

Care leaving strategies



a good practice handbook

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Foreword

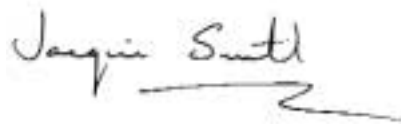
The launch of the Quality Protects programme in 1998 reminded us all that we must act as effective corporate parents for the young people that we look after. We should be as concerned about them as a responsible parent would be for their own children. Ensuring that young people are able to access safe and secure housing is one tangible way of demonstrating this concern. And this care shouldn't stop just because young people leave care.

The Government has provided local authorities with the legal framework and the resources to assist them in meeting their obligations towards care leavers. The Children (Leaving Care) Act came into operation in October 2001, confirming care leavers' legal entitlement to better support. The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to assess the extent of housing need in their community so that they are able to develop a suitable range of accommodation.

These opportunities also present a challenge. Different departments of the local authority have to work together. Councils will also need to be able to form partnerships with the voluntary sector to be effective in achieving their objectives so that young people who have left care are enabled to play their full part in the community. This means more and better help to remain in education, to find training or employment, more help to find a home and access to support if things go wrong.

This handbook was developed following the work of Centrepoint with seven London boroughs under the Careleaving Support Service funded by the DTLR's Rough Sleepers Unit and supported by the Social Services Inspectorate. It is intended for everyone concerned with the welfare of young people leaving care - local councillors, chief officers, managers in local authorities and voluntary services and practitioners. Its aim is simple - to assist local authorities and their partner agencies to improve their services by providing information about initiatives that are working now, preparing young people for leaving care and enabling them to access suitable accommodation and support. The handbook's examples of good practice are drawn from every region in the country and from different types of council.

I commend this handbook, and I hope that you will find it valuable in your work to secure the best future possible for young people leaving care.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Jacqui Smith', with a stylized flourish underneath.

Jacqui Smith MP

Minister of State for Health



Executive summary and checklists

Executive summary and checklists

The chapters of this handbook reflect the key issues to be considered by local authorities when developing integrated strategies to meet the housing and support needs of young people leaving care. The examples highlighted demonstrate that many local authorities are already developing creative services to ensure that young people are given the best chance when leaving care to be confident, positive and successful.

The strategic areas do not stand in isolation. Joined up services must support and anticipate the diverse and changing needs of young people as they move towards independence. The good practice ideas within this handbook should be drawn upon to develop new and existing services to address identified gaps in service provision. Local needs will guide this process, as individual local authorities will need to develop different areas of provision. In order to achieve a wide network of support for young people leaving care it is important that local authority departments work closely together and develop strong partnerships with a range of other statutory and voluntary services.

The following chapter summaries and checklists may help local authorities with the development of leaving care strategies.

1. Creating a strategy

- Core themes are the diversity of the leaving care population, the need to move away from a traditional linear approach to service delivery and the need to extend the role of corporate parenting across the whole local authority and relevant partner agencies.

- Services must be flexible and built upon a thorough assessment of local needs.
- Young people and local service providers should be involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of leaving care services.

Questions for your authority:

- How would you undertake an audit and assessment of need in your area?
- Which agencies would be involved in your agency forum?
- How could you develop flexibility in service delivery?

2. Improving preparation for leaving care

- The preparation process must be understood as preparation for greater independence, as many young people will leave care before they are fully able to live completely independently without the need for any support.
- Preparation work needs to be appropriate to the emotional and developmental stage of the individual young person.
- Preparation work must actively involve the young person, appropriate members of his or her family and relevant local agencies.

Questions for your authority:

- Do you have an agreed framework for delivering and assessing preparation work?
- Which agencies deliver preparation work?
- How do you involve young people and appropriate family members in the planning and delivery of preparation work?

3. Providing an appropriate range of accommodation

- A range of accommodation provision is necessary to facilitate choice and recognise the diverse needs of the leaving care population.
- Social services and housing departments need to work closely together to meet their statutory responsibilities and ensure that young people leaving care have access to appropriate accommodation.
- Moves between housing options should be triggered by a young person's wishes and personal development rather than their age.

Questions for your authority:

- What is the range of housing options for care leavers in your locality?
- How does the range reflect the needs of care leavers?
- How does the provision support the changing support needs of young people?

4. Tailoring individual support for care leavers

- The support provided to a young person once they have left care must be a continuation of the preparation for independence work already undertaken.
- Support should be flexible and viewed holistically to meet the individual needs of care leavers. The aim should be to build up a wide network of support and link young people into relevant local services.
- Financial support should recognise the enhanced support needs of many care leavers and be assessed and delivered to reflect their stage of personal development.

Questions for your authority:

- What links are there between preparation and after care support in your locality?
- Which agencies and individuals are involved in delivering support to care leavers?
- Does your authority have an accessible formal policy framework for supporting care leavers?

5. Accessing education, training and employment

- Young people must be supported to achieve whilst they are at school in order for them to take advantage of opportunities when they leave care.
- Local authorities should develop the role of a consistent parental advocate and encourage young people to think about their long-term futures.
- Care leavers need to be supported to access the full range of education, training and employment opportunities.

Questions for your authority:

- How does your local authority demonstrate that it has high aspirations towards the achievement of looked after young people and care leavers?
- What education, training and employment opportunities are available for young people in your locality?
- What links exist between leaving care services and the Local Education Authority, Connexions service and local employers?

6. Improving the participation of care leavers

- Young people must participate in service design and delivery in order to ensure that services are meeting needs. Participation needs to happen on an individual and collective level and include the whole of the local leaving care population.
- Young people may need training and support to maximise the effectiveness of their involvement.
- Participation should be viewed as an ongoing process and young people should be encouraged to provide continuous feedback on their experiences of services.

Questions for your authority:

- How involved are young people in decision making, and what processes are in place to collect and input their views and feed information back to them?
- Which agencies in your locality would be best suited to further develop youth involvement?
- How are decision making processes inclusive of hard to reach groups, such as disaffected young people, those living out of the area and young people who are less able to communicate?

7. Providing clear information for care leavers

- Young people need to be clearly informed what they can expect from local services when they leave care. Young people should also be informed how they can make complaints and access their files.
- Agencies should provide clear information about the services they offer in order to inform young people and other local providers.
- Information should be delivered in a range of accessible formats.

Questions for your authority:

- How can information on services be made more accessible for young people and other agencies?
- How can young people be involved in designing and delivering information?
- What range of formats would be needed in your locality?

8. Monitoring, evaluating and future planning

- Local authorities need measurable outcome targets against which to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of leaving care services.
- Local authorities need to forecast future needs within the leaving care population in order to provide appropriate services. Good information systems are vital to ensure accurate data is available.
- The monitoring and evaluation of service provision should involve young people, partner agencies and other local authorities.

Questions for your authority:

- What range of information is needed to allow services to be effectively monitored?
- How are partner agencies in the locality undertaking evaluation and using this to improve services?
- How is forecasting used to plan future service provision?

A close-up, profile view of a woman with light brown hair pulled back, looking upwards and to the right with a contemplative expression. She is wearing a small gold hoop earring and a thin gold chain necklace. The background is a solid, vibrant blue.

1. Creating a strategy

1 Creating a strategy

Introduction

It is critical that effective care leaving services meet the wide ranging needs of those in and leaving care. In creating an effective strategy, local authorities need to co-ordinate and broker the delivery of the disparate services that care leavers may need during their transition to independence.

All strategies should be underpinned by an assessment of needs, involving all local agencies, in order to deliver a flexible toolkit of services.

1.1 Flexibility

Flexibility should underpin all aspects of service provision. Contingency arrangements need to be built into young people's Pathway Plans, which outline what type of accommodation would best meet their needs and the practical, financial and emotional support that they will require. Pathway Plans must be kept under review so that they can be updated as young people's needs change. Local authorities should work towards developing an overall system that enables young people to re-enter services at various times. This acknowledges the fact that young people will require varying levels of support as they move towards independence.

Work in individual London boroughs by Centrepont has identified that a local authority's overall approach to leaving care services must:

Recognise diversity

Ensure that a diverse range of services is developed to meet the individual needs of young people, including young people with learning or behavioural problems, black and minority ethnic young people, young people with disabilities and unaccompanied asylum seekers.

Develop a non-linear approach

Ensure that services are flexible enough to meet young people's needs during care, and that they can also be re-accessed during their transition to adulthood.

Widen the view of corporate parenting

Ensure that care leavers have a wide network of support from both statutory and voluntary agencies. The term *corporate parent* recognises that all parts of the local authority must have the same interest in the progress and attainment of children in care, as a reasonable parent would have for their own children. Care leavers will depend on a range of services from across a local authority and from other agencies in the health and voluntary sector; all of these will be responsible for ensuring that vulnerable young people are offered a quality service.

1.2 Key stages

Any strategy is reliant on the right infrastructure for its development and implementation. A multi-agency forum must be established and developed to plan and implement the leaving care strategy. The key stages in creating a strategy are:

Consulting in service design, delivery and evaluation

Services for care leavers are provided by many statutory and voluntary agencies. Consultation with young people and relevant service providers is vital in order to establish local needs and assess the effectiveness of available provision. Successful care leaving strategies benefit from the involvement of all relevant agencies, which promotes a sense of ownership and strong commitment to delivery. When care leavers are involved in decisions about their future, services can be made more responsive to their needs and transitions to independence will be smoother.

Assessing local needs and auditing services

Care leaving strategies must be locally sensitive, as a service that works well in one area may not work well elsewhere without a careful assessment of the local infrastructure. The consultation process must therefore involve all relevant local agencies in an assessment of local needs, which highlights good practice and gaps in or duplication of services.

Developing and delivering the strategy

Any strategy is reliant on the right infrastructure to see it through to implementation. It is vital that a multi-agency forum is developed to plan and implement the leaving care strategy. A suitable forum may already exist to deal with these issues, and this should be used where possible. Membership of the forum should include representatives of the local care leaving population and local agencies delivering services to them. For example:

- Housing Department and other local housing providers.
- Social Services (leaving care teams plus mental health, special needs, drug and alcohol team representatives).
- Connexions.
- Local Education Authority.
- Youth Offending Teams.
- Youth Services.
- Jobcentre Plus.
- Primary Care Trusts.
- Local Strategic Partnerships.
- Voluntary sector agencies.

It is important that forums meet regularly in order to ensure that commitment is maintained and built upon. Relationships between individual agencies can be subject to change and competing demands. Local authorities must ensure that the corporate family tree is bound together by formal measures such as protocols to detail the roles and responsibilities of all participating agencies. Strong forums can also help to facilitate other successful joint work, such as common and joint assessment of care leavers and joint commissioning of services.

