

# Appendix A: Barnet Care Leavers' Strategy 2017-20

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Barnet, we want the same things for our care leavers as any good parent would want for their child. We want our care leavers to be resilient, and by that we mean healthy, happy and feel valued. We want them to grow into well-adjusted individuals who will experience positive relationships, be responsible citizens, fulfil their goals and ambitions, and ultimately provide good parenting to their own children. Barnet has high aspirations for young people who have left our corporate care and want them to be able to confidently say phrase like:

*I have a place at uni*

*I am happy with my relationships*

*I can talk to others about things that frighten or bother me<sup>1</sup>*

We know that each care leaver is an individual with his or her own strengths, interests and background. Care leavers in Barnet, and across the country, go on to achieve amazing things and inspire others.

However, when researchers look at care leavers as a group, they have found that care leavers experience more difficulties in life than other young people. These include getting a job, staying well mentally and having good accommodation.

In line with our Family Friendly Barnet approach, we want care leavers to be able to bounce back from life's challenges and embrace new opportunities. Our vision is for a society where care leavers have the same life chances and ambitions as other young people.

One of the ways in which we can achieve this is through a strategy. A strategy is a way of partners in Barnet coming together to work towards the same, agreed priorities for Barnet's care leavers. These priorities are based on evidence about what will make the biggest difference to the lives of Barnet care leavers.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

### Care Leavers

A care leaver is a young person who is 25 years old or younger and was in the local authority's care for at least 13 weeks after the age of 14 and who was looked after by the Local Authority at school leaving age or after that age. They have since left the local authority's care and are entitled to a leaving care services

Local authorities are required by law to support care leavers until they are 21 years old (or 25 in some cases).

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<sup>1</sup> Modelled on Grotberg, E: 'A guide to promoting resilience in Children: strengthening the human spirit' (1995) See Annex C: What makes a resilient care leaver? for more local examples.

## Care Leaving Services

Care leaving services are resources, drop-ins and other forms of support provided to care leavers. They are delivered by Barnet's Onwards and Upwards team and other organisations in order to support care leavers in areas of their lives including work, study and training; accommodation and health.

### 3. WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT CARE LEAVERS NATIONALLY?

Over 10,000 young people aged 16 or over leave local authority care each year. 58% are male and 48% are female.

The government's wants to give care leavers the same care and support that their peers would expect from a reasonable parent, such as help finding a job or setting up home. The July 2016 'Keep on Caring'<sup>2</sup> cross-government strategy outlines the future of care leaving services. It invites councils to be more creative about how they meet care leavers' needs.

Research shows that care leavers working, studying or in training are more likely to have good mental health. However, only 60% of 19-year old care leavers nationally fall into this category. Care leavers are five times less likely than their peers to attend university. They are eight times less likely to be apprentices than the wider population.

Good housing can help care leavers across a range of areas, including mental health and education. One in three young people with care backgrounds experience homelessness at some stage. Nationally, 79% of care leavers live in accommodation defined as suitable. Research highlights the importance of care leavers having choice about where they live.

Care leavers have often suffered abuse and neglect during childhood, which is known to have a significant impact during adulthood. Around half of care leavers have a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire score (which measures mental wellbeing in young people) that is cause for concern, which means that they are more likely to develop poor mental health as an adult.

Budgeting is particularly difficult for young people living alone after leaving care. Navigating the benefits and council tax systems also brings challenges.

64% of care leaving services nationally are judged to be inadequate, or requiring improvement by the Ofsted inspection body. Generally, the more a council resources its care leaving services, the more supported care leavers feel. Care leavers say that they want to be valued by their local authorities as experts on the care system.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid

To find out more about care leavers nationally, please take a look at Appendix B (Needs Analysis).

#### 4. WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT CARE LEAVERS IN BARNET?

In Barnet, there are 195 young people eligible for care leaving services (Sept 2016).

65% are male, which means that males are overrepresented in the care leaving population. Just over 1 in 10 has a learning disability. 7% are parents. 22% are Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers.

When it comes to education, 63% of Barnet's care leavers work, study or are in training. 9% of Barnet's care leavers attend university and 2% are completing apprenticeships. Care leavers are ambitious for themselves and tell us that they see working or studying as the biggest opportunity for their future.

In 5 years I want to:

- Be working as a carpet fitter
- Have finished my BA in music and have opened my first music studio
- Be a vet
- Work in a well-paid trade
- Be working full-time with my own place

(5 Barnet care leavers)

Being able to live independently, manage my bills and prove I can do it presents the biggest opportunity for me

(Barnet Care Leaver)

Nearly two-thirds of Barnet's care leavers live within the borough. Of the third that do not, the majority live within the London area. 96% of our care leavers are in suitable accommodation. 15% live with their foster carers post-18 as part of the 'Staying Put' arrangement.

Nearly 2 in 5 care leavers in Barnet have mental health issues. These can be significant or diagnosed (16% of the cohort) or poor mental health that is undiagnosed (23% of the cohort).

Accessing adult mental health is the first step, then I can think about working  
(Barnet care leaver)

To find out more about care leavers in Barnet, take a look at Appendix B (Needs Analysis).

#### 5. CORPORATE PARENTING

Corporate parenting involves the whole of the local authority. It means that the local authority, including its elected Members, has special responsibilities towards children in care and care leavers.

Corporate parenting also involves working effectively with our partners, like health, education and the police, to make a difference to many areas of a care leavers' life.

In Barnet, there is a Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel, chaired by the lead member for children's services. It helps to ensure that the council delivers on our priorities and corporate parenting duties. There is a Barnet Pledge for children in

care and care leavers, setting out what they can expect from Barnet as a corporate parent. In early 2017 Barnet was named as a UNICEF child rights partner, and the priorities identified as part of this initiative will strengthen the care leavers' strategy.

## 6. OUR PRINCIPLES

The following principles guide Barnet, as corporate parents, in helping care leavers build resilience and do well for themselves.

We will:

- Build resilience in our care leavers, and put them at the heart of our work
- Encourage them to have hopes for the future and continue to study, work or train to secure their preferred future
- Listen to what care leavers want when it comes to placements, helping them to remain in their communities, keep their networks of friends and families and minimise disruption to their lives as they transfer from care
- Support them to be healthy in body and mind
- Help them make their views known and show how this influences both their individual plans and shapes services that they receive

In doing this, Barnet will work together with different organisations, to give care leavers the services and support they need to build resilience. Care leavers can expect Barnet to listen to them and be open and honest. We will celebrate the different backgrounds of our care leavers.

## 7. KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Our mission is to help care leavers build resilience and enjoy equal life opportunities to their peers. Barnet wants to support care leavers at an important time in their lives.

Priority 1: We will support you to **work, study and train**

- We will increase the number of care leavers going to university, in order to close the gap with their peers (1A<sup>3</sup>)
- We will support more care leavers to complete high-quality apprenticeships, as these should be available to all care leavers who want to lay the foundations for their future career (1B)
- We will make sure that, regardless of whether a care leaver was in foster care, residential care, or another type of care, they participate in work, study or training (1C)

Priority 2: We will help you find **accommodation** that is suitable and right for you

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<sup>3</sup> This reference refers to the Action Plan

- We will offer a greater number of semi-independent placements and improve care leavers' access to them (2A)
- We will help more care leavers to 'Stay Put' with their foster carers once they turn 18, because it can be an excellent option at a time of change (2B)
- We will help young people in residential care to 'Stay Close' to their residential home once they turn 18, if that is what they wish (2C)
- We will give care leavers clarity around the housing offer and work with Barnet Homes and housing associations to improve access to service (pathways), increase support and make sure that care leavers are in the right accommodation for them (2D)

Priority 3: We will help you to **be well** in body and in mind

- We will give more support to care leavers who are young parents, so that they can build resilience as a parent and give their child a good start to life (3A)
- We will support care leavers with poor mental health who do not meet thresholds for adult social care to manage their condition in the community (3B)
- For those care leavers who are eligible for adult social care, we will improve access to services (pathways) so that they get what they need to manage their condition (3C)
- We will improve the experience of care leavers with a learning disability or physical disability and support them to achieve better outcomes (3D)

Priority 4: We will help you to **live independently** and manage your finances

- We will make moving from care to leaving care an easier experience (4A)
- We will help care leavers to better manage their finances (4B)
- We will make sure that finances are fair and accessible for care leavers(4C)

Priority 5: We will support you to **make your voice heard**, help you to **access services** and we will **build your resilience**

- We will help care leavers take part in developing and shaping care leaving services that work for them – and make a difference to their lives (5A)
- We will help elected Members to understand and undertake their corporate parenting responsibilities (5B)
- We will raise the profile of care leavers across Family Services, the wider council and local organisations, so that we are working together to increase opportunities and remove barriers for care leavers (5C)
- We will support frontline practitioners to build on care leavers' strengths and manage risk, using the Family Services resilience model (5D)
- We will develop and publish a local offer for our care leavers, so that they know what services are available and how to access them (5E)

- We will explore ways to formally document work with care leavers who have left the service (5F)
- We will make our services more responsive to care leavers, so that they know how to access them in ways and at times that are convenient to them (5G)
- We will have a defined offer for care leavers who are (former) Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (5H)