



Supporting Care Leavers into Employment

Introduction

1. It is established that young people leaving care to begin an independent life are amongst the most vulnerable groups in society. They are more likely to face poverty and lower earnings, higher rates of unemployment, encounter difficulties securing housing and face homelessness, and face greater physical and mental health issues. Recent figures from the Department of Education (2019) show that 38% of those who leave care aged 19 to 21 are not in education, employment, or training compared with under 12% of all young people.
2. Research has identified numerous contributory factors for the poor experience care-experiences individuals have in education and in finding employment, including mental health, learning and behaviour problems, trauma, attachment issues, stigma, disruption in living placements and schools, poverty, chaotic living arrangements, and low expectations from social workers, teachers, and carers.
3. Further research has shown that these disadvantages can persist into middle age for many care leavers if they cannot obtain secure employment. The role of secure employment can be critically important in a care leavers transition to social and economic independence because work is associated with stability and social integration. Care leavers are more likely to face difficulties securing employment and often work in unskilled and precarious jobs, with lower earnings and fragmented and weak support networks.
4. For many care leavers, the prospect of getting a job, or even applying for one, can be overwhelming without the support networks in place that many young people can take for granted. There are many barriers to care leavers joining the secure employment market, such as navigating an application process and attending an interview, having the right clothing, inability to travel to less accessible workplaces, and integration into the social fabric of a workplace.

Eligibility

5. This policy sets out our two Councils' joint commitment to providing employment opportunities for care leavers who live within the South Hams and West Devon up to the age of 25.
6. It sits alongside other commitments the Councils have made to support our care leavers and to assist employees who are themselves foster parents or have adopted children from the care system or are applying to do so.

Working with Partner Organisations

7. We will work constructively with partner organisation to support care experienced young people in our locality, such as Devon County Council and the Care Leaver Covenant and are committed to extending the network of organisations that provide support and opportunities for care experienced young people.



Our commitment

- ★ The Councils will offer a two-to-four-week work placement with pay to all care experienced young people living in South Hams and West Devon. The offer will be made via the Devon County Council Employment Training and Education Personal Advisors (ETAPA) and via the Care Leaver Covenant. We will work with the young person and their Personal Adviser (PA) to identify a suitable position and will agree reasonable adjustments to remove any barriers to the young person taking up the placement or being able to maximise the opportunity the placement affords, such as assistance with transport, working hours and putting in place an effective support network.
- ★ The Councils will identify apprentice opportunities and ring fence them to be offered, in the first instance, to care experienced young people each year as part of our apprenticeship programme (see HR Apprenticeship Strategy).
- ★ The Councils will nominate a senior officer to act as a mentor for each care experienced young person that takes up the placement opportunity to help them through the period and to provide on-going assistance in securing further employment opportunities, such as help with job applications, producing a curriculum vitae and general advice and support. The senior officer will be nominated from the Line Managers Development Pathway.
- ★ The Councils will guarantee every care experienced young person who lives on our area an interview for a vacancy where they meet the required person specification (or could meet it with support).

8. In addition, the Councils will publish their commitment on the Care Leaver Covenant website and join the employer's accreditation scheme being developed by Devon County Council in association with Exeter College.