

Press release: Timpson: record number of councils sign 'Care leavers' charter'

One hundred and twenty-three councils across England have now signed up to the 'Care leavers' charter', pledging to provide young people leaving care with comprehensive support and advice until they reach their 25th birthday.

Please note that this article was originally published by the DfE.

One hundred and twenty-three councils across England have now signed up to the '[Care leavers' charter](#)', pledging to provide young people leaving care with comprehensive support and advice until they reach their 25th birthday.

The charter, launched by Children and Families Minister, Edward Timpson in October 2012, clearly sets out how care leavers should be treated and the support they should expect to receive from their local authority. It also recognises the unique challenges facing young people leaving care, such as moving into their first home as an independent adult, and points to the practical support they need.

Edward Timpson, Minister for Children and Families who grew up with over 80 foster brothers and sisters, said:

One hundred and twenty-three councils have now signed up to the 'Care leavers' charter' - pledging to provide young people leaving care with the vital help and support they need as they take their first steps into adulthood.

Too often I hear stories about young people leaving care feeling isolated, unsupported and facing endless barriers when all they are trying to achieve is the routine, everyday things that others take for granted - such as applying for their first job, getting information about college or university, or finding their first home.

Today's figures are a fantastic achievement, and I know the charter is already making a real difference to the lives of many young people. I now want every one of the 29 councils who hasn't already made this promise to consider signing up to the charter and prioritise the needs of these vulnerable young people.

Around 10,000 young people aged between 16 to 18 leave care each year. The government believes that care leavers should expect the same level of care and support that their friends and classmates get from their parents. Yet some can find it difficult to navigate services or work out what support they are entitled to, with too many ending up unemployed, out of training or education or living in poor accommodation.

Figures published by the Department for Education this year shows that:

- over 1,100 care leavers aged 16 or over are now living in independent accommodation without any formalised support
- 34% of care leavers aged 19 or over are not in education, employment or training
- just 6% of care leavers aged 19 or over went on to higher education

The charter sets out a wide range of commitments to improve the help and support available to young people leaving care across all areas in life, including:

- making it clear that young people leaving care should be treated as individuals with their

- own views and ambitions that should be listened to and taken on board
- setting out how care leavers should be supported, so they know what to expect from their council - including being provided with full information on the practical and financial support they can expect
- helping local authorities to better advise and support young people leaving care and moving onto adulthood - putting them in touch with the services they need, such as housing, colleges and universities, employers and health services - and can be used as a tool and guide for what care leavers can expect

The 'Care leavers' charter' is just 1 of a series of measures the government has made to improve outcomes for young people leaving care as they make the transition to adulthood. We have been working with local authorities and voluntary organisations such as the National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) and the Care Leavers Foundation to overhaul the way in which they are supported.

Edward Timpson has written to all local authorities asking them to dramatically improve financial support for care leavers, resulting in a tripling in the number of councils now paying £2,000 or more through the setting up home allowance.

We have introduced Junior Independent Savings Accounts for all care leavers, with over 46,000 accounts now open with a £200 contribution from government, and provided over £280,000 to the Care Leavers Foundation and NCAS to help improve support and outcomes for young people leaving residential care.

We have also improved accountability by publishing an annual data pack, outlining statistics on care leavers' education and employment status, and from this autumn Ofsted's local authority children's service inspection framework will place extra emphasis on the outcome of care leavers.

Notes to editor

The following local authorities have already signed up to the 'Care leavers' charter':

- Barking and Dagenham London Borough
- Barnet London Borough
- Bath & North East Somerset Council
- Bexley London Borough
- Birmingham City Council
- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
- Blackpool Council
- Bolton Council
- Bournemouth Borough Council
- Bracknell Forest Borough Council
- Bradford Metropolitan District Council
- Brighton & Hove City Council
- Bristol City Council
- Bromley London Borough
- Buckinghamshire County Council
- Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
- Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Camden London Borough
- Central Bedfordshire Council
- Cheshire East Council
- Cheshire West and Chester Council
- City of London
- Cornwall County Council
- Coventry City Council
- Croydon London Borough

