

care leaver local offer

26th February 2021

Dear Review

The Children & Social Work Act 2017 introduced a new duty on local authorities, to provide Personal Adviser (PA) support to all care leavers up to age 25, if they want this support. However, despite this extension current national data only measures outcomes for 19, 20 and 21 year old care leavers and therefore does not focus on the full cohort of care leavers that local authority leaving care services work with.

As a result we do not have the complete picture of how many care leavers are currently supported by local authorities. We do not know how older care leavers (aged over 21) are faring in terms of education and housing. For example, research evidence suggests that by age 23 around 12% of care leavers are in Higher education (in contrast to 6% recorded at age 19-21).

Overall, this absence of statistics makes it difficult for services for care leavers to be managed in a strategic way; planners at national and local levels simply do not have an overview of what is being provided and for whom. As a result it is difficult to evaluate the impact of the PA to 25 policy.

To address the above, I've made a start by creating the first website detailing every local offer in England. This is free of charge for our community. It has 330 councils and over time will be a huge resource for care leavers, local authorities and those that work in the sector.

However we require joint working and I therefore request as a starting point to extend the current data requirements to all care leavers up to their 25th birthday. Local Authorities already have this information. The name of the form that they complete each year is SSDA903.

I've already check with various experts in this field including those that complete the form. The data is held by the local authorities already so would not be much of an inconvenience.

However in addition, I would call for a review of the current statistical information collected on children in care and care leavers, the care review as part of its remit could assess the adequacy of current data reporting requirements, determining what the gaps are and consider requesting additional information from local authorities. For example:

- what areas of support are care leavers aged 21 or over requiring advice and assistance with (pathway plan domains could be used as categories)
- currently it is not recorded whether a child in care or care leaver is 'disabled' - this is a long standing gap

Hopefully you will support this. I look forward to your response at your earliest.

Kind regards
Terry Galloway
Care Local Offer

Dr. Claire Baker
Research and Policy Consultant (Children & Young people's services)