Personal Adviser is identified as soon as possible after the child in care's 16th birthday to provide a smooth transition from their Social Worker to the Care Leaver Team. The Personal Adviser works alongside the young person's Social Worker, building a relationship before they become 18 and co-producing their Pathway Plan. This enables us to support young people with the skills they need as they move into adulthood, so they are more ready to leave care.

The Dorset Care Leaver offer was revised following a revision of the financial offer to Dorset Care leavers in April 2021. This is published on the Dorset Council website.

### **3.0 What we know about children in care and care leavers in Dorset**

We currently have 437 children in care, 262 Former Relevant, Qualifying, and Relevant care leavers receiving leaving care services (July 2021), and we know that this number will increase over the next two years with 101 of 16/17- year old children in care.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, we have 181, 21-25-year olds for whom we have a duty to keep in touch with annually and who can return to receive an active service should they need support.

We therefore have a total of 544 eligible, qualifying, and former relevant care leavers for whom we offer a level of leaving care service.

Most of our young people (99%) remained in care until their 18th birthday. While an improving picture, we know not as many of our young people are benefiting from Staying Put arrangements as we would like. We continue to look at how we are supporting foster carers

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<sup>1</sup> *Definitions*

*Eligible children within the meaning given by paragraph 19B of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989. Eligible children are young people aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and are still being looked after.*

*Relevant children within the meaning given by section 23A(2) of the children Act are children who are not being looked after by a local authority, but was, before last ceasing to be looked after, an eligible child, and is aged 16 or 17.*

*Former relevant persons within the meaning given by Section 23C(1) of the Children Act 1989 are young people aged between 18– 25 who have been either eligible or relevant children or both.*



to continue to provide a safe and stable home for our young people after they turn 18 and into adulthood.

We are in touch with 97% of our young people who are care experienced between 19 and 21 years of age.

## Our Data

		Male	Female	Not specified	Living within the Dorset Boundary	Living outside the Dorset Boundary
<b>Total Care leavers</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>Relevant Care Leavers</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Former Relevant Care Leavers</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>94 (19 in BCP)</b>
<b>Qualifying Care Leavers</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Former Relevant Care Leavers aged over 21</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>63 (20 in BCP)</b>
		Male	Female	Not Specified		
<b>Eligible 16 &amp; 17 year olds</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>1</b>		

### 4.0 What we have achieved:

We are partners with Coram Voice, together with 7 other Local Authorities, to deliver the New Belongings programme. This has been developed from the successful Bright Spots programme and 35% of our care leaver population completed the “*Your Life Beyond Care*” survey in April 2020 which measures the subjective wellbeing of young care leavers.

We have also undertaken a detailed self-assessment of our services with our partners as part of New Belongings to identify priorities for action.

We are proud to achieve “bright spots of practice” in the following 4 areas:

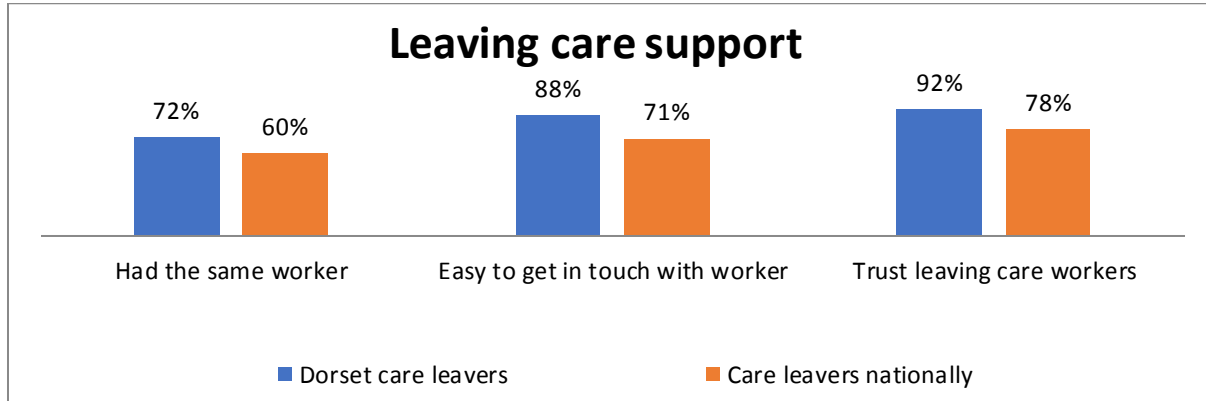
- **Getting in touch with your leaving care worker**

