

Southwark's Care Leavers' Covenant

Outline and launch plans

In July 2016, the Government published 'Keep on Caring' to support young people from care to independence. A key policy commitment in the paper is a strategic pledge to introduce a Care Leaver Covenant.

All young people who leave care at 16, 17 or 18 are statutorily provided with some support from the local authority in the region in which they live in the form of a Local Offer. This should include help in the transition to living independently; support with finding accommodation and with any costs of participating in education, training and employment.

However, in order to provide a greater level of support at this crucial stage during the transition of care leavers to adulthood, wider society also needs to play a part, which is where the Care Leaver Covenant comes in.

This paper sets out Southwark's approach to the Care Leaver Covenant, and the council's plans to launch it.

Southwark's Care Leaver Covenant

Care Leaver Covenants are an opportunity for local organisations to set out what they can and will do to support care leavers in their local area. This is in addition to the advice and support offered by the council, making available a different type of support and expertise from that statutorily provided by local authorities. Drawing on the resourcefulness and imagination of their staff and their working environment, organisations have the potential to offer new perspectives and professional expertise. These can offer opportunities and a new way of thinking to aid the care leavers in moving forward successfully to the next phase of their lives.. Whilst the 'offer' will be specific to each organisation, we expect that the majority of Southwark's organisations could offer something related to skills and employment, as well as softer support such as mentoring.

What are the needs of our care leavers that we think a Covenant can help address?

- Lack of confidence
- No experience of work/the workplace
- Lack of inspiring role models who have overcome diversity
- Practical help with life skills (bills, navigating the system, maintaining a home)

Who do we think can help address these?

- Big businesses
- SMEs
- Voluntary and community sector organisations
- FE and HE establishments

What are the ways in which they can help?

- Work experience, shadowing and internships
- Apprenticeships and traineeships
- Mentoring, guidance and coaching
- Opportunities to broaden horizons like discounted access to sport, leisure or cultural activities
- Discounted goods and services
- Educational and training opportunities to open up future employment opportunities

What support will the council offer businesses and staff if they sign up to the Covenant?

- Signposting to information and guidance
- Helping organisations to connect with care leavers
- Events to network and compare offers with other organisations
- Support to recruit care leavers through Southwark Works

Launch

We plan to launch the Covenant at a local organisation that is leading the way with developing its own Care Covenant offer. Kings College London, based in Southwark has already developed its offer and we believe they will be keen to promote this by hosting Southwark's launch.

To avoid the Easter holidays we propose a early May launch at Kings College. Lead members will explain the importance of the Care Covenant, and encourage local organisations to sign up, with Kings providing the 'case study' of why they have signed up, and what they believe the benefits will be for their organisation and student community.

Care leavers will be invited and if they are comfortable speaking, we could ask some young people to speak about why this matters to them, and what they are hoping to see from a covenant.

We will invite other local organisations to come along and hear more (primarily through the Southwark Business Forum, but also Community Southwark and our SME networks) and we will use the launch as a media opportunity to further promote the covenant locally, and demonstrate that Southwark is leading the way in supporting its care leavers to succeed in life.