

Press release: New schemes to help care leavers access education and employment

New projects have launched to improve the education and training of young people leaving care, helping them make the transition into independent life.

Care leavers will benefit from a £5 million investment in programmes that deliver specialist, bespoke support through personal advisers and transition coaches. The pilot schemes are designed to develop care leavers' confidence, communications and skills needed to enter sustained education, employment and training.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

Leaving care can be a daunting time for many young people, who often face the challenges of growing up without the support network others might take for granted.

We all share a responsibility to act and these new projects are focussed on improving the lives of those young adults who have had difficult starts in life.

That is why these pilots in Bristol, Lewisham and Sheffield are so vital in helping ease the transition from care to independence, so they are not facing these milestones alone. Where you start out in life should not determine your destination, so I hope that through this work care leavers get the tools they need to get into training, education or employment.

The £5 million is being used to fund the first ever Social Impact Bonds aimed at preventing care leavers being out of work and training – which have previously been used to tackle problems including homelessness and long-term health issues.

The news comes as the latest data on care leavers aged 19-21 show that 39 per cent of care leavers are NEET, compared to 13 per cent of 19-21 year olds in the general population.

Sheffield City Council Councillor Jackie Drayton, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families said:

We want to ensure that our Care Leavers get every help and support they can to access education, training or employment. I'm pleased that Project Apollo will enable the Council's Leaving Care Service to work with Sheffield Futures to give our care leavers every

opportunity to achieve their full potential and progress successfully in the future.

Lewisham Councillor Chris Barnham, Cabinet Member for School Performance and Children's Services, said:

In Lewisham, we give a high priority to helping our care leavers into sustained work, training and education. We are pleased to be able to work with Depaul UK on the i-Aspire programme, which offers a creative and long-term approach, with the opportunity for care leavers to receive support for up to four years. This will ensure that young people are able to build trusting and supportive relationships with staff, with time and space to be able to explore and overcome any barriers to their employment, training and education aspirations.

Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol, said:

Young people leaving care face a number of challenges that threaten their future and can hold them back from fulfilling their potential. One of the most important roles every council plays is providing that support, we call it being a corporate parent, but through this programme we're demonstrating that it's not just the council's role, it's one for the entire city.

By working together with our partners in 1625 Independent People and engaging with businesses across sectors we've developed opportunities that have benefitted over 200 care leavers. The continuing success of Reboot West helps to ensure diversity in the local talent pool and demonstrates that when we work together as a city we have the ability to ease the challenges young people face when leaving care.

The Social Impact Bonds bring together the public, private and voluntary sectors to solve these challenges, with care leavers in the three regions being offered:

- Sheffield: Specialist support will be provided through transition coaches working alongside Personal Advisers. The support package will involve support with speech, language and communication needs.
- Bristol: The programme to help 200 care leavers will test a new approach using Acceptance & Commitment Theory (ACT) to develop care leavers' values, aspirations and motivation to succeed. A new team of EET workers will build relationships with care leavers, employers and training providers.

- Lewisham: The project will produce a local employment toolkit, develop the Young Minds resilience framework and deliver financial resilience training through The Money House and resolution training.

Social Impact Bonds work through funding from social investors who pay for the delivery of the services throughout the project, and are then paid a return based upon the results. Those investing in these programmes will be paid depending on the number of care leavers that achieve employment, education or training outcomes over a four year period.