Nearly all care leavers (96%) knew who their Personal Adviser was (more care leavers than in other local authorities), and had had the same worker (72%) in the last 12 months

- **Trusting your leaving care worker**

Dorset care leavers trusted their worker all or most of the time (92%) and found it easy to get in touch with their worker all or most of the time (88%). Care leavers reported that their friends, leaving care worker and partner were the top sources of support for them

Most young people (92%) had someone who listened to them, although fewer (87%) felt they had someone who praised them when they had done something good. 84% felt they had someone who believed they'll be a success



- **Internet access**

Care leavers in Dorset were more likely to have internet at home (96%) compared to the general population (93%). A similar proportion of care leavers (97%) had a smart phone compared to their peers (96%).

- **Pets**

More care leavers (41%) had a pet in Dorset than in other local authorities (28%) and they were an important source of emotional support.

- **Projects**

Through New Belongings, we also have opportunities to come together with other Local Authorities to peer and practice learning.

Building on the work already undertaken in Dorset to support our care leavers including the development of apprenticeships and council tax exemption, our Care Leaver Offer has been refreshed and our finance policy has been enhanced setting out the financial support available to care leavers as they leave care and beyond. The revised Finance Policy was implemented from April 2021 for all new care leavers and retrospectively applied for all care leavers age 18-21 already supported by us.

During the pandemic we distributed refurbished Dorset Council laptops, surface pros and provided phone and corporate contract sim cards for care leavers who did not have internet access. We also distributed laptops and mobile WIFI hubs from the DfE.

As a result of the success of using corporate contract sim cards we have now embedded the offer of a “daisy” corporate contract sim card for all care leavers over 18 as part of our care leaver local offer.

Work has been taking place to strengthen the approach to supporting vulnerable young people at risk of homelessness. Joint funding from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government has been secured and as a result a new Housing Officer post has been created and is based in the Care Leaver Team. Part of the role is to work with young people before they leave care, working alongside Care Leaver Personal Advisers, to provide advice and support regarding housing options, including Staying Put and Supported Lodgings. When a care leaver who has been placed in B&B, under the Homelessness legislation. Their

Personal Adviser works closely with the Care Leaver Housing officer, District Housing officer and the young person to help them move on as quickly as possible into secure affordable and suitable housing.

We are developing a Housing Protocol for Care Leavers. This will ensure our Care Leavers access timely appropriate accommodation that will promote their independence and stability.

Work has begun to create additional independent living accommodation for care leavers. A report went to Cabinet in March 2020 recommending the creation of additional accommodation for care leavers. Dorset Council has purchased a property which will be converted to provide affordable accommodation to meet the needs of our care leavers, together with a Care Leaver Hub. It is anticipated that the project will be open December 2021.

Dorset Council is the first local authority in the country to adopt a unique initiative for care leavers. 24-hour emotional support and counselling to assist our care leavers.

With one in four people experiencing a mental health crisis after leaving care, national charity Rees Foundation has launched a scheme to give access to 24-hour emotional support and counselling.

'Ask Jan' gives care leavers access to services, including a same-day 24-hour telephone counselling service, and the opportunity to use a network of UK-wide counsellors for face-to-face counselling within five days of requesting an appointment.