- Cumbria County Council
- Darlington Borough Council
- Derby City Council
- Derbyshire County Council
- Devon County Council
- Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Durham County Council
- Ealing London Borough
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Enfield London Borough
- Essex County Council
- Gateshead Council
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Hackney London Borough
- Hammersmith & Fulham London Borough
- Hampshire County Council
- Haringey London Borough
- Harrow London Borough
- Hartlepool Borough Council
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Hillingdon London Borough
- Hounslow London Borough
- Isle of Wight Council
- Isles of Scilly
- Islington London Borough
- Kensington & Chelsea Royal Borough
- Kent County Council
- Kingston Upon Thames Royal Borough
- Kirklees Metropolitan Council
- Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Lambeth Council
- Lancashire County Council
- Leeds City Council
- Leicester City Council
- Leicestershire County Council
- Lewisham London Borough
- Luton Borough Council
- Manchester City Council
- Medway Council
- Merton London Borough
- Middlesbrough Council
- Milton Keynes Council
- Newcastle Upon Tyne City Council
- Norfolk County Council
- North East Lincolnshire Council
- North Lincolnshire Council
- North Somerset Council
- North Tyneside Council
- North Yorkshire County Council
- Northamptonshire County Council
- Northumberland County Council
- Nottingham City Council
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Oldham Council
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Peterborough City Council
- Plymouth City Council
- Poole Borough Council

- Portsmouth City Council
- Reading Borough Council
- Redbridge London Borough
- Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
- Richmond Upon Thames London Borough
- Rutland County Council
- Salford City Council
- Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
- Sheffield City Council
- Shropshire Council
- South Gloucestershire Council
- South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
- Southwark Council
- Staffordshire County Council
- Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
- Stockton on Tees Borough Council
- Stoke on Trent City Council
- Suffolk County Council
- Sunderland City Council
- Surrey County Council
- Sutton London Borough
- Swindon Borough Council
- Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
- Torbay Council
- Tower Hamlets London Borough
- Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
- Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
- Waltham Forest London Borough
- Wandsworth Borough Council
- Warrington Borough Council
- Warwickshire County Council
- West Berkshire Council
- West Sussex County Council
- Westminster City Council
- Wiltshire County Council
- Windsor & Maidenhead Royal Borough
- Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
- York Council

We are already hearing from some local authorities about the difference the charter is helping to make, for example:

In Oldham Council the charter has encouraged the authority to review their own local pledge to their care leavers, as well to review their Staying Put policy to encourage more young people to be able to remain with their carers post 18.

In Harrow Council, the charter has offered young people more clarity around their entitlements and responsibilities. Young people are now being much more proactive in claiming their benefits and this has offered huge savings to placements where housing benefit is being claimed and paid directly to the placement.

In Cumbria, the young people have established a Charter for Care Leavers Project Group to help implement the charter, and to find out about young people's experience of the services they have received during their time in care. They want to use the voice of young people to highlight and share good practice, and improve services.

In Nottinghamshire County Council they have undertaken a review of their leaving care services and found that young people were confused by the roles of workers and wanted fewer changes of social worker. The new structure which the council have put in place allows young people to remain with

the same social worker until the young person reaches 18 years old or until they are no longer looked after and it is only at 18 years old the case will transfer to the Leaving Care Service for on-going advice and assistance.

In Cheshire East Council, the charter has helped raise the profile of care leavers and their specific needs across the whole council. This has led to the developing of a gold standard for care leavers, including encouraging increased take up of higher education places (13 in 2013 as compared to 1 in 2012) and an increased take up of council apprenticeships and apprenticeships outside of the council.

In Shropshire Council, a new website for looked after and care leaver young people has been launched and includes links for young people to share their concerns, as well as links where young people can access advocacy services. A new consultation document for looked after young people has also been introduced for care leavers to record their wishes and feelings for review meetings. This was produced alongside Shropshire's children in care council.

In Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council, they have improved links with colleges and training providers to identify mentors to help support their young people to achieve.

In Warrington Borough Council, they are taking a regional approach to the charter by participating in a regional workshop event looking at the impact of the charter for care leavers across the North West authorities.

In the London Borough of Lewisham, they have consulted with their young people about how the council measure up against the pledges made in the charter and through the feedback received from their young people and care leavers are considering how further they can develop their services for care leavers.

In Hertfordshire Council, they have discussed the charter with their young people and care leavers and this had led to the development of a localised charter with more practical proposals which support the general principles of the charter.

In Hampshire County Council, the charter has helped to reiterate the messages of their local pledge, in a way that concentrates on care leavers and the support they can expect from their corporate parents.

In Derby City Council, care leavers have been made aware of the charter through discussions and consultations at a weekly drop in service. The charter encourages a sense of belonging and personalised support, which is based on a more family based model and has been embedded in staff appraisals along with feedback from young people about the quality of personalised support they receive.

Enquiries

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