

Notice of Motion (as amended) – Support for West Sussex Care Leavers

The Care Leavers service in West Sussex supports young people to exit care successfully as they move towards independence, and operates under a clear legislative framework provided by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

The most recent Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee held on the 13th September 2023, included a paper on 'Leaving Care in West Sussex' which was in direct response to the recent comments in the full inspection by Ofsted back in March 2023 with respect to meeting the needs of care leavers.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduces corporate parenting principles which comprise seven needs that local authorities in England must have regard to. The West Sussex Care Leavers service and increasingly their partners, operate in line with these principles which centre around the promotion of physical and mental health and wellbeing of those children and young people; to encourage those children and young people to express their views and to take those views into account; to help children and young people gain access to and make the best use of services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners; to promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for those children and young people; for those children and young people to be safe and have stability in their homes, relationships and in education or work, and ultimately to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Whilst it is accepted that corporate parenting is not the statutory responsibility of the District Council, as District Councillors we should acknowledge that we are all corporate parents, particularly given that the West Sussex House Project Memorandum of Understanding was recently signed by all seven of the District and Boroughs Council partners, endorsing this view.

But as Adur District Councillors, we could go further and support the aspirations of the West Sussex Care Leaver service through initiatives such as;

- Providing a shop front facing community base for our Care Leavers – providing a communal space to meet, laundry facility, life skills, Wi-Fi and a place to meet Leaving Care Personal Advisors.
- An apprenticeship or work-based opportunity provided by the District and Borough for any Care Leaver who wanted to explore this as an alternative Employment Education and Training option.
- Ensure that all Council front line services are known by care leavers, are accessible and sensitised to the needs of care leavers, recognising the West Sussex County Council decision to treat care experience as if it were a protected characteristic.

This Council therefore calls upon the Leader to instruct officers to explore these initiatives, by engaging directly with the West Sussex County Council, to proactively help the service move towards Good and onto Outstanding status through the implementation of these initiatives for the benefit of our young people leaving care.

Proposer - Cllr Andy McGregor

Secunder - Cllr Kevin Boram