The 'Ask Jan' membership package provides a much-needed lifeline for care leavers seeking support for their mental health, while avoiding long waiting times that can lead to a further deterioration of mental wellbeing.

We are really pleased to now be able to include a year's 'Ask Jan' membership in our revised Care Leaver Local Offer for Dorset Care Leavers.

Dorset Strategic Alliance for Children and Young People plan priority, Young and Thriving, will support young people on the edge of care, to safely remain in their family home through the development of edge of care services. Dorset have created the Harbour to meet this aim. The impact of this project should reduce numbers of care leavers requiring care leaver services over time.

Dorset Council, led by the Corporate Parenting Board, has committed to adopting the Care Leaver Covenant, whole council approach. We are working with the Care Leaver Covenant to use best practice and as we continuously build on our care leaver offer across the Council, our partnerships, and the wider community.

This work sets out a clear commitment to our Care Leavers framed around what they can expect from us as they become young adults.

## **5.0 Our priorities for care leavers: Delivering the strategy**

Dorset's overarching plan is for all children to:

- have the best start in life
- be safe from harm and have the help they need
- have healthy and active lives
- be prepared for adult life

- feel they can have their say and are listened to
- enjoy growing up in Dorset
- have a settled and happy education which enables them to achieve their full potential

**5.1 OUTCOME 1:** Improve access to education, employment, and training.

**Dorset care leavers in EET - 57.5% (Former relevant care leavers aged 18-21 years)**

<p><b>What we have achieved</b></p>	<p>We have established a specific link with Ansbury, previous NEET engagement partner.</p> <p>In December 2020, the leaving care service and DWP signed a joint protocol to support our care leavers. We have established positive working relationships with our specific point of contacts within the DWP and Personal Advisers are aware of the kick start programme being run by the DWP.</p> <p>Promotion of 'how to' guides building on research done about preferred methods.</p> <p>Pathways to Employment scheme is active and the team have very recently collaborated with DC Commissioning service to promote a care leaver apprenticeship under this scheme and are proud to say that one of our care leavers was successful in securing this position.</p> <p>All looked after young people and care leavers who apply for DC apprenticeships are guaranteed an interview.</p> <p>3 Personal Advisers in the team with a focus on education training and employment (PA ETE) and who will support our care leavers at University.</p> <p>We are currently supporting 27 care leavers at University. 6 of whom are due to graduate this academic year.</p> <p>PA ETE's have undertaken targeted short term support to care leavers who are not in education, employment, or training to help them reengage with a variety of education, employment, and training opportunities, which could include applying to college, creating CV's and making job enquiries, engaging care leavers with readiness for work experiences. We have supported 29 care leavers with bespoke support between March and July 2021. Referrals to the service have a strong trend towards online learning (such as Dorset Skills and Learning and the free ones with the OU) and to obtain Maths and English qualifications.</p> <p>Working relationships with Dorset's Virtual School. Care Leaver Team representation within the Governing Body of the Virtual School.</p> <p>The Care Leavers Team are supporting the Virtual School with the organisation of the Dorset Council EPIC Awards for Children in Care and Care Leavers.</p>
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	<p>The Care Leaver Finance policy has been implemented on 1.4.21, included in our local offer to care leavers is specific financial support packages, to promote education training and employment, for care leavers in the first year of an apprenticeship if living independently and receiving an apprenticeship wage of less than national living wage, incentive payments to promote and encourage care leavers into work experience, volunteering to improve their employability, university bursary of £2000 per course, financial support to secure university vacation accommodation, financial support towards IT equipment for care leavers in full time education or training.</p> <p>Revised finance policy offers incentives for preparation for work activity.</p> <p>Virtual school continue to work with care leavers until the end of the academic year in which they turn 18 to promote smooth transfer into independence.</p>
<p><b>What we are working on</b></p>	<p>It is anticipated that our bespoke service may change in the future with the implementation of the in-house NEET tracking, support, and re-engagement service in August 2021. We are working closely with the new management team around service design to ensure care leavers complex re-engagement needs are met.</p> <p>Discussions supported by the care leaver covenant about the development of opportunities internal and external to the Council.</p> <p>A Care Leaver Participation Apprenticeship within the care leavers team is being progressed as part of our supernumerary apprenticeship offer. (Pathways to Employment)</p> <p>In response to care leavers telling us that they prefer to work with their own Personal Adviser rather than being referred on, we will ensure all Personal Advisers feel skilled and confident in providing ETE advice</p> <p>Undertake further development of accessible support including development of care leaver hub at Kirtleton Avenue, including possible satellite drop-in sessions, virtual access, and evening sessions.</p> <p>Development of EdQual accreditation across independent living to help prepare care leavers for living independently.</p>
<p><b>Our further ambition</b></p>	<p>Explore impact of illness and disability on care leavers being able to access ETE opportunities and how we can assist care leavers to be more able to take up opportunities– potentially led by our Care Leaver New Belongings task force leaders.</p> <p>Promote opportunities to highlight aspirational stories. This will be a priority for National Care Leaver Week.</p>

