

## **Draft policy for facilitating children in care's attendance of university and higher education**

### **Aims**

Southwark is seeking to support as many care leavers as possible to successfully attend university and Higher Education without incurring significant levels of personal debt.

### **Background**

The leaving care legislation places a clear duty upon local authorities to support and promote care leavers being in education employment and training. The Adolescent and Aftercare service will be identifying a single personal advisor to support all Young People attending University or Higher Education. Through the allocation of a personal advisor, advice and practical support can be provided until they reach the age of 21 or 24 if in further education.

The process for identifying a university place, finding accommodation, making applications for various financial support packages including course fees is a complex one which may prove daunting to care leavers.

Whilst Southwark provides a diverse range of practical and financial support for care leavers attending university it has been recognised that this is not universally understood by all staff and care leavers.

### **Process**

In partnership with Speakerbox, the CLA Service have undertaken a review of its current service alongside an examination of support provided by other London boroughs.

Following the review an agreed strategy was developed.

### **Key Components**

- Establishment of a specialist personal advisor within the Adolescent and Aftercare Service who will be allocated to all care leavers attending university and higher education to improve the consistency and quality of advice, guidance and support. This worker will ensure each persons pathway plan takes full account of all the young adults needs.
- Acknowledge that each care leaver's personal circumstances and requirements will be different necessitating a strategy which is flexible and dynamic to meet individual need.
- The Southwark care support package will be:
  - a. payment of accommodation during holiday periods (or cash equivalent) to a minimum £3,000 per annum
  - b. all traveling costs provided to education venue during term time
  - c. provision of a laptop
  - d. book allowance – no upper limit depending upon course being studied

- e. development of leaflet for care leavers outlining support services available
- f. full funding of necessary field trips
- g. allocation of a specialist personal advisor
- h. support in applying for government grants and loans to meet living costs during term time
- i. additional payments if care leaver experiences significant difficulty
- j. That all Young People who attend University will have their own tenancy made available to them via the Southwark Housing Protocol, were upon they will travel each day to their London university.

For Young People attending Universities further afield they will either have the option of there own Southwark Tenancy which they can use during holiday periods or alternately have their own local accommodation. If they prefer this, the choice is the Young Person.

This has been discussed and agreed with Speakerbox and will be included in a leaflet.

### **Unaccompanied Minors**

Unaccompanied minors who have their status resolved are eligible for the full range of supports outlined above. Current Home Office practice results in unaccompanied minors status not being considered fully until they become 18. Whilst their case is being considered the unaccompanied minor is unable to access any housing, grants or loans. CLA Services therefore, advocate the use of a gap year whilst this is resolved. If the unaccompanied minor care leaver obtains leave to remain the children Looked-After Service will support the unaccompanied minor care leaver to attend university or further education from the age of 19 to 22.

### **Implementation**

This strategy will be implemented with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008, following approval by Corporate Parenting Committee on the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2008