Monitoring and evaluating the strategy

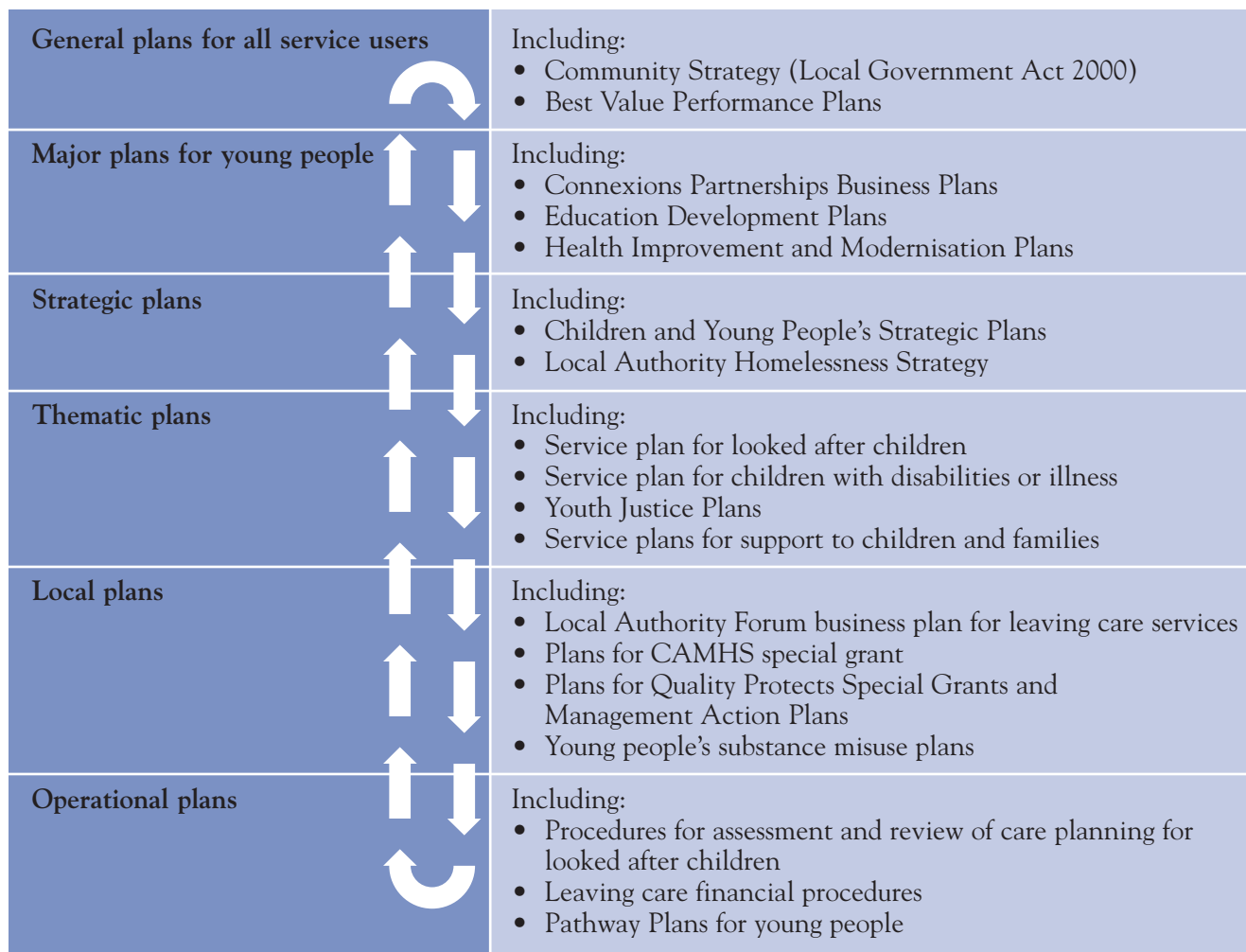
The forum will need to put in place monitoring procedures, including performance indicators focusing on outcome measures. These might include the proportion of care leavers still in touch with the local authority, those maintaining a stable lifestyle in the community two years after leaving care, or the proportion of care leavers actively involved in education or training. It is often beneficial if the forum appoints a designated officer to co-ordinate the monitoring and evaluation process.

Linking to other local strategies

There are a range of other local authority strategies and programmes with which the leaving care strategy should be co-ordinated. The forum's strategic approach should be integrated with the Children and Young People's Services Strategic Partnership which will be responsible for planning services for all vulnerable young people within a local authority area.

The forum will also need to develop links with other initiatives such as Connexions, Supporting People and local homelessness strategies. The forum will need to consider the implications of linked initiatives and how they will affect local services for care leavers. This can help to avoid duplication of services and also ensure that there are no gaps in service provision.

Example of the Contribution of Forums for Leaving Care Services to Children's Services Strategic Planning in a Local Authority



Based on the bookcase diagram, Planning for Young People Guidance (May 2001). www.doh.gov.uk/scg/childplan.htm

Local authorities should be aware of the statutory responsibilities for housing departments under the Homelessness Act 2002. The Act will provide greater protection for homeless people and will require local authority housing departments to carry out a review of homelessness and to adopt and publish a homelessness strategy in consultation with local statutory and voluntary agencies. The strategy must be based on a review of the accommodation and support needs of all people who are or may become homeless, including young people leaving care.

The Homelessness Act 2002

Homelessness reviews must consider:

- The current and likely future levels of homelessness in the district.
- The activities and services which are available to help to prevent homelessness, to ensure accommodation is available for homeless and potentially homeless people, or provide support for them, including support to prevent them becoming homeless again.
- The resources available to the authority and to social services, other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other agencies providing these services.

Homeless strategies must include plans for:

- The prevention of homelessness.
- Ensuring there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are, or who may become homeless.
- Ensuring there is satisfactory support for people who are, or who may become homeless, or who need support to prevent them from becoming homeless again.

The Government proposes to make an Order to extend the categories of homeless applicants who have a priority need for accommodation. This will include homeless 16 and 17 year olds (except relevant children), children aged 18 to 20 and those aged over 20 if they are vulnerable. It is expected that the Order will come into force in July 2002.

Cross authority service provision

Under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 the responsible local authority must retain responsibility for a care leaver wherever the young person may be living in England and Wales. Leaving care services will also need to develop procedures for cross authority service provision in order to ensure that young people receive appropriate and continuous support.

Local authorities have, under the power of well being in the Local Government Act 2000, substantial capacity for cross boundary partnership working with other councils and partners, such as the health and social services sectors. The power of well being provides local authorities with increased scope to improve the social, economic and environmental well being of their communities. Section 2(5) of the Local Government Act 2000 makes clear that cross authority service provision is within the scope of the well being power.

This subsection opens up scope for:

- More collaborative working within local authorities and local strategic partnerships.
- Co-operation between neighbouring local authorities and local strategic partnerships.
- Initiatives at regional, cross-regional and sub-regional level that address issues which do not recognise administrative boundaries.



2. Improving preparation for leaving care

2 Improving preparation for leaving care

Introduction

Young people leaving care face many challenges in their transition to independence. Pathway Plans play a key role in ensuring that young people leaving care have the support and skills to participate fully within the community and maximise their opportunities. It is important that care leavers feel ready and prepared for independent living. The preparation process should aim to mirror the transition to independence experienced by young people who benefit from effective parenting and should be part of a continuous process of personal development.

2.1 Timely preparation

Support to allow young people to move on successfully from care should be an integral aspect of being looked after. This support would be similar to the involvement that parents have with their own children so that they are adequately prepared when the time comes for them to leave home. The key resource for good preparation is the time, attention and continuity of experienced adults. Provision of a stable relationship will help to ensure that young people are offered adequate preparation for leaving care. Therefore, local authorities should make every effort to minimise disruption to young people caused by frequent changes of placement.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 requires that local authorities appoint personal advisers to support young people who are eligible for services under the Act. The personal adviser works with the young person and other agencies to develop and implement their Pathway Plan, co-ordinating services to ensure they are appropriate and will meet the young person's needs. The personal adviser is also responsible for reviewing the Pathway Plan and keeping records about individual young people up to date. The young person's leaving care personal adviser will also act as their Connexions personal adviser.

The young person's leaving care adviser will also normally act as their Connexions personal adviser. Or, as Connexions rolls out across the country, local authorities can consider subcontracting the role of the leaving care personal adviser to Connexions. It is important that Connexions and local authorities work together to ensure that leaving care advisers operate as an integrated part of the Connexions Service, so that young people can benefit from the network of schools, employers, youth support services and other local opportunities that Connexions is building. Equally, where the role of leaving care personal adviser is subcontracted to Connexions, the Connexions personal adviser will need to be in close contact with the leaving care team, for example to receive support and supervision over the preparation and implementation of the Pathway Plan.

The Connexions Service has been established to provide integrated information, advice, guidance, support and personal development opportunities for all 13 to 19 year olds in England. It aims to help young people engage in learning, achieve their full potential and make a smooth transition to adult life. This will be achieved by bringing together a wide range of existing agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors, schools, colleges and employers.

The support young people receive will vary according to their needs; vulnerable and disadvantaged young people will receive extra help to overcome barriers to learning and progression and improve their life chances.

Central to the service will be the development of a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency network of young people's personal advisers. The network will include both new recruits and existing professionals currently delivering a personal adviser role, including: care leaver advisers, Youth Offending Team staff, social workers, Sure Start Plus advisers, youth workers, careers specialists and voluntary sector workers.

Every young person will have access to a personal adviser. For some this may simply be a way to access one-off advice or information. For those who need more intensive support, their personal adviser will work with them on a sustained, one-to-one level, brokering the range of support they need.

Connexions will be delivered through schools, Connexions One Stop Shops, in the community and in existing youth services.

Connexions started in some parts of England in April 2002 and will be delivered everywhere across England by 2003. To find out whether Connexions is operational in your area, check the website www.connexions.gov.uk. The Department of Health and the Connexions Service National Unit have issued joint guidance: *Working together – Connexions and Social Services*, which is available from the website or calling 0845 60 222 60 and quoting reference CXSS.

The delivery of preparatory work should reflect the maturity and emotional development of individual young people. It must not be triggered solely by their age and should relate to the complexity of the issues faced by the young person. For example, young people with disabilities may need a wider range of services to enable them to reach their potential. It is also important that young people with particular vulnerabilities or weak social and familial networks receive targeted and intensive support as part of the preparation for independence.

Resilience Group, Hounslow

This project, jointly funded by social services and the youth service, works with young people in care. A small group of young people aged between 12 and 15 meets two evenings a week. The aim of the group is to build self-esteem and confidence in the young people by using a programme of social skills work. The focus is to help vulnerable young people build support networks and develop interpersonal and social skills so that they are equipped to integrate into the community and avoid isolation when they leave care. The group undertakes a wide range of social activities and trips that are decided in partnership with the young people.

