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To Ms Alison Stathers-Tracey  
Director of Children's Services  
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

**Follow up visit by National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers.**

Dear Alison

Thank you for hosting my follow up visit on 10<sup>th</sup> May. During the follow up visit I heard about the rapid progress you have made to your offer to care leavers since my two day visit. As stated in the feedback meeting I was very impressed by the leadership and management approach to have a better offer for care leavers across the whole service area. What I also saw and heard was many examples where I felt the service was 'pitching' above 'requires improvement' and that the whole approach and in particular the team approach stood out with workers who were highly responsive to the needs of care leavers. I have therefore made a number of further recommendations that will go some way in strengthening your offer to care leavers. These are my comments on progress and further recommendations:

1. The local authority accepted all of my recommendations and have made huge progress in implementing them.
2. The local authority have strengthened their offer to care leavers – they are pushing the ICB to be more responsive to care leavers, they have a designated nurse for care leavers up to 25yrs, they have 5 ringfenced opportunities in the family business but realise more is needed, they have appointed additional PA's an advanced practitioner and PA apprenticeships which will take time to embed and a new adolescent hub is currently under construction.
3. There is a really strong buy-in from elected members and senior officers within the Corporate Parenting Board and the impact is being seen by them acting a Champions. It would be good to see an advanced personal adviser on the Board.
4. The Board now has a real focus on the issues faced by both children in care and care leavers.
5. Partnership arrangements have improved but this area still requires attention for example:
  - Housing – I would like the LA to consider a review of its JWP as it came across as a statutory offer for example: care leavers get one offer, housing still use B and B, care leavers cant view properties, and it would

be good to see if a standardised housing starter pack which should include carpets and white goods for care leavers(possible use of VOID's monies). It came across that housing don't see themselves as Corporate Parents.

- DWP – changes to the advance payments have been positive. The team still talked about sanctions being applied which needs to be explored further with DWP as this makes care leavers vulnerable.
- Health – this came across as a developing partnership. Having a designated nurse for care leavers up to 25yrs is a good approach. Health again came across as an absent partner and not very joined up resulting in a complex statutory offer to care leavers which is at times failing them.
- Transitions – a stronger buy-in is needed from Adult Services around earlier planning for care leavers and a favoured approach for care leavers below thresholds alongside giving care leavers more than one chance to engage and could an adult worker be based in leaving care.

6. The local offer is good but to further enhance the offer I would like the LA to pull out your guarantees to care leavers so that these can be accessed easily and for PA's to fully understand whats on offer. Within this it would be good to see a discreet offer to care leavers 21yrs to 25yrs for UASC, care leavers entering and leaving custody and for young parents.
7. A review of the leaving care grant entitlements as staff were unsure if it was available to 25yrs. The current approach is that it has to be spent by the age of 21yrs which should be reviewed as it should be available up to 25yrs.
8. Practice across the team is at times inconsistent but this is due in part to the local offer not being owned by all partners.
9. Participation came across as mixed so it would be good to see if a participation lead could be closer aligned to leaving care.

And finally in the meeting with your care leavers they stated that things had certainly changed but there is still more to do. Here are a few comments they stated:

1. Tell us when our PA's are off work.
2. When you get to 21yrs it feels a lot different.
3. More lifestory work.
4. PA's are usually very good.
5. We want to get involved more.
6. Not sure about the local offer as we get told different things.
7. Getting financial support is hard.
8. Why does leaving care grant end at 21yrs.

Overall what I heard and saw is a good offer to care leavers and I look forward to seeing you again in the future

*M. Riddell MBE*

Mark Riddell MBE

National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers