The Aspiration Champion Network

Supporting our Children in Care and Care Leavers to Raise their Aspiration Levels

**What is the Aspiration Champion Network?**

As corporate parents Nottingham City Council has a responsibility to support our children in care and care leavers with raising their education and employment aspiration levels – the same way any parent would for their child. We’re developing a bespoke network of ‘Aspiration Champions’ designed to provide this vital support to our most vulnerable children.

****There are many different organisations and individuals who can (and do) support these young people, but through discussions with care leavers themselves it was identified that what may not be as available is the more informal “network” of support that many parents provide their own children with access to work experience, providing general guidance and support, as well as having discussions about opportunities available to them. The aim of this network is to provide that level of support to our children in care and care leavers who may not have access to it anywhere else. The type of support a young person requires will vary from individual to individual but it will likely include providing them with support and guidance with identifying and achieving their next steps towards education, training or employment, offering them a variety of experiences and opportunities to widen their knowledge and horizons, as well as helping them to overcome any barriers they may face in relation to accessing work experience opportunities, training or education.

We are also working with **Barnardo's** and other external organisations within the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) to widen the reach and size of the network. This will not only widen the pool of Champions we have available within the network, but also the variety of knowledge, guidance and experiences we have available for these young people to access. Many of these organisations have networks and links which extend far wider than their own organisations which will be vital when supporting the various number of young people in our city who are care experienced.

### Who do we support?

The network is available to children in care from the age of 14, as they begin to think about their GCSE options, through to care leavers aged 18 – 21, or 25 if they have requested additional support. 

****The Role of an Aspiration Champion

Aspiration Champions are individuals who are willing to offer their time (inside and outside of their contractual hours) to support a young person to widen their horizons and raise their aspiration levels around education and employment opportunities.

This can be through:

* A series of informal chats with the young person
* Putting the young person in touch with appropriate colleagues or contacts
* Arranging work experience opportunities for the young person (once Covid restrictions have eased), either within their own service, through their established networks or via NCC’s Equality and Employability Team

They will build a relationship with the young person, offering guidance and support, and helping them to overcome any barriers they may face.

The key skills and attributes we need from Aspiration Champions are:

* A passion for their own job and sharing that with other people
* An aspirational approach and someone who really likes young people!
* Flexibility, as the needs of young people may not fit into a pre-agreed timetable
* Approachable and understanding about young people and their unique needs

Appropriate training and support will be offered to all Aspiration Champions with regards to supporting a child in care or care leaver. DBS checks will also be mandatory for this role, with the internal team conducting checks for anyone who currently does not have one. Any safeguarding concerns a Champion may have, or any concerns not relating to work experience, employment and training, will always need to be raised with either the Personal Assistant or Social Worker.

Once a successful ‘match’ has been made via the Aspiration Champion [SharePoint](https://nottinghamcc.sharepoint.com/sites/ACN/SitePages/Aspiration-Champion-Matching-Matrix.aspx) site and an initial meeting has taken place where all parties agree to proceed, it is expected that onus would then fall to the Champion to build a relationship and support the young person to achieve their agreed outcomes.

Once all parties feel that the role of the Champion is coming to an ‘end’ and is no longer required, the Champion should provide an update, with the young person, to the PA/Social Worker where achievement of outcomes can be discussed.