Contact: Policy and Development Officer
Hounslow Social Services
Department
The Civic Centre
Lampton Road
Hounslow
TW3 4DN

Tel: 020 8583 3057

Birmingham's Personal and Health Development Programme

In April 2001 Birmingham City Council undertook a six month multi-agency personal and health development programme for looked after young people aged between 12 and 15. The programme was designed and delivered to help the young people develop the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to live healthy and positive lives when they leave care.

The steering group for the programme consisted of key partners from social services and the youth service with funding from the teenage pregnancy prevention strategy. The programme successfully engaged the young people and included outdoor activities, relationship and sexual awareness courses and drama workshops. The youth service evaluated the outcomes for the young people through questionnaires, interviews, focus groups and videos and found that levels of sexual health awareness, self-confidence, communication skills and teamwork skills had all tangibly improved. It was also found that the programme helped to develop closer working relationships between social services, residential care and youth work staff.

Contact: The Curriculum and Project
Development Unit
Birmingham City Council Youth
Service
Ladywood Arts and Leisure Centre
316 Monument Road
Ladywood
Birmingham
B16 8TR

Tel: 0121 464 1709

2.2 A holistic approach

Leaving care involves more than the physical act of moving address. The process can have a large social and emotional impact on a young person.

To ease this process, Needs Assessments and Pathway Plans must be based on an individual assessment of a young person’s situation and should encompass the following:

The Relationship between Needs Assessment and the Pathway Plan

Needs to be assessed	Information for inclusion in the Pathway Plan
Family and other social relationships	The support that the young person will need in order to maintain family and other relationships which can in turn offer them practical and emotional support. Family details and information about other significant people (e.g. friends, social workers, teachers) who may be able to assist the young person establish a more independent lifestyle.
Practical and other skills necessary for independent living	Evaluation of the young person’s current practical, social and emotional skills. Information about the skills that they may need to acquire to enhance their abilities and to manage successfully in their own accommodation and any support necessary to develop these skills (e.g. help with cooking, budgeting, shopping).
Accommodation	Information about where the young person will live from the age of 16. Arrangements and timing for the young person to move to more independent accommodation based on an assessment of their practical and other skills.
Education, training and employment	Summary of the young person’s educational attainment to date based on their Personal Education Plan. Programme to be maintained in order to access education or training opportunities – including the personal support that will be available and how other agencies will assist this objective. Details of remedial help necessary. Information about the young person’s individual goals and ambitions for work or further education.

Needs to be assessed	Information for inclusion in the Pathway Plan
Health and development	<p>Information about support necessary to lead a healthy lifestyle (e.g. dietary needs). Arrangements for registration with a GP and access to primary health information about any medical conditions requiring regular treatment and review (e.g. asthma, epilepsy).</p> <p>Details of specialist treatment required and how they will obtain this.</p> <p>Emotional and mental health needs with details of services necessary to meet these.</p>
Financial arrangements	<p>Summary of support necessary to enable the young person to develop budget management skills.</p> <p>For relevant young people – information about the funding necessary to meet their basic needs including how they will draw their financial support arrangements for funding other needs. How to obtain funds in an emergency. Bank account details. Information about help that will be funded to enable young people to set up their own accommodation when they leave care.</p> <p>Details of arrangements to ensure that a young person's property and accommodation are covered by adequate insurance.</p> <p>Arrangements to offer the young person independent financial advice.</p>

Based on Chapter 5, Needs Assessment and Pathway Planning - Children Leaving Care Act 2000: Regulations and Guidance (Department of Health 2001)

The needs of young people will be met most effectively when they have been considered within a multi-agency assessment framework. Pathway Plans should, therefore, follow a detailed assessment of individual needs and be planned in conjunction with relevant agencies such as education, health and housing.

Since the leaving care personal adviser will normally act as their Connexions personal adviser, and to avoid the duplication of planning processes, a young person's Pathway Plan will be the same document as their Connexions Personal Action Plan. Leaving care teams and the Connexions service will need to work together to ensure continuity of support and planning at any transition points. This would include, for example, a situation when a young person has had a Connexions personal adviser while in care, and it is decided that this role would be best transferred to a leaving care adviser to support them through their transition to independence.

Assessment Form, Waltham Forest

The London Borough of Waltham Forest has developed an extensive independence training assessment framework for care leavers. This framework provides residential staff, foster carers, social workers, supported lodgings carers, housing workers and outreach support workers with a tool to review the progress of young people as they move towards independence.

The framework helps to maximise the opportunities for young people in the transition to adulthood. It covers many areas including support networks, self care, money, practical tasks, resolving conflict, careers, setting boundaries, making choices, identity and history, citizenship and problem solving. Young people are able to refer back to this framework once they are living independently.

Contact: 16+ Services
London Borough of Waltham Forest
14 Prospect Hill
London
E17 3EL

Tel: 020 8496 2855

2.3 Creative approaches to delivery

The approach to preparing young people for independence needs to move away from a traditional structure of provision, and instead mirror the two-way communication a good parent would use. Young people should be encouraged to develop their skills by gradually being given responsibilities, such as cooking, budgeting, shopping and other household tasks. Local authorities should consider how preparation for independence work is delivered to young people within the whole range of care placements.

Role of foster carers

Training for Foster Carers, Cheshire

Cheshire County Council has recognised the important role that foster carers have in delivering preparation for independence work with young people. The young people have identified that they like to work with their foster carers on an agreed programme to develop necessary practical skills. The social services department has supported the young people to develop a video exploring issues around being in and leaving local authority care and this is used as part of the ongoing training for foster carers.

To provide continuity for young people leaving care in Cheshire, social services are using foster carers to meet the new duties to keep in touch with care leavers. The council provides ongoing financial assistance to facilitate this contact.

Contact: Cheshire County Council
County Hall
Chester
CH1 1BW

Tel: 01244 602222

Role of the children's home

The routine and structure of some residential units may reduce the chances of young people developing the skills necessary for independent living. It is important for service providers to think of creative ways to include residents in the daily routine. Standard 6 of the National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes¹ requires that children's home staff should contribute to Pathway Plans and where appropriate, work collaboratively with the responsible authority's services for assisting young people leaving care.

Involving Residents in MACC

Macclesfield Accommodation Care and Concern (MACC) is a registered charity that provides accommodation and support for young homeless people aged between 16 and 25 in two hostels with a total of 13 bed-spaces.

MACC actively involves young people in the running of the project in a number of ways. Young people are involved in recruiting and interviewing new staff members, they attend the Annual General Meeting, and can participate in management committee meetings. Young people hold regular residents meetings which feed into staff meetings and have been used to re-visit and amend the house rules. MACC believes that encouraging participation in the organising and running of the hostel will allow young people to develop the inter-personal and communication skills necessary for successfully moving on to their own accommodation.

Contact: MACC
1 Glegg Street
Macclesfield
Cheshire
SK11 7AJ

Tel: 01625 502540

Role of family and peers

It is important to involve appropriate members of the young person's immediate and extended family in the preparation process. Family members might support the preparation process by engaging young people in activities that aid their personal development, such as helping with homework and cooking.

Local authorities could facilitate the delivery of peer support to help young people build their self-esteem and regard their experience of being looked after without embarrassment.

¹ See Appendix B

Young people should be offered support to understand the reasons that led them to go into care and enable them to reflect upon their experiences of being looked after. It is important for young people to have strong role models, and in this respect peer approaches to delivering preparatory work can be very valuable.

Delivering Preparation for Independence Work, Redbridge

Care leavers in the London Borough of Redbridge are employed on a sessional basis to deliver training to young people still in care on the issues of leaving care. This peer education approach has proved successful in informing young people of the realities of independent living. The young people both delivering and receiving the information have found it a positive learning experience.

The council has developed this work and now employs two care leavers to work in different sections of the social services department. This enables young people to gain work experience and an insight into social work from a practitioner's viewpoint.

Contact: Leaving Care Team
London Borough of Redbridge
Adolescent Resource Centre
Station Road
Barkingside
Essex
IG6 1NB

Tel: 020 8478 3020

Delivering Preparation for Independence Work, Manchester

Manchester Social Services has embarked on a three year project to improve the delivery of preparation work to looked after young people. The aim of the project is to ensure that the work is delivered systematically to all young people and that foster carers and residential workers have clear expectations of what preparation work they will be expected to undertake with young people.

With the direct involvement of young people, a series of preparation materials have been produced including a cookbook and interactive CD-ROM for young people about preparation issues. A diary of care leavers' experiences has also been produced, aimed at sharing these emotions with those still in care. Young people have also been involved in making a video about preparation issues specifically for foster carers and residential workers. These materials are sent to all foster carers and residential workers to support the delivery of preparation work and identify the key issues that should be covered as part of this process. Young people are also devising and delivering a training course to teach foster carers and residential workers how to use the materials.

Contact: Manchester Leaving Care Service
36 Monton Street
Moss Side
Manchester
M14 4LT

Tel: 0161 226 6722

Cross-authority provision

Particular thought should be given to providing continuity to young people placed outside their responsible authority. Authorities should identify which person or agency will be responsible for ensuring that the needs of young people placed outside of their home authority are assessed, and for then offering appropriate services to prepare them for the time when they will leave care.

2.4 Cultural issues

Many looked after young people will have needs related to their cultural identity. Young people should be supported to explore these issues as an important part of their personal development.

Support for Black and Minority Ethnic Groups, Liverpool

Liverpool City Council Social Services has developed a comprehensive resource pack to help carers support black and minority ethnic young people to explore their cultural identities. The pack covers issues such as diet and nutrition, health, cultural history, religious festivals and holidays, black achievements and language. It also includes the local anti-racism policy, an anti-racism checklist and worksheets for carers.

This is a valuable resource for the carers of black and minority ethnic children, exploring areas around positive images and identity, young people and labels and conflicts for black children. The pack concludes with comments from young people and their carers.

Contact: Learning and Development Team
Liverpool City Council
Ebony House
Newhall Campus
Longmoor Lane
Fazakerley
Liverpool
L10 1LD

Tel: 0151 521 3181



3. Providing an appropriate range of accommodation

3 Providing an appropriate range of accommodation

Introduction

The accommodation needs of young people living in and leaving care are diverse. They are likely to be influenced by their various experiences of being looked after and how well prepared they are to make the transition to living independently. Factors such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability and physical or mental ill health also influence the accommodation needs of a young person.

Local authorities must develop an appropriate range of provision in order to ensure that young people are housed in accommodation that is appropriate to their needs. A range of accommodation provision will also enable young people to exercise some preference and feel they have ownership of the leaving care process.

