

## Care Leavers Forum

Did you know that there is a group that meets regularly of older young people who are looked after or who have left care? The group have been successful in influencing policy, procedure and practice for care leavers in Cumbria and are actively working to make sure that the experience of being in care continues to improve for all. For more information and to get involved with events in your area contact your area co-ordinator:

- **Rebecca Barnes**  
Allerdale & Copeland:  
[rebecca.barnes@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:rebecca.barnes@cumbria.gov.uk)  
07770938021
- **Joanne Gawne**  
Barrow & South Lakeland:  
[joanne.gawne@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:joanne.gawne@cumbria.gov.uk) 07967  
469996
- **Liz Wright**  
Carlisle & Eden:  
[liz.wright@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:liz.wright@cumbria.gov.uk)  
07825340475

### Social Media

The Care Leavers Forum has a Facebook facebook group which you can join. It's a closed group so they have to accept your request to join but people outside the group cannot see information posted within it.

### Why not have a look?

As a result of feedback from young people about smart budgeting and high cost mobile calls we are currently starting to roll out WhatsApp to personal advisors and Children's Rights officers work phones. This doesn't mean they are always available but does mean you can make calls and send messages (for free via the internet) if that is easier for you.



## Independent Advice

**Did you know that if you need advice independent of Children's services you can contact NYAS to help?**

Every year we receive thousands of contacts through our helpline. If you are worried about what is happening to you and you want something to start, to change or to stop, you can contact us in a variety of ways. You don't have to wait for anyone to do this for you.

Freephone: **0808 808 1001** Email: [help@nyas.net](mailto:help@nyas.net)



## Corporate Parenting Board

Cumbria has a Corporate Parenting Board which is made up of elected members (Councillors) from across the county. It is chaired by Anne Burns who many of you will have met over the years. The board meets to ensure that services to children looked after are positive for young people.

Care Leavers have been a big priority for them over the last 6 months.

- They have had in depth look at what education opportunities and support looks like for our young people and some of you provided information about this on the day.
- They have had a focussed meeting about the needs of care leavers overall, what is going well and where there is a need to improve and get ready for changes in policy and procedure.

Care Leavers have an elected member who champions their views within this group. At the moment a new corporate parenting board is being formed as a result of the recent elections. We will soon know who the member for care leavers will be and ensure links are made with the care leaver forum.

The board met with full cabinet in April 2017 and have confirmed their council priorities for the year.

- Developing an improved Care Leavers Offer in partnership with Health, District Council and other services.
- Ensuring that children are only placed at a distance outside Cumbria if absolutely necessary.
- Support the Council to recruit in-house foster carers.
- Ensure the Council's approach to apprenticeships including work with the LEP targets children in care and care leavers.
- Strengthen the role of the frontline councillor and local committees to champion the needs of all children in care and care leavers.

## Cumbrian care leavers update



**Hello...** For those of you who do not already know me, my name is Liz Curtis and I am the Senior Manager for Children Looked after provider services within Cumbria County Council. This means I work with Fostering, Adoption, Residential and edge of Care Services.

I also have the pleasure of being the lead manager for Care leavers within the service. Improving services and outcomes for those of you who are leaving or have left care is something I am really passionate about so do get in touch if you have ideas you want to discuss. You are the experts on how we improve care leaver services in Cumbria.

You will of course have your own personal advisor and should also have detail of who to contact if they are not available.

In each area of Cumbria there is also a Service Manager who is the main link to improvements for care leavers in your area.

### District Service Manager Care Leaver Leads

- **Carlisle and Eden:**  
Liz McKie [liz.mckie@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:liz.mckie@cumbria.gov.uk)
- **Allerdale and Copeland:**  
Jan Hendren [jan.hendren@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:jan.hendren@cumbria.gov.uk)
- **Barrow and South Lakeland:**  
Keeley Slack [keeley.slack@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:keeley.slack@cumbria.gov.uk)

I have put this document together to let you know some of the things that are happening at the moment for care leavers and keep you in the loop. Hope you find it helpful, have a great summer. ●

Coming soon

## Guaranteed Interview Scheme!

If you are looking for a job or your next career move then why not check out what opportunities Cumbria County Council have to offer! Our employees are really important to us and we have some great career opportunities with an excellent benefits package. We offer a large variety of roles where the work you do can really make a difference to the people and communities within Cumbria.

If this sounds like something you would be interested in you will be pleased to know that In the coming weeks we will be introducing a guaranteed interview scheme for care leavers. Anyone under 24 who is in care or a care leaver will get a guaranteed interview for the role they are applying for as long as they meet the minimum essential criteria for the role.

Keep an eye out for more information on our careers website at [cumbria.gov.uk/jobsandcareers](http://cumbria.gov.uk/jobsandcareers) and to keep up to date with our latest job opportunities, like us on Facebook [@cumbriaccjobs](https://www.facebook.com/cumbriaccjobs) and sign up for our job alerts. ●

## New laws about leaving care

The Government is really interested in care leavers, which is great. They want to improve outcomes and give those who have had experience of care the best start into adult life. New laws in the Children and Social work Bill include specific requirements about an improved offer to care leavers which includes amongst other things:

- Extending the offer of a personal advisor through to age 25 for all. Currently this is just for those in education and training.
- Publication of a 'local offer' so that all young people are aware of the services available to them as a care leaver in their area.