**5.2 OUTCOME 2:** Care leavers should experience stability in their lives and feel safe and secure

**Dorset Care Leavers living in suitable accommodation – 94% (care leavers aged 18 to 21years).**

<p><b>What we have achieved</b></p>	<p>Dedicated Care Leavers housing officer role embedded within the Care Leavers Team.</p> <p>Care Leaver Protocol has been developed with Housing colleagues.</p> <p>A report went to Cabinet in March 2020 recommending the creation of additional accommodation for care leavers. Dorset Council has now purchased accommodation “Kirtleton Avenue” to provide affordable accommodation offers to meet the needs of our care leavers.</p> <p>Staying Put and Supported Lodgings team embedded within the Care Leavers Team.</p> <p>A sub-regional framework for supported accommodation for care leavers is in place.</p> <p>The Care Leaver Finance policy has been implemented on 1.4.21, included in our local offer to care leavers is specific financial support packages, to provide rent deposits and rent in advance, a £2000 setting up home allowance and a welcome to your new home box to support care leavers into their accommodation.</p>
<p><b>What we are working on</b></p>	<p>Development of Kirtleton Avenue to provide accommodation for Care Leavers which is not currently available in Dorset, co-produced with Care Leavers.</p> <p>It is anticipated that this project will be open late 2021 / early 2022.</p> <p>Undertake further development of accessible support including development of care leaver hub at Kirtleton Avenue, including drop-in sessions, virtual access, and evening sessions.</p> <p>Review of supported accommodation through tender process to improve and expand range of supported accommodation. Work is also ongoing with Adult services to reconfigure the former young people’s supported accommodation contract. This is a former Supporting People budget which could be combined with existing spend on care leaver accommodation to increase purchasing power.</p> <p>Review of Staying Put and Supported Lodgings policy and procedure, influenced by care leavers voice.</p> <p>Working with social landlords about the needs of care leavers.</p> <p>Expanding the guarantor offer beyond students at University Development of EdQual accreditation across independent living to help prepare care leavers for living independently.</p>

<b>Our further ambition</b>	<p>Develop staying close opportunities.</p> <p>To date we have no local authority housing allocation from our Dorset housing providers, and we need to drive this work forward to secure affordable long-term housing for care leavers.</p> <p>Explore how young people can get involved with training for foster carers and/or supported accommodation providers and/or housing officers.</p> <p>Personal Advisers to be guided and supported to undertake inspection visits of independent private housing, quality mark for private landlords.</p>