3.1 What is an appropriate range?

To meet the individual needs of care leavers, local authorities should be able to access a range of low to high support accommodation. Every area is different and so in each area an audit and assessment of available provision will highlight any gaps in services. For example, Centrepoin's work in seven London boroughs uncovered particular gaps in the provision of high support, respite and emergency accommodation.

Effective use of a range of accommodation that reflects the needs of young people will give them the best chance of making a smooth transition from care. If young people are housed in unfamiliar areas or without appropriate support then they are more likely to feel isolated and unable to cope, which may lead to the breakdown of placements and homelessness.

Flexible supported accommodation options

Accommodation provision should be adaptable so that the level of support provided to an individual is appropriate to their changing needs. Centrepoin's work identified some innovative examples of services offering young people individually tailored accommodation and support.

Bathurst Road Housing Scheme, Redbridge

Bathurst Road is a local authority scheme situated near the centre of Ilford. Using rooms above a residential unit that is staffed 24-hours a day, it offers two levels of move-on accommodation for young people leaving care. The first level consists of two bedsits with a shared kitchen and bathroom. The bedsits are closed off from the main building although access to them is through the residential unit. The next level of accommodation offers two self-contained bedsits with private access directly out to the street. Young people living on the top floor are expected to be self-supporting and not use the facilities in the residential unit on an ongoing basis, although in emergencies they can access the staff by use of an intercom system.

These two levels of accommodation allow a transition towards independent living and young people are able to negotiate some of the terms of their accommodation.

The scheme helps to minimise disturbance in the usual process of leaving care by removing the need for a young person to move away from their established home. Staff from Bathurst Road also continue to provide support to young people once they move on to other accommodation.

Contact: Housing Directorate
London Borough of Redbridge
17-23 Clements Road
Ilford
Essex
IG1 1AG

Tel: 020 8478 3020

Shared accommodation

Research² indicates that young people in and leaving care prefer accommodation that is as familial as possible. Local authorities should develop creative models of housing provision, avoiding large-scale accommodation that can be stigmatising for care leavers. Many young people first leave home to share houses with friends and other young people and there are often major social and economic advantages to shared living arrangements. These shared experiences are often an important part of the transition to independence and can help to counter isolation by encouraging young people to develop strong networks of support. Local authorities should aim to facilitate shared housing as part of the range of housing options available for young people.

2 Broad, B (1998) Young people leaving care: Life after the Children Act 1989. Jessica Kingsley.

Supported Housing Scheme, Waltham Forest

The London Borough of Waltham Forest has developed a supported housing scheme for care leavers aged 17 and over. Young people can experience greater independence by living in a shared house with other young people of a similar age. Adults do not live on the premises which allows young people to take greater responsibility for themselves, including keeping themselves and their home safe, demonstrating their ability to be responsible neighbours and learning further budgeting skills by paying for gas and electric bills.

Young people will have lived in a semi-independent capacity prior to accessing this scheme. Housing support workers and the 16+ social worker will provide ongoing support. This scheme provides a basis for future resettlement in the community, as young people have their own tenancies.

Contact: 16+ Services
London Borough of Waltham Forest
14 Prospect Hill
London
E17 3EL

Tel: 020 8496 2855

Respite and emergency accommodation

Despite intensive preparatory work some young people may not succeed at their first attempt at living independently and need to fall back on more supportive arrangements. Managers of services for care leavers, personal advisers and multi-agency forums must ensure that contingency arrangements are in place to prevent a young person becoming homeless.

Holmdene Housing Limited, Lambeth

Holmdene Housing ensures that the design and delivery of services reflects the accommodation requirements and personal care support needs of young people. The organisation works flexibly so that young people can influence and change their plans to reflect changes in their support and accommodation needs. They also have a say in the type and location of accommodation they would like.

Holmdene has an eight-bedroom property. Four of the rooms are used for ongoing accommodation, and the remaining four are reserved purely for emergency or respite use, and only paid for when occupied. This allows the commissioning authority access to emergency bed-spaces and some security in knowing where young people can be accommodated in an emergency.

Contact: Holmdene Housing Limited
131 Anerley Road
London
SE20 8AJ

Tel: 020 8778 8275

Supported lodgings

The cut-off point for leaving care services should be led by the needs of the individual and be responsive to how ready a person feels to live independently. It is important that accommodation needs are closely tied into pathway planning so that, for example, a young person is not expected to move from care whilst they are preparing for important examinations. Local authorities should consider developing arrangements that will enable foster placements to be converted into supported lodgings as a way of providing continuity for young people in their transition to independence.

Supported Lodgings, Redbridge

The London Borough of Redbridge has a supported lodgings scheme that young people can access between the ages of 16 and 18, with support offered by the leaving care team. The social services department works to ensure that a diverse range of placement providers is recruited.

The supported lodgings manager offers ongoing support to the care leavers. The manager also provides support to the placement providers and encourages them to undertake NVQ training in child care. Young people have stayed in supported lodgings up to the age of 21, and the project is developing good links with local landlords to provide move on accommodation.

Contact: Leaving Care Team
London Borough of Redbridge
Adolescent Resource Centre
Station Road
Barkingside
Essex
IG6 1NB

Tel: 020 8478 3020

Floating Support

In many cases the provision of accommodation follows a traditional progression from foster or residential placement to semi-independent to independent accommodation.

Although this provision is successful and adequate for most care leavers, it does not meet the needs of some young people leaving care. Local authorities need to ensure that floating support is available to young people to help them cope with changes of accommodation and increasing independence.

Centrepoint's Floating Support Service

Centrepoint's floating support scheme provides outreach support for care leavers in their own independent accommodation. The service is a partnership between Centrepoint, four local authorities and twelve housing associations.

Westminster, Brent, Richmond and Kensington & Chelsea Social Services refer young people to the scheme and the housing associations provide flats and carry out housing management. The objectives of the service are:

- To provide resettlement support and practical help to young people moving into their own accommodation.
- To support young people in addressing any behavioural issues and helping them to develop more self-confidence and self-esteem.
- To help young people develop life skills.
- To assist and support young people in maintaining or initiating some form of employment, educational course or training programme.

Social work support is provided alongside Centrepoint's floating support package. Other relevant professionals are also invited to participate in the assessment process which focuses upon identified risk factors such as mental health and drug issues, repetitive criminal offending and rent arrears or nuisance behaviour.

Contact: Centrepoint
Central Office
Neil House
7 Whitechapel Road
London
E1 1DU

Tel: 020 7426 5300

Cross-authority provision

Local authorities should also look beyond local provision of services and explore the possibility of linking into cross-authority leaving care and homelessness strategies. It can be beneficial for adjacent boroughs to jointly commission less frequently required services, such as supported housing for young people with mental health or drug and alcohol problems.

Stonham's Lillie Road Project

Stonham's Lillie Road project provides supported housing for care leavers for up to two years in three shared three-bed flats and four self-contained flats. The project only accepts referrals from social services and has formalised contracts with leaving care teams in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and the City of Westminster. This arrangement enables the project to meet the housing and support needs of young people leaving care across different local authority boundaries.

The support provided focuses upon developing independent living skills, networking with other community based agencies and accessing education, training and employment opportunities. Project staff liaise closely with the young people and their social workers to develop support plans and ensure that suitable permanent move-on accommodation is available.

Contact: Stonham Lillie Road Project
321 Lillie Road
London
SW6 7LL

Tel: 020 7385 4544

There may also be a need for local authorities to consider cross authority arrangements to meet the housing needs of young people who want to live outside of their responsible authority. Particular attention must be given to providing continuity to young people who have been placed outside of their responsible authority and do not want to return when they leave care.

3.2 Joint protocols and multi-agency accommodation strategies

Social services and housing departments have statutory duties to meet the housing needs of care leavers. In order to meet these duties both agencies must work together to develop joint protocols and ensure that established procedures are firmly in place.

Housing agencies must be consulted as part of the pathway planning process for individual young people so that they are able to identify suitable accommodation. Leaving care forums should promote joint protocols and other joint working arrangements such as multi-agency needs assessment forms and joint training between housing and social services departments.

Joint Training between Housing and Social Services, Buckinghamshire

In 2000 Centrepont worked with Buckinghamshire County Council to help develop its services for young people leaving care. Part of this work involved delivering joint training to housing and social services departments in order to facilitate a better mutual understanding of their respective roles and their responsibilities towards care leavers. The training focused upon their particular legislative duties and highlighted how the gaps that can arise between services impact upon the needs of young people.

Training and information sessions were also provided to the Careers Service, Jobcentre Plus and colleges of further education on their responsibilities and roles when working with care leavers.

Contact: Centrepont
Central Office
Neil House
7 Whitechapel Road
London
E1 1DU

Tel: 020 7426 5300

Sensitive Allocations of Housing, Redbridge

The housing advice centre in Redbridge has a long running assessment scheme for care leavers seeking accommodation. The scheme was initiated by the housing department in response to evidence from social services that care leavers were experiencing particular problems accessing accommodation.

Housing department staff have developed a clear understanding of the issues facing young people leaving care and the importance of suitable accommodation. The housing application form asks for relevant information so that the officer allocating properties has a good understanding of the young person's needs. Staff ensure that issues such as transport links, shops, access and location are all considered before offers of housing are made. This helps to ensure that care leavers feel positive about their accommodation and reduces the likelihood of tenancies breaking down.

Contact: Housing Directorate
London Borough of Redbridge
17-23 Clements Road
Ilford
Essex
IG1 1AG

Tel: 020 8478 3020

Partnership Working, Welwyn Hatfield

Welwyn Hatfield District Council's Housing Department has in place a number of measures to ensure that young people leaving care have access to appropriate housing and support.

The housing department has well-established joint protocols with the children, schools and families service so that young people leaving care are assessed as being in priority need for accommodation. There is a range of supported housing options available for care leavers including a Foyer and projects managed by NACRO and NCH. The housing department also has nomination agreements with these housing providers to ensure that young people are able to move into independent accommodation when they are ready to make this transition.

Within the housing department, a team of special needs support officers works to provide floating support to vulnerable council tenants. The team works closely with many care leavers to link them into local services and ensure they are supported to maintain their tenancies and cope with independent living. They also liaise closely with the children, schools and families service, attending monthly case conferences to monitor the needs of vulnerable young people with the leaving care team and other relevant statutory and voluntary service providers. The needs of care leavers are also addressed within the monthly meetings of the Welwyn Hatfield Young Homeless Group.

The group is chaired by a local voluntary agency and includes representation from all agencies working to meet the needs of young homeless people in the district.

