

Date: 1 November 2023



Councillor Roger Gough  
Leader of the Council  
c/o Leaders Office  
Sessions House, County Hall  
MAIDSTONE  
ME14 1XQ

Dear Councillor Gough

On 19 October, Canterbury City Council passed a motion at its Full Council meeting which gained overwhelming cross-party support.

That motion required I write to you requesting, in the strongest terms, that you reconsider the decision taken by Kent County Council to remove the provision of the Shared Accommodation Service for care leavers over the age of 18.

This decision was made by the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services on 17 October and is recorded as 23/00083.

It indicated the removal of funding for serviced accommodation of care leavers between the ages of 19 and 21 could be implemented - over a transition period - achieving a predicted annual budget saving of £700,000.

At the moment accommodation is provided by you at Kent County Council to care leavers until the age of 21 within the Shared Accommodation Service.

I am sure you have had similar conversations to that we had at Canterbury on 17 October and, as such, you will know first-hand the concerns Canterbury City Council shares along with other lower-tier councils in the county, which are now facing the consequences of decision 23/00083.

The predicted cost to Canterbury City Council alone of picking up the cost of those leaving care accommodation after 18 could be almost £2.5m per year, every year.

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That is more than **three times** the entire predicted budget saving for KCC.

When you expand these figures to speculate on the project costs to the wider Kent district councils, this decision by Kent County Council is a terrible misuse of Kent council taxpayers' money.

When services can be streamlined, safeguarded and provided at a much better value while providing better outcomes for vulnerable young people within the higher tier authority when compared to any other set of partners, then the services should be retained there.

This possible outcome is unaffordable for Canterbury City Council in terms of its budget.

We are unashamedly worried these proposals will lay a less secure and potentially less local pathway for the young people caught in this set of circumstances through no fault of their own.

If I am plain-speaking, this decision, if implemented, would place the wellbeing of care leavers in the balance.

We are fearful they will end up in unsuitable, unsupervised and, possibly, distant accommodation because of our very limited local temporary accommodation options. The support of the current funded system endeavours to be there to support the turmoil of those years when we leave school and either enter the world of work or further study.

They are the years when many of us can recall the support of our family with words and actions.

It is right that those who have a troubled childhood also have those opportunities to take a step with confidence into the next phase of life, in this case with support and secure, appropriately local accommodation.

Kent County Council is by far the most appropriate and best provider of those opportunities for those young people between 19 and 21 who are leaving care.

Kent County Council should continue to provide the Supported Accommodation Service for care leavers until the age of 21, as it does now.

I hope you will consider not implementing decision 23/00083 and instead continue to provide the vital support for young care leavers as you do now.

Yours sincerely

A small, square image containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is stylized and appears to be 'Alan Baldock'.

Cllr Alan Baldock  
Leader  
Canterbury City Council