**5.3 OUTCOME 3:** Improved access to health support.

**Dorset care leavers NEET due to illness and disability -12 %**

**Dorset care leavers identified as having a disability – 13.7%**

**(Former relevant care leavers aged 18-21 years)**

<b>What we have achieved</b>	<p>Care Leavers have access to a Care Leaver Nurse who delivers 7 hours per week specialised care leaver nursing time.</p> <p>One year Ask Jan Membership from Rees Foundation is now available to all care leavers through our Care Leavers Local offer.</p> <p>Local charity funding to provide free sanitary items are available to combat Period Poverty for our care leavers.</p> <p>Links with our Nursing colleagues to support care leavers through regular data provision and management meetings to review working practice and referral processes.</p>
<b>What we are working on</b>	<p>Undertake further development of accessible support including development of care leaver hub at Kirtleton Avenue, including drop-in sessions, virtual access, and evening sessions.</p> <p>Care Leaver offer website to be further developed to include links to wellbeing resources.</p>
<b>Our further ambition</b>	<p>To improve dedicated care leaver nurse availability and to have access to an Emotional Wellbeing practitioner for care leavers.</p> <p>Reduce / remove prescription charges for all care leavers.</p> <p>Explore how we can ensure young people feel they are being taken seriously when they show concerns for themselves.</p>

	<p>Develop a formalised peer support offer.</p> <p>Explore with Steps to Wellbeing services a fast track system for care leavers.</p>
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**5.4 OUTCOME 4:** Care leavers should achieve financial stability and independence.

<b>What we have achieved</b>	<p>Development of revised financial policy which now also offers a personal budget to develop financial literacy and choice.</p> <p>An improved website with up to date and revised detail of our Care Leavers Local offer.</p> <p>In December 2020, the leaving care service and DWP signed a joint protocol to support our care leavers. We have established positive working relationships with our specific point of contacts within the DWP and Personal Advisers are aware of the kick start programme being run by the DWP.</p>
<b>What we are working on</b>	<p>Development of a specific Care Leavers Team social media presence to communicate with care leavers e.g. Instagram. Aim is to launch at National leaving care week.</p> <p>Care leavers to contribute to development and reviews of policy.</p>
<b>Our further ambition</b>	<p>Produce a printed copy of our Care Leaver offer.</p> <p>Work with young people to produce a care leavers guide for the setting up home allowance.</p> <p>Care Leavers to deliver care leaver awareness training within foster care training.</p> <p>Undertake further development of accessible support including development of care leaver hub at Kirtleton Avenue including drop-in sessions, virtual access, and evening sessions.</p> <p>Development of accreditation across independent living to help prepare care leavers for living independently.</p>

**5.5 OUTCOME 5:** Experience strong family networks and be the best they can be

**Dorset Care Leavers in touch - 98%**

*(care leavers aged 18 to 21-years).*

<b>What we have achieved</b>	Dorset Council has committed to adopting the Care leaver covenant, whole council approach.
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	<p>An improved website with up to date and revised detail of our Care Leavers Local offer.</p> <p>Care Leaver Team and Virtual School working together to deliver the EPIC awards to celebrate successes and achievements for children in care and care leavers.</p> <p>Development of Care Leaver Delivery Group which reports to Corporate parenting board.</p> <p>The charity 'Friends of Dorset Care Leavers' was set up by personal advisers in provides opportunities throughout the year to reduce isolation and promote a positive sense of self. The charity has recently launched a "get mobile" and a "choose your own adventure" fund.</p>
<b>What we are working on</b>	<p>Friends of Dorset Care Leavers have partnered with the Will Houghton Trust to set up and launch a "Get active" fund.</p> <p>Care leaver contribution to staff appraisals.</p> <p>Regular updates to care leavers regarding the New Belonging programme.</p>
<b>Our further ambition</b>	<p>Undertake further development of accessible support including exploring development of care leaver hub at Kirtleton Avenue. This could include drop-in sessions, virtual access, and evening sessions.</p> <p>Consider alternative and appropriate celebrations of care leaver successes, informed, and developed with care leavers.</p>

As national and local policy develops, and the needs of Care Leavers change, this strategy will be reviewed and refreshed.