Contact: Welwyn Hatfield Council
51 Bridge Road East
Welwyn Garden City
Hertfordshire
AL7 1JR

Tel: 01707 357000

Positive outcomes from this have been care leavers being registered for housing at an earlier stage, an increase in offers both from the housing department and housing associations and more of these offers being accepted by young people.

Contact: Corporate Parent (Housing Needs)
London Borough of Lambeth
190 Kennington Lane
London
SE11 5DX

Tel: 020 7926 6304

Multi-Agency Corporate Parenting, Lambeth

The London Borough of Lambeth has achieved integrated service provision by seconding the housing commissioning manager to work within the leaving care team in a new role as the Corporate Parent (Housing Needs).

This officer has the specific remit of developing housing options for young people leaving care and commissioning new contracts for interim accommodation with the private and public sector. The officer is also responsible for processing all housing applications for care leavers to ensure that offers of housing are appropriate to the needs of individual young people. The creation of the post has helped to develop good partnership arrangements between housing and social services and the introduction of new procedures and monitoring systems.

Leaving care forums are likely to include non-statutory housing providers and it will be necessary to develop formal working protocols with these agencies. All forum members should be involved in an audit and assessment of the housing needs of care leavers with the aim of identifying gaps in provision. This audit should then form an evidence base for future developments that will contribute to the plans of Children and Young People's Strategic Partnerships and the planning and development of the local authority's wider homelessness strategy.



4. Tailoring individual support for care leavers

4 Tailoring individual support for care leavers

Introduction

It is vital that preparation for independence support is continued when young people leave care. Local authorities must enable care leavers to find their feet at their own pace. The support delivered should be consistent and continuous, mirroring that which a good parent would provide.

4.1 Role of the personal adviser

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 places a duty on the responsible authority to keep in touch with young people up to the age of 21, or beyond if in an agreed programme of education or training. It is important for leaving care services to ensure that this duty is being followed and that personal advisers are able to maintain contact with young people. Local authorities must accept responsibility for remaining in touch rather than leaving this to the young person. They should offer young people a range of options to stay in contact with them, including face to face meetings, phone calls, letters and e-mails.

Delivering the Personal Adviser Role, Lambeth

Lambeth Social Services will be working in partnership with NCH to provide a personal adviser and aftercare service to looked after young people and/or those leaving care. This partnership arrangement was developed in recognition of the potential advantages of having a worker with some independence from social services delivering the personal adviser role.

It is envisaged that the NCH personal advisers will be in a good position to develop trusting relationships with young people. A less statutory approach could help young people to recognise the interest being shown towards them and facilitate a more open dialogue. This approach should also assist personal advisers in assessing the needs of young people and facilitating access to a flexible and responsive package of support. Lambeth Social Services also envisages that a more informal youth work approach will help to engage the more vulnerable and disaffected care leavers in service provision.

Contact: NCH London Region
22 Lucerne Road
London
N5 1TZ

Tel: 020 7704 7070

Each care leaver will require different types and levels of support as they make their transition to independence. Continuous assessment is vital to ensure support is properly targeted. Personal advisers need to carefully assess the changing needs of each young person in order to provide comprehensive support and facilitate access to relevant services. In order to access relevant local services for care leavers personal advisers will need the support of all services throughout the local authority.

4.2 Developing networks of support

Family and friends

Some care leavers find it difficult to cope with independent living and may need help to strengthen their networks of support. Whilst a young person is in care their family links often weaken and Centrepoin's work indicated that young people often want to renew these links when they prepare to leave care. Local authorities should assess the quality and level of support that immediate and extended families might be able to offer young people when they are living independently in the community.

Daybreak Family Group Conferences

Daybreak works in partnership with Hampshire County Council and other local authorities and agencies to include families in the decision making and planning process for children leaving care.

An independent co-ordinator arranges a meeting between a young person, their social worker and appropriate relatives, friends and professionals. The meetings can be used to discuss the young person's needs and plan the role family members and other individuals will play in meeting them. Family group conferences can also help young people to strengthen relationships with family members and to build up networks of support so they are not isolated when they leave care.

Contact: Daybreak Family Group Conferences
5 Vears Lane
Colden Common
Winchester
Hants
SO21 1TQ

Tel: 01962 717373

Peer support

Care leavers often identify companionship as their greatest need. Young people often receive a lot of support from their peers and so it is important that local authorities encourage care leavers to build up networks of both friends and informal support. Peer approaches to service delivery can help care leavers build self-esteem and develop strong social networks.

Care Leavers Association

The Care Leavers Association (CLA) is a members-based organisation that aims to represent care leavers of all ages across the UK. All of the CLA's staff, management and trustees are care leavers. It works with government departments, local authorities and voluntary organisations on policy and legislation and facilitates consultation with care leavers to ensure that local authorities develop appropriate services. The organisation provides forums through which care leavers can feed into decision making processes and contribute to service planning and delivery. The forums also function as social outlets and can encourage care leavers to develop networks of peer support.

One example of the CLA's work with care leavers is the joint working with Barking and Dagenham's Quality Protects and Leaving Care Teams. The CLA helped to establish a leaving care group to consult on services that affected them and how they could be improved. The CLA is now working with this group to consult children in care about the services they access and how they feel about them.

Contact: CLA
59 Peverel House
Stour Road
Dagenham
Essex
RM10 7HZ

Tel: 0161 881 5510

Friends for Leisure, Macclesfield

Friends for Leisure aims to establish and develop mainstream leisure activities for care leavers and all other young people aged between 5 and 21 with physical, sensory and learning disabilities within Macclesfield. Volunteers aged over 12 give the majority of support and a befriending scheme also helps young people to develop networks of peer support.

Friends for Leisure provides information to young people and a quarterly newsletter, which is available in print, large print, braille or audiotape. The project delivers training on disability awareness within schools and to other local agencies including the youth service and housing providers.

The project is currently developing a pack to enable other agencies develop similar schemes.

Contact: Friends for Leisure
Weston Community Centre
Earlsway
Macclesfield
Cheshire
SK11 8RL

Tel: 01625 613433

Emergency help lines

Research³ has shown that care leavers like to have access to 24-hour support so that they have someone to talk to in the event of an emergency or if they are feeling lonely. Local authorities can facilitate this need by expanding the scope of existing services.

³ National Children's Bureau (2000). Audit and Assessment of Leaving Care Services in London. DoH, DTLR.

24-hour Telephone Help-Line, Waltham Forest

In responding to feedback from their care leavers, Waltham Forest Social Services has established a telephone helpline service based in a children's home that has waking staff 24 hours a day.

Relevant information has been provided to ensure that the staff team is able to respond to any queries that may be received. This development has proven to be a very simple and cost effective solution to meet an identified local need.

Contact: 16+ Services
London Borough of Waltham Forest
14 Prospect Hill
London
E17 3EL

Tel: 020 8496 2855

Cross-authority provision

Local authorities will also need to develop arrangements in order to fulfil their duty to keep in touch with young people who move to a different local authority. The support needs of the individual young person and their relationship with the responsible authority must lead the decision making process. It may be appropriate for either the responsible authority to keep in touch, or to arrange for another authority or voluntary agency to maintain contact on their behalf.

Moving Forward, Kent

Kent Community Housing Trust's Moving Forward project comprises four drop-in centres across Kent for young people aged between 16 and 21. Project workers respond flexibly to individual needs and can either offer confidential one-off advice or provide more intensive long-term support on a key work basis. Funding is received from a variety of sources so young people are able either to self-refer or access services via referral from linked agencies.

The project works closely with Kent Social Services to provide specific support services to care leavers. The project also provides a support service to care leavers living in Kent who are outside of their responsible authority. Prescribed agreements are made between Kent Community Housing Trust and the responsible authority's social services department to outline the type and level of support to be delivered. An assigned key worker then maintains contact with the young person and delivers support as set out within the agreement.

Contact: Kent Community Housing Trust
Bridgewood House
8 Laker Road
Rochester
Kent
ME1 3QX

Tel: 01634 869880

4.3 Specific support and improved transition between services

Emotional and mental health

Many young people in and leaving care have been emotionally damaged by negative past experiences and may have enhanced needs for care and support. Some young people will need to receive therapeutic interventions such as counselling whilst others may need more intensive support from mainstream mental health services.

Local authorities should also pay close attention to the needs of young people with high emotional support needs who are vulnerable to mental ill health but do not have a formally diagnosed mental illness. Even if a young person's problems are not so severe that they are eligible for mainstream mental health services, it may be necessary to ensure that they are offered sufficient support to prevent a deterioration in their condition and crisis intervention from mental health services. It is also important that young people make smooth transitions between child and adult mental health services and between services in different local authority areas. Joint protocols can be effective in bridging gaps between services.

Stockport's Youthful Minds

Youthful Minds promotes positive mental health by providing informal support and a safe, comfortable environment to young people who are experiencing some form of mental distress, worry, loneliness or boredom. The project is jointly funded by the Youth Service and the Primary Care Trust to offer a friendly and confidential listening service to help vulnerable young people integrate into the community and counter isolation. Young people can access advocacy, information and advice on any issue, ranging from practical help with housing and benefits to help with drug issues, sexual health and relationships.

The project is part of Stockport Youth Service and it links young people into other relevant services such as a climbing club, theatre group and a support group for young people who self harm. Close links exist with leaving care services to ensure that young people are offered targeted support once they have left care. The project also works closely with mental health services to make sure that young people with additional needs receive targeted interventions.

Contact: Youthful Minds
25 Covent Garden
Middle Hillgate
Stockport
SK1 3AX

Tel: 0161 477 1598

Healthy lifestyles, healthy relationships and help to tackle substance misuse

Once young people have left care they may need to receive support to live healthily. For example, care leavers may be vulnerable to developing substance misuse problems. Any such issues should be addressed as part of the continuous process of assessment. Pathway planning should pay attention to the need for young people to have accessible information on maintaining good health, sexual health and sexuality, substance misuse and emotional and mental health. Personal advisers should ensure that young people are registered with a GP, and able to access primary health services as well as any specialist services. It is important that young people are helped to take responsibility for their own health. They should be offered support to pursue leisure interests that encourage a healthy lifestyle.

Informal and Holistic Health Assessments, Hounslow

The London Borough of Hounslow's Leaving Care Team has developed a procedure for looking at young people's emotional and physical health needs in a wide context. These needs are written into the young person's Pathway Plan and are regularly assessed and reviewed. As part of this process the young person is given:

- Clear information about health and healthy lifestyles.
- Support in finding a local GP, dentist and optician.
- Advice about the range of support services available to them.
- Assistance in finding the right service and health professional to meet their needs.