We are waiting for the Government guidance and will then let you know what that means for you as soon as we can. ●

## Do you know? ...your financial entitlements?

The most up to date copy is attached. Your personal advisor knows this information well and will be working with you to ensure we do all we can to meet the needs set out in your pathway plan to help you move to independence successfully.





### Your Feedback is important

If you have positive feedback about your worker or the service you have received, then let us know as we want to make sure we do more of the good stuff and less of the bad stuff. That positive feedback is recognised.

You can contact us via your personal advisor or email directly to [complaints@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@cumbria.gov.uk)

If you need to ask us to improve the way we do something for you then we really want to know that too.

If you need to make a complaint then you can access information online and I have attached the leaflet to this letter to ensure you have clear information about this. Or you can email the team at [complaints@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@cumbria.gov.uk)

### How we use your feedback

Via the Care Leavers Forum we asked care leavers recently about their experience of leaving care and this is what you said:



Best thing about being a care leaver?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More Freedom</li> <li>• Independence</li> <li>• More responsibility to make decisions for yourself</li> <li>• A relief</li> </ul>
Worst thing about being a care leaver?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistent information (being told different things by different people)</li> <li>• Big expectations from workers in a short amount of time</li> <li>• Feel lonely sometimes</li> <li>• Losing support</li> <li>• Feels like leaving your family</li> </ul>
Things you think the local authority should change for care leavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More options eg housing/accommodation/education</li> <li>• More awareness on what happens next eg after accommodation, contact with family etc</li> <li>• More information</li> <li>• Making sure Pathways worker visits more and regularly</li> <li>• Housing options/accommodation options</li> </ul>
Three things could have prepared you for independence?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More information and the right information at the right time</li> <li>• More intensive support for a short period</li> <li>• More notice when it comes to moving</li> <li>• Basic budgeting skills: How to pay bills, realistic financial awareness eg this is how much money you will have after bills etc to yourself each week</li> <li>• Being given time to do things for yourself whilst still learning</li> <li>• Ensuring that you had all the equipment that you needed</li> </ul>
Advice they would give other care leavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not be afraid</li> <li>• Be assured that there is always support</li> <li>• Just ask for support/advice when you need or want it</li> <li>• Take everything you are offered</li> <li>• Spend some time planning</li> <li>• Don't be in a rush</li> <li>• Take your time</li> </ul>

We have taken this feedback and are using it within our planning across the county to listen to what you have said and shape our work around this.

For example:

- We have been focusing on good and regular visiting which is improving.
- We are working with the housing departments and providers on accommodation options.
- We are working to improve our approach to independence skills and budgeting to ensure that everyone gets a consistent service and that planning starts early on this.
- We are also developing an annual survey so we can seek your views on how we keep improving.
- The care leavers forum also noted that the move from children's to adult focussed health and wellbeing services is really difficult. They have chosen it as a theme for their work this year and we are supporting via mental health first aid training for all personal advisors and work with other agencies to improve the care leaver offer and experience.

If you have further feedback you want to give us, and ideas on what is needed do get involved and let us know.



## Cumbria County Council's Promise to Care Leavers

### We promise:



**P**assion  
**R**espect  
**O**ptimism  
**M**ove  
**I**nspire  
**S**upport  
**E**mpathise

#### ...to believe in you

- We believe in you and we will help you believe in yourself.
- We have faith in your unique potential and your vision for your future.
- We will seek out opportunities for you to pursue your goals.
- We will celebrate your achievements.

#### ...to respect and recognise who you are

- We will support you to be you.
- We will listen and encourage you to grow as an individual.
- We recognise you as a valued and respected member of your community.
- We will advise and guide you through your important relationships.

#### ...to inform you

- We will give you information about your entitlements and our services, through care into adulthood.
- We will keep information up to date and accurate.
- We will make sure you know where to get information while you are in care and when you have left care.
- When you leave care, we will support you to access the information we have about you.

#### ...to actively listen to you

- We will strive to understand your point of view.
- We will place you at the heart of all decisions about you.
- We will be open and honest about our thoughts and actions.
- If you're not happy with the service we provide, we'll show you how to complain.

#### ...to support you

- We will do everything we can to provide practical, emotional and financial support for you.
- If necessary, we will support you to access additional services.
- We will make sure you get the right support at each stage of your life.
- We recognise that you will learn, grow, and change from your experiences.
- We will be there to support you through the challenges of your life, no matter how many times you come back.

#### ...to find you a home

- We will work with you to prepare you for your move into independent living when you are ready.
- We will help you think about the choices available and to find the right home for you.
- We will do everything we can to ensure you are happy and feel safe when you move to independent living.
- If your situation changes we will continue to support you.
- We will work proactively with other agencies to help you keep your home.

#### ...to be there for you

- We will support you throughout your life when dealing with other agencies, for example – housing, welfare, education, employment and health.
- We will treat you with courtesy and dignity when you return to us for advice or support.
- We will help you steer your life in whatever direction you want.
- We have a commitment to support you throughout your life.



We trust you, respect you, and care about you.