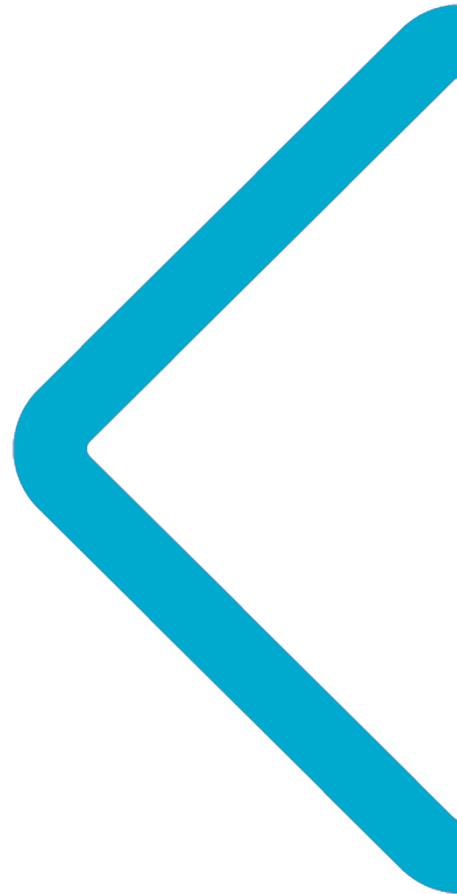


NHS Universal Family (Care Leaver Covenant) Programme

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NHS Universal Family (Care Leavers Covenant) Programme

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 It is well recognised that care experienced individuals often have far poorer outcomes than their non-care experienced peers.
- 1.2 The Care Leaver Covenant is a promise made by the private, public and voluntary sectors to provide support for care experienced young people aged 16-25 to help them to live independently.
- 1.3 On 27 October 2022 NHS Chief Executive Amanda Pritchard made a commitment to supporting care experienced young people announcing that NHSE would be signing the Care Leavers Covenant on behalf of all NHS organisations.
- 1.4 On 6 December 2022 a letter was shared with Integrated Care Board (ICB) Chief People Officers, Regional Workforce and Operational Development Directors, looking to identify 10 ICB pathfinders to join NHSE on the start of the journey to introduce the NHS Universal Family (Care Leavers Covenant) Programme. Designated Nurses for Children in Care were asked to submit an expression of interest in becoming one of the pathfinder organisations but unfortunately due to the tight turnaround the deadline for submission had passed.
- 1.5 The selected 10 ICB pathfinders are to employ 250 care experienced young people in total by the end of the 2023-24 financial year. The programme will then be widened to all 42 ICBs to meet a target of 500 care leavers being employed in 2024-25 and then move to an annual target of 1000 employment opportunities being provided for care experienced young people in 2025-26.
- 1.6 ICBs and NHS Trusts do not have to wait for the national roll out of the NHS Universal Family (Care Leavers Covenant) Programme. A paper was approved by the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Executive Board in January 2023, that agreed to the progression of the NHS Universal Family (Care Leavers Covenant) Programme in 2023-24 although NHS Cheshire and Merseyside is not a pathfinder ICB.
- 1.7 This report provides an update on the progress so far and identifies the next steps to be taken.

2. Introduction / Background

- 2.1 In the UK, on average young people now live in their family home until the age of 23. Yet, when it comes to the highly vulnerable in our society – those who have been in foster care or a children's home, the expectation is that young people start to live independently at 18, or in some cases even younger. Sadly, we know that care

experienced young people often have far poorer outcomes than their peers. By the time they reach 19-21 years old, 4 in 10 are not in education, employment or training. Many suffer with poor physical and mental health and are at even greater risk of suicide than their non-care experienced peers.

2.2 In July 2016, the Government published a major policy document '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. The Covenant is a promise made by the private, public and voluntary sectors to provide support for care leavers aged 16-25 to help them to live independently. The aim of the Care Leaver Covenant, to which organisations commit, is to provide additional support for those leaving care; 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.

2.3 The Care Leaver Covenant is funded by the Department for Education and delivered by Spectra. Spectra are a social impact company and were appointed, in 2018, as the national delivery partner for the Care Leaver Covenant. They design and deliver social impact and inclusion programmes for governments and organisations across sectors. Over 330 organisations, across all sectors and industries, have 'signed' the Covenant and are providing tangible offers and opportunities to care experienced young people in England.