Contact: Leaving Care Team
London Borough of Hounslow
8 School Road
Hounslow
Middlesex
TW3 1QZ

Tel: 020 8583 3586

Discount Leisure Card, Redbridge

The London Borough of Redbridge promotes healthy living by ensuring that care leavers receive information on groups in the area that provide arts, drama, sports, music and other leisure activities. The council also provides care leavers with a discount leisure pass to encourage them to participate in sports activities at a number of venues in the borough.

Contact: Leaving Care Team
London Borough of Redbridge
Adolescent Resource Centre
Station Road
Barkingside
Essex
IG6 1NB

Tel: 020 8478 3020

Addaction IMPACT Project

Camden and Islington Primary Care Trust jointly fund the IMPACT project alongside the local Drug Action Team to provide a service for young people aged between 11 and 21 years with concerns about drug use. The project offers:

- Prevention and early intervention work with vulnerable young people, including counselling, advice, information and support.
- Drug education sessions for groups of young people, parents and carers, families and professionals.
- Satellite services in partnership with local youth justice and social services teams.
- An individual support package designed to suit the individual that provides a range of support including health, welfare, educational training and links to employment.

A flexible service is provided to maximise access to young people. The project works closely with social services to assess needs and identify young people who may require more intensive interventions and support from treatment and rehabilitation services.

Contact: IMPACT Project
Addaction
59 Compton Road
London
N1 2YT

Tel: 020 7704 1700

It is important for young people to receive continuing advice and information about sexual matters after they have left school. This should include information about practical issues such as how to access contraceptive services, as well as advice about the emotional aspects of sexuality and relationships. Depending on the availability of local provision, it may be appropriate either to develop new services or to link young people into existing services.

GLYAM (Gay, Lesbian Youth Around Macclesfield)

Cheshire County Council's Community Youth and Regeneration Service runs GLYAM to provide a safe and supportive environment for lesbian, gay and bisexual young people. The project facilitates networks of peer support and encourages young people to develop positive identities. They are also able to meet other young people like themselves and develop the skills and knowledge required to ease their transition to adulthood.

GLYAM has weekly social meetings, which can involve issue-based discussions, workshops and arts and crafts. Other activities include residentials, day events and meetings with other lesbian, gay and bisexual groups.

Outcomes for the group include providing good support systems, a fun and different environment to the commercial gay scene, developing more awareness of lesbian, gay and bisexual issues, increasing self-confidence and learning about other people's thoughts and feelings.

Young people are able to sit on the multi-agency steering group. The steering group works with GLYAM to provide support, encouragement, advice and advocacy to its members and workers to ensure the future development of the group.

Contact: GLYAM
Cheshire County Council Youth
Services
Nexus House
Thachery Drive
Chester
CH3 5LP

Tel: 01625 501203

Care leavers are more likely than an average young person to become teenage parents. Whilst it is important that local authorities ensure that young people are given the support and opportunities to address this trend, it is also important to ensure that young people are appropriately supported before and after they have children.

Wakefield Young Families Project

Wakefield Young Families Project helps young parents get back into education and gain access to health advice and practical support with parenting. The project was set up in May 2000 with funding from the local Health Action Zone, Sure Start Plus and Barnardos, which manages the project.

The project has a particular focus upon the needs of care leavers and aims to prevent cycles of care by supporting them to be confident, positive parents. Staff work to build peer support networks for young parents and to ensure that services are accessible and responsive. The project has set up antenatal classes for teenagers in response to evidence that young people can often feel excluded from mainstream services. A local Community Food Programme works in partnership with the project, promoting nutrition and healthy eating by delivering weekly boxes of fresh organic food and recipe cards to young people. Young people are also helped to access cheap cooking utensils and cookery courses.

Training programmes equivalent to NVQ1 have been developed and creative writing courses are proving particularly popular with care leavers. The project takes the courses out to the young people by running them in family centres and providing transport and crèches. Young people can access the service until they reach the age of 25 which enables staff to provide continuity for young people with on-going support needs.

Contact: Wakefield Young Families Project
Flanshaw Children's Centre
6 Springfield Grange
Flanshaw
Wakefield
WF2 9QP

Tel: 01924 304152



5. Accessing education, training and employment

5 Accessing education, training and employment

Introduction

Performance at school or college and a young person's skills and potential should be a key aspect of individual Pathway Plans. Young people who achieve highly at school are likely to have broader career opportunities and are less likely to leave school to later experience unemployment and poverty. It is vital that looked after young people and care leavers are supported to achieve their potential at school and to access a range of education, training and employment opportunities.

5.1 Support with education

Pathway planning must build upon the foundation of educational progress already made by young people and be based on their individual needs and potential. Research⁴ indicates that low aspirations amongst young people is influenced by low expectations from adults: it is therefore vital that young people receive encouragement to identify and realise their ambitions both whilst they are in care and afterwards.

Links between the leaving care adviser and the Connexions service will be critical in this context, so that the young person benefits from Connexions' links with schools and other learning providers. In particular, leaving care advisers and young people leaving care will need to draw on specialist advice in relation to careers and long term goals. In some areas this is being delivered through the secondment of Connexions staff into leaving care teams to provide specific advice and support on education, training and employment issues.

⁴ Jackson. S (1983) The education of children in care. University of Bristol.

Local authorities should develop the role of a consistent parental advocate in order for young people to feel that someone has a continuing interest in their achievements. It is important that local authorities maintain continuity in the provision of education to young people in care. Where young people's placements do break down, every effort must be made to maintain stable arrangements for their schooling.

Many local authorities have introduced measures to help ensure that looked after young people realise their full potential in school.

Pupil Support Team, Wigan

Wigan's Pupil Support Team works to raise the educational achievements of looked after young people by providing individually tailored educational support. The team is jointly funded by education and social services and comprises six teachers - four working in secondary schools, one in primary schools, and one working as a homework co-ordinator within Wigan's five children's homes.

The service maintains young people in school and ensures that they are supported to reach their full potential. Support workers act as educational advocates for young people and help them with the many issues that can impact upon their ability to learn, including in-school support, help with home tuition, attendance at reviews and inter-agency liaison.

The Pupil Support Team also provides training on educational issues so that teachers, foster carers and social workers develop a clearer understanding of the difficulties faced by looked after young people.

In 2000, a joint social services and education working party developed a local authority wide joint protocol to outline the principles and vision of services, and clarify the roles and responsibilities of all agencies involved in raising the educational achievement of looked after children.

This protocol has helped to raise the profile of educational issues and has led to good partnership working across the local authority.

The Pupil Support Team closely monitors the achievement of looked after children and celebrates their achievements in order to raise their self-esteem and confidence. The success of the work is demonstrated by the fact that young people in Wigan exceeded the Government's educational targets for care leavers by 11% in 2001.

Contact: Department of Social Services
Wigan Council
80 Ribble Road
Platt Bridge
Wigan
WN2 5EW

Tel: 01942 769763

The Joint Educational Trust (JET)

JET was established to support the educational achievement of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. It supports children aged between 7 and 13 at independent day schools when it is clear that they require additional support to learn and achieve their potential. It offers open access to its services, and does not discriminate on grounds of ability.

JET deals with around 500 enquiries a year from many different sources. Staff filter the enquiries, visit the children, their carers and the schools, and work with any professionals involved. JET arranges placements at suitable schools and can sometimes assist with free places or financial support for fees. The children are regularly monitored via school reports and family contact. JET does not interfere in successful placements but takes an active role in solving problems and difficulties. It works to provide children with the stability and security needed to achieve through their own efforts, so that they become fully-participating members of society.

Support from JET ends as a child reaches 13 years of age. However, ongoing support from a trust is often arranged and JET also retains loose contact with children as they become older.

Contact: JET
6 Lovat Lane
London
EC3R 8DT

Tel: 020 7283 3445

Local authorities should challenge and support young people to think about their long-term futures and motivate them to pursue options that are likely to improve their employability and life chances.

University of Southampton's Summer School

The University of Southampton runs a summer school for young people from inner city areas and care leavers who would like the opportunity to sample life at university. The summer school focuses on year-11 pupils and encourages them to continue with further/higher education once they leave school. It also helps them improve their communication skills, team work and self-esteem. Only the faculty leaders and the project manager know which young people are from care. Funding for care leavers can be arranged either through the Connexions service, local authority, or from a voluntary grant negotiated by Fostering Networks.

During the week care leavers stay in university halls of residence and take part in an academic programme of their choice including science, engineering, social sciences, law and humanities. The programmes are designed to engage young people in the subject areas and are delivered in exciting formats that include group activities, performances and competitions. The summer school also gives the young people the chance to find out more about graduate career opportunities by providing advice and organising visits to local organisations.

University students help to run the summer school and organise a lively programme of social activities to give young people the opportunity to sample the social benefits of university life.

Contact: University of Southampton
Highfield
Southampton
SO17 1BJ

Tel: 02380 592564

The Buttle Trust's By Degrees Project

By Degrees is a five year action research project commissioned by the Buttle Trust and based at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, part of the University of London's Institute of Education. The project helps young people moving from care to higher education by establishing what kinds of support they need to complete their courses successfully and get the most out of their time at university.

The aims of the project are to:

- Document the different levels of support – financial, practical, and emotional – that care leavers may need to attain similar educational outcomes to young people in the general population.
- Monitor and evaluate existing and developing support systems offered by corporate parents and assess how well they meet the needs of young people.

- Provide detailed guidance for local authorities on the levels of financial support, accommodation, mentoring, concern and encouragement that will enable students in their care to access and benefit from higher education.
- Raise the aspirations both of young people in care and of those that support them.

To achieve these aims, 50 care leavers entering higher education are being recruited each year over a three year period to take part in the research. The young people will be interviewed at the beginning and end of each academic year and will be in regular contact with the researchers between interviews in order to identify the obstacles they face and the types of assistance needed to overcome them. An interim report will be published at the end of 2002 to enable local authorities to feed the research findings into practice.

Contact: The Buttle Trust
Audley House
13 Palace Street
London
SW1E 5HX

Tel: 020 7828 7311

5.2 Support with training and employment

Collaborative working between social services, local education authorities and the Connexions service helps young people access the full range of educational, training and employment focused opportunities.

It is important that all relevant agencies, such as Connexions and the Chamber of Commerce are involved in leaving care forums, so that a strategic approach to meeting young people's needs for suitable vocational training and employment is taken. Vulnerable young people will require specific support to enable them to access services to assist them in identifying suitable employment opportunities.

The Employability Programme

The Employability Programme was developed by the Who Cares? Trust to increase awareness amongst statutory bodies, service providers and employers of the specific disadvantages faced by young care leavers when they begin to access further education, training and employment. A range of practice materials has been produced to provide social workers, Connexions service workers, young people, carers and elected members with relevant information and guidance.

The Employability Programme was piloted in Thurrock Borough Council and North East Lincolnshire County Council in 1998 for a period of two years. Project managers were employed to develop projects based on local research and consultation in order to:

- Increase access to education, training and employment opportunities.
- Develop young people's skills, confidence and motivation to enable them to access the opportunities available to them.

- Develop a culture of multi-agency working across the local authority.
- Develop links with local businesses and other agencies to increase the opportunities for a range of training and employment initiatives.

The outcomes from both pilot projects were positive. In Lincolnshire, work experience placements were established in 14 different council departments and 13 young people progressed from the project into full time education or employment. In Thurrock, the programme was seen to embed firmly further education and training in pathway planning and establish a value base for a better corporate parenting approach.

All local authorities should have received the practice materials from the Employability Programme, which will help with the development of projects to improve post-16 education, training and employment opportunities for young people in and leaving care. The Employability materials include written materials, a video, CD-ROM and an audio CD.

Contact: The Who Cares? Trust
Kemp House
152-160 City Road
London
EC1V 2NP

Tel: 020 7251 3117

Local authorities should also help young people into employment by developing links with local employers and initiating work placement and apprenticeship schemes for care leavers.

Teenagers to Work in Gateshead

Teenagers to Work in Gateshead is providing individual support to help looked after young people and care leavers to access work placements and training programmes.

The project has set up:

- Forty-five supervised work placements.
- A partnership project with Tyneside Careers.
- A pilot project led by Tyne and Wear Learning and Skills Council to engage looked after young people.
- Information sharing protocols between the council, Tyneside Careers and the Learning and Skills Council.

A co-ordinator will help teenagers fill permanent vacancies and support further joint working between the Education Support Team, Learning and Skills Council, the Aftercare Service and Gateshead Connexions.

Contact: Services for Children and Families
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough
Council
Civic Centre
Regent Street
Gateshead
NE8 1HH

Tel: 0191 433 2475

Recruitment of Care Leavers, Stoke-on-Trent

Stoke-on-Trent's Social Services department has two peer development workers within its leaving care team. The posts have been created both to develop the employment opportunities for care leavers and ensure that the views and experiences of looked after young people are fully embedded within service design and delivery.

The posts offer care leavers the opportunity to be employed within the team at the same grade as personal advisers. The development workers are developing and facilitating a training and support group for care leavers, linking into the department's Personal Independent Living and Occupational Training course.

Contact: Leaving Care/After Care Team
Stoke-on-Trent City Council
245 Hartshill Road
Stoke-on-Trent
ST4 7NQ

Tel: 01782 233575



6. Improving the participation of care leavers

6 Improving the participation of care leavers

Introduction

It is vital that young people are engaged in the assessment, planning, review and decision making arrangements to ensure leaving care services are responsive to their needs. Local authority care leaving strategies must allow young people to take ownership of what happens to them and ensure that continuous feedback is received on their experiences of services, including suggestions for improvements to service design and delivery.

Encouraging participation

Local authorities should provide varied opportunities for participation to reflect the varying ability, maturity and confidence of individual young people. In addition to formal mechanisms of involvement it is important to make sure that young people are fully involved in the whole process of assessment and pathway planning. Effective participation must involve young people from the outset and young people must have the opportunity to participate on both an individual and a collective level. Some local authorities have developed formal mechanisms to involve looked after children and care leavers in the council's decision making structure.

All Connexions Partnerships are required to ensure that young people are involved in the development of Connexions in the area. Local authorities and Connexions Partnerships will need to work together to ensure young people in or leaving care have their say in this process.

Luton's Children's Panel

The Children's Panel is a committee of councillors and young people in and leaving care in Luton. The purpose of the Panel is to make sure young people can impact on decisions that affect their lives. It is a vital route for the council to carry out its corporate parenting responsibilities and ensure that young people are fully involved in the democratic process. To establish the Panel, the council invited all looked after young people and care leavers to a planning event. From this event eleven young people put their names forward and were recruited to sit on the panel alongside eight councillors.

The Panel is a sub-committee that reports directly to the executive and is a permanent feature of the council's decision making process. The structure and process of the meetings have been adapted to make them meaningful and user friendly for young people. The young people set the agenda for each meeting, tabling issues that are of direct concern to them and their peers. Relevant council officers, including the head of children's services and service managers, attend the panel to listen to young people's views and to discuss options for improving services. They then return to subsequent meetings to inform members of what actions are being taken.

Maximum participation is achieved by involving an officer from the Local Democracy Unit and the Children's Rights Co-ordinator from the YMCA, both of whom are independent of the social services department, as well as members of the social services 16+ team who are known to and trusted by the young people. Early achievements of the panel include a revision to the policy on overnight stays for young people, recommendations on housing for care leavers, and the development of a video, leaflets and an interactive game to help looked after young people contribute to their reviews. The Children's Panel has been included in a Best Value review of children's services across the borough and involved in training and development activities related to children and children's rights. Work is also continuing to address the accommodation needs of care leavers and support needs of teenage parents.

Contact: Housing and Social Services
Luton Borough Council
Unity House
111 Stuart Street
Luton
LU1 5NP

Tel: 01582 547622

Peer groups

Peer approaches to user participation can often help to engage harder to reach groups in decision making processes. Young people should be supported to develop their own consultation forums and many local authorities have employed dedicated officers to help young people feed into decision making processes.

Dorset Taking Care Group

Dorset County Council's Leaving Care Team set up the Taking Care group to enable older looked after young people and care leavers to participate more fully in service design and delivery. The group feeds into decision making processes in a number of ways and one young person is a co-opted member of the social services committee. Care leavers are encouraged to use their views and experiences to identify how policy and practice can be developed to most effectively meet their needs. The group has so far influenced a number of decisions and their contributions have included:

- A video and presentation to councillors.
- A workshop presentation on young people's participation.
- An award ceremony to celebrate the achievement of care leavers.
- Identifying how information and advice centres could be made more accessible for young people.
- Holding a twice-yearly open forum attended by the director of social services.

The group hopes to appoint a designated officer to provide support and help develop the members' involvement. It is set to make future contributions to the development of information, communication and technology (ICT) skills by young people and assist in the development of a website.

Contact: Dorset County Council
County Hall
Dorchester
Dorset
DT1 1XJ

Tel: 01305 224643

Manchester Yippee Group

Manchester's Leaving Care Team set up the Yippee group (Young independent people presenting educational entertainment) with help from the University of Salford's social work and policy department. Members of the Yippee group are supported to become trainers and give presentations to professionals about their personal experiences of being looked after and leaving care. So far Yippee has been involved in a number of events including the delivery of training to social workers, housing workers and teachers. The group is encouraged to identify how to increase the effectiveness of services for looked after young people and care leavers.

This approach to participation enables care leavers to develop their own skills and confidence whilst also influencing and improving services for other young people.

Professionals have been very responsive to the training provided by the Yippee group and have welcomed the opportunity to evaluate and develop provision from the perspective of service users.

Contact: Manchester Leaving Care Service
36 Monton Street
Moss Side
Manchester
M14 4LT

Tel: 0161 226 6722

Hard to reach groups

It is important to ensure that participation is representative. Local authorities should make extensive efforts to ascertain the views of disaffected and harder to reach groups to ensure that services understand and respond to their needs. Local authorities could consider providing incentives to encourage involvement in decision making processes. Many local authorities have developed creative initiatives to engage and involve young people.

L2YP - The Art of Listening to Young People

L2YP is a Derby-based partnership project between the National Children's Bureau, Derby City Council and Q Arts - a local arts organisation. The project uses arts activities as a mechanism to support young people who are either in care, excluded from school, disabled or involved in offending, to communicate their views and experiences to the people in the local authority who make decisions that affect their lives.

Young people have been offered a range of opportunities to develop their interests and skills in arts activities, ensuring that the activities engage young people and are not based upon perceptions of what they will enjoy. Individual activities have included the 'Boxed In' project which brought together a group of young people in foster care for six two-hour workshops. Within the workshops the young people were encouraged to explore and express themselves by producing

work representing their memories and their secrets. This work was then enclosed within a wooden box with a hole and light switch so that the young people could rotate the images and reflect on the work as a way of keeping hold of their identities and what is important to them.


Young people have been involved in shaping and overseeing the project in a variety of ways. A multi-media training pack will be available from August 2002 to help other relevant agencies and individuals develop arts activities to empower vulnerable young people.

Contact: National Children's Bureau
8 Wakley Street
London
EC1V 7QE

Tel: 020 7843 6000

Out of borough placements

Local authorities should also consider how to involve young people that have moved outside the local authority area. For example, it may be appropriate to develop transport arrangements so that young people placed outside of the area can attend relevant meetings and events.



7. Providing clear information for care leavers

7 Providing clear information for care leavers

Introduction

Local authorities are required to publish information about the services they provide for young people leaving their care. They must ensure that it is provided in a format that is easily accessible to young people as well as to other agencies. The provision of clear information is vital if young people are to be offered real choices and be involved in planning for their futures in a meaningful way. It is also important for them to receive information on the care leaving process in order for them to have realistic expectations of what to expect when they leave care. If young people have expectations that cannot easily be fulfilled they may feel let down and despondent once they have left care. This could damage the self-esteem of particularly vulnerable care leavers and strain relationships between young people and their corporate parents.

7.1 Creative approaches to delivering information

In order to equip young people for independent living they must be fully informed of:

- Which services are available to them.
- How to access available services.
- Their rights and responsibilities.
- What to do if things go wrong.

Relevant information must be delivered in a range of formats appropriate to the needs of young people.

Some young people will respond well to written information but there is also a need to communicate information to young people less able to read and write. Local authorities should ensure that young people are given the opportunity to request information along the path to independence.

The links between the leaving care personal adviser and the Connexions service will be critical in this context. As the service is developed, Connexions Partnerships will be responsible for providing information on all the education, training, leisure and cultural activities, personal development opportunities, and all forms of support that young people and their carers may need.

Leicestershire County Council's Rough Guide to Leaving Care

Leicestershire's Leaving Care Team has produced a Rough Guide to Leaving Care, containing 15 fact sheets covering areas such as entitlements to benefits and accommodation. The guide also includes an outline of the young person's Pathway Plan and is designed to hold other relevant information such as contact cards for their personal adviser and details of other local services.

The guide was produced and designed in conjunction with young care leavers to ensure it contains relevant and useful information. The fact sheets are contained within a bright folder so that it is attractive and accessible. A pocket diary has also been produced containing a list of events for care leavers to attend throughout the year.

Contact: Leicestershire County Council
County Hall
Glenfield
Leicester
LE3 8RL

Tel: 0116 265 7404

Accessible Information for Care Leavers in Bristol

Bristol City Council's Care and After team has developed a number of measures to ensure that care leavers receive targeted information. The team has established strong links with relevant local agencies and drop-in centres to ensure appropriate sign-posting within the network of local services. A free telephone number has been introduced to encourage care leavers to contact the after care team for information and advice.

Services and sources of help to young people are also widely promoted within the local community. Posters advertising leaving care support services have been placed in supermarkets, GP's surgeries and public houses so that young people living independently are aware of the help and advice available to them.

Contact: The Care and After Team
Bristol City Council
Ridingleaze House
Lawrence Weston
Bristol
BS11 0QE

Tel: 0117 903 1749

It is important to ensure that young people living outside their local area feel included and have easy access to relevant information both from their responsible authority and the authority where they are living. In areas where the population is particularly dispersed, it may be more difficult to maintain regular contact with young people and disseminate information.

Some local authorities have developed websites in conjunction with care leavers and this can be a good way of delivering information and maintaining consistent communication flows.

Looked After Children and Young People Website, Northumberland

Northumberland County Council has developed a website for looked after young people and care leavers. All libraries and most youth centres offer free internet access so the website is an effective means to communicate with care leavers dispersed across a vast rural area. Looked after young people and care leavers identified what information they wanted on the website and were involved in the planning and design processes alongside a web-designer and digital artist.

The website includes a discussion forum which young people can use to post messages to staff and other young people. The discussion forum is also used to consult young people and involve them in decision making processes. The site has over 400 links to other useful websites including links to learning sites and local schools.

Young people also have access to social services policy documents and e-mail links to a health adviser and an educational support service. Young people are encouraged to provide feedback on the site via a link to the council's children's information and participation officer.

Contact: Northumberland County Council
County Hall
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 2EF

Tel: 01670 533878

Stonethrow Website

Stonethrow is an internet-based information resource for children, young people and the adults and professionals who work with, care for and teach them. It includes information on services for children and families, an A-Z of issues, a news desk and links to many relevant sites. The site also includes several community message forums to enable young people to share and disseminate information. Young people can access and download information and guides relating to leaving care and other issues.

Stonethrow also develops pages for local authorities to show localised information and services incorporating their own logos, with the ability to access the full Stonethrow site.

Contact: info@stonethrow.co.uk
www.stonethrow.co.uk

Tel: 01782 392663

7.2 Clarity about financial arrangements

Fostering independence

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 introduced new financial arrangements for relevant children. These are young people who, whilst they have left care have not yet reached the age of 18. They were introduced so that local authorities' duties to young people that they had looked after were similar to those of a reasonable parent. Local authorities are no longer able to cease financially supporting vulnerable young people who left care before they had legally reached adulthood. This practice had been a significant factor that led to care leavers being socially excluded and more likely to live in poverty than other young people.

The financial arrangements for relevant children are set out in Chapter 9 of the Guidance to the Children (Leaving Care) Act (Department of Health 2001). Pathway Plans for every individual relevant child will include details about how they will be offered financial support. Every young person will have a different set of needs and a different capacity to manage a budget. Some young people will not be ready to assume complete responsibility for their financial affairs and personal maintenance. Pathway Plans must include details about how young people will be supported so that they are enabled to develop competence in money management.

Wherever possible, young people should be helped to establish a bank account so that they can receive payments through this. This will enable them to understand handling money and personal finance. Nevertheless, it needs to be recognised that care leavers may need emergency access to cash payments and local authorities will need to develop contingency arrangements to allow them to offer this service whenever necessary.

Once they are 18 years old, care leavers will be former relevant children and will be expected to access the same sources of financial support as other young adults. Disabled young people may need particular help in identifying and accessing potential sources of financial support. The local authority will have a continuing responsibility to offer financial assistance with the expenses associated with remaining in education and training.

Administering financial support systems

The responsible authority must ensure that young people are offered the financial arrangements that are best suited to their needs, based on an accurate assessment of their circumstances, wants and abilities. The value of this package will usually be above, and should not be any less, than that which a young person would receive if they were entitled to claim benefits. A relevant child has an absolute right for maintenance and accommodation to be provided by their responsible local authority. Discretionary powers should not be used to impose financial penalties on young people that would prevent them from being maintained in suitable accommodation.

The local authority must produce a written schedule, setting out its priorities for funding, so that young people understand their entitlements.

Care Leavers Guide to Financial Help and Support, Waltham Forest

The London Borough of Waltham Forest Social Services has produced a comprehensive and accessible guide to inform young people of the financial help and support they can expect to receive if they are leaving care to live independently.

The guide clearly explains what financial help young people can expect to receive from the social services department, as well as advice on the benefits available to young people aged over 18 who are not working. Detailed advice is included to outline the support available to young people continuing in education and young people who have a child or are expecting a child. It also contains information on rent and accommodation costs and the one off payments or grants young people may be entitled to such as clothing grants, birthday allowances, moving-in grants and education payments.

Contact: 16+ Services
London Borough of Waltham Forest
14 Prospect Hill
London
E17 3EL

Tel: 020 8496 2855

Cross-authority provision

Young people do not have to be living in their responsible authority's area in order to receive their financial support. If a young person moves between local authority boundaries the responsible authority will need to be able to continue to provide financial support using a method that is most appropriate to the needs and maturity of the young person. It may be appropriate either to direct funds straight into a care leavers bank account or transfer funds for administration through the authority in which the young person is living. If the authority where a young person is resident is unable to offer this service to a responsible authority, then the responsible authority may need to identify a local voluntary agency to manage financial support to a young person on their behalf.

There is a particular need to consider contingency plans in the event of a young person losing touch with their responsible authority. Arrangements need to be in place to ensure that young people who disengage from their responsible authority have access to financial support. The responsible authority has a duty to take reasonable steps to re-establish contact so it is vital that young people are given appropriate incentives and opportunities to engage with the wider personal support service.

Cross-Authority Protocols in the North West

The North West After Care Forum has developed a procedure to achieve clarity and consistency as to how local authorities in the North West respond to the needs of care leavers living in or moving into an area outside of their responsible authority. The procedure includes measures to ensure that:

- Wherever possible, the responsible authority provides continuity and remains directly involved in supporting the young person.
- When it is not practical for the responsible authority to directly provide support, it remains actively involved with the young person for three months to ensure a smooth transition between services.
- Meetings take place between the young person and key workers from both authorities to introduce the young person to their new key worker and revise their Pathway Plan.
- Young people receive detailed advice on how they will continue to be supported and information on the services available in the new area.
- Named workers continue to liaise to update the receiving authority as to how they have carried out the legal duties in respect of that young person.

- Young people who have been placed outside of their responsible local authority area can continue to live in that area when they leave care.
- Young people who have made unplanned moves between areas or are estranged from their responsible authority have access to emergency accommodation and financial support.

The protocol has been provisionally agreed by all 22 authorities and is working well to support care leavers in the North West.

Contact: Social Services
Oldham Metropolitan Borough
Council
Marion Walker House
Fredrick Street
Oldham
OL8 2SW

Tel: 0161 626 4947

7.3 Independent advice and advocacy

Care leavers need to have access to independent advice and advocacy. Local authorities should ensure that young people are aware of relevant services that can meet this need. Independent advice and advocacy can be effective in engaging disaffected and harder to reach young people and ensuring services are accountable to the needs of care leavers.

East Cheshire Transitional Advocacy Scheme

The Transitional Advocacy scheme was established in 2000 to meet the needs of young people with learning difficulties. The service develops positive, equal relationships with young people with learning difficulties and helps ensure that they gain access to the same rights, opportunities and experiences as other young people.

The scheme provides advocacy support for young people aged between 14 and 25 years old through the use of volunteer citizen advocates. Young volunteers are recruited and trained to enable service users to receive peer support and become actively involved in making decisions and choices about their lives. The advocates support young people in many ways and can either provide long term support or short term crisis advocacy. Support is provided to respond to individual needs and can include help to make representations to other agencies and access to relevant information and advice.

Contact: East Cheshire Advocacy
The Moss
4-6 Congleton Road
Macclesfield
Cheshire
SK11 7UE

Tel: 01625 534889

Durham Natural Ally Scheme

Durham Social Services works in partnership with The Children's Society to deliver an advocacy scheme to enable disabled children and young people to express their wishes and feelings. Young people identify the person they wish to be their natural ally. The expectation is that this will be a particular worker, carer or family member who means the most to the young person and is already involved in supporting them on their own terms.

The natural ally is given training to prepare them for their role and they spend time with the child or young person to establish their views. The natural ally's role is to speak up for the young person on their own terms in any forums where decisions are being made about their lives. For example, the natural ally can either support young people to attend and participate in reviews, or attend them on their behalf.

Contact: The Children's Society
PACT Yorkshire
George House
York
YO1 9QB

Tel: 01904 639056

preparation for independence as exploring these issues is often part of the process of making sense of the past and moving forward.

Leaving Care/After Care Team, Stoke-on-Trent

Stoke-on-Trent Leaving Care Team has recognised the importance of young people having access to their files. In response to an encouraging increase in the number of young people wishing to access their personal records, the department has seconded a worker to co-ordinate access.

The dedicated officer supports young people through the process and, if necessary, can also help them to access further support or counselling. The officer works to the young person's time scale at this important step in their lives.

Contact: Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Leaving Care/After Care Team
245 Hartshill Road
Stoke-on-Trent
ST4 7NQ

Tel: 01782 233575

Local authorities should ensure that young people are informed how to make complaints and how they can access their files if they should they want to in their future. This should be addressed as part of the

Peer groups

The delivery of information should be sensitive to the fact that many young people access information from their friends and other young people. Local authorities should therefore develop creative mechanisms of information delivery and encourage care leavers to share information.

Caring Around Sheffield Together (CAST)

CAST is a group for young people aged between 10 and 25 who are or have been in the care system. It was started when a group of young people who had been in care researched the needs of other care leavers and identified the need for a support group to help young people combat loneliness and isolation.

The group receives funding from a variety of sources including social services and the Primary Care Trust. Peer mentors staff twice-weekly drop-in sessions at a local youth centre to provide care leavers with informal information and advice, as well as the opportunity to socialise and build networks of support. Young people are also able to access one-to-one sessions from youth workers and receive more intensive therapeutic support from a counselling service.

Care leavers have also been recruited to run a befriending scheme for young people in the care system and to act as mentors to young people at school. These projects enable care leavers to

share their invaluable experience of the care system so that other young people are supported and prepared for leaving care. They also help the peer mentors to gain in confidence and develop skills that will enhance their employment opportunities.

Contact: CAST
Unit 5
Waverley House
10 Joiner Street
Sheffield
S3 