2.4 On 27 October 2022 NHS Chief Executive Amanda Pritchard made a commitment to supporting care experienced young people announcing that NHSE would be signing the Care Leavers Covenant on behalf of all NHS organisations. The concept of the NHS Universal Family is at the heart of the Care Leaver Covenant and the NHS is committed to improving outcomes for care experienced individuals, whilst also harnessing the talent that lies in the care leaver community to help the NHS better serve our patients and our communities. The NHS also recognises that it has something to offer our care experienced young people - the opportunity to have a fulfilling career in the NHS.

2.5 The NHS Universal Family (Care Leavers Covenant) Programme aims to:

- Make a firm and visible commitment to supporting care experienced young people in our NHS Family.
- Ensure 250 care experienced young people, access employment, education and training opportunities in service by 2024.
- Establish and implement the NHS Care Leavers internship scheme in partnership with Covenant.

- Work with Covenant to develop a 'Care Leaver's Offer' in 10 pilot Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) supported centrally for ICBs to take forward the covenant in their communities.
- Ensure strong advocacy from National, ICB and Provider leadership community, led by Thomas Simons, Chief HR & OD Officer and Deputy National Director of People.

2.6 On 6 December 2022 a letter was shared with ICB Chief People Officers, Regional Workforce and Operational Development Directors, looking to identify 10 ICB pathfinders to join NHSE on the start of the journey to introduce the NHS Universal Family (Care Leavers Covenant) Programme. NHSE indicated that they would provide £25,000 to support each successful pathfinder site. The deadline for expressions of interest in becoming a pathfinder ICB was 16 December 2022.

2.7 The selected 10 ICB pathfinders are to employ 250 care experienced young people in total by the end of the 2023-24 financial year. The programme will then be widened to all 42 ICBs to meet a target of 500 care leavers being employed in 2024-25 and then move to an annual target of 1000 employment opportunities being provided for care experienced young people in 2025-26.

2.8 The NHSE Programme team are working up a draft plan, and but this will be finalised in collaboration with the 10 pathfinder ICBs as part of early steps workshops. A toolkit (or similar) is intended to be co-produced as a specific output of the pathfinders and used as part of the full national roll out.

2.9 ICBs and NHS Trusts do not have to wait for the national roll out of the NHS Universal Family (Care Leavers Covenant) Programme. A paper was approved by the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Executive Board in January 2023, that agreed to the progression of the NHS Universal Family (Care Leavers Covenant) Programme in 2023-24 although NHS Cheshire and Merseyside is not a pathfinder ICB.

3. Progress So Far and Next Steps

3.1 Since the paper was approved, the following progress has been made:

- We have met with Spectra and registered NHS Cheshire and Merseyside's intention
- We have met with the NHSE system resourcing team to discuss NHS Cheshire and Merseyside's intention
- We have/are in the process of ensuring that the 9 place Corporate Parenting Boards are aware of the NHS Universal Family (Care Leavers Covenant) Programme
- We have ensured that the Joint Forward Plan reflects the NHS Universal Family (Care Leavers Covenant) Programme

- We have/are in the process of discussing the inclusion of the NHS Universal Family (Care Leavers Covenant) Programme in the 9 place plans
- We have met with the Associate Director for Organisational Development
- We have made contact with the Associate Directors for Workforce and Inclusion, Workforce and Education Transformation Lead and the Head of Communications
- We have met with the Beyond Programme Leads
- We have developed an initial suite of possible 'offers'
- We are in the process of consulting with care experienced young people across the 9 place areas about what they consider would be helpful to have within the 'offer'
- We have met with Workforce/HR leads to discuss the requirements and how to operationalise the 'offer'

3.2 Next Steps:

- Review feedback from our young people and use this to help inform the final 'offer'
- Ensure that the 9 Directors of Social Care are briefed regarding the final 'offer'
- Ensure that the 9 Corporate Parenting Bords are kept updated on the progress of this programme and the final 'offer'
- Update the Beyond Programme Board
- Inform Spectra of the final 'offer' so that it can be advertised on the webpages
- Ensure that the final 'offer' is widely publicised via internal mechanisms and social media platforms
- Share our learning with the NHSE system resourcing team
- Consider how we encourage provider organisations to commit to the NHS Universal Family (Care Leavers Covenant) Programme

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 It is recommended that all relevant ICS place committee members note the content of this paper and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside's commitment and progress in relation to the NHS Universal Family (Care Leavers Covenant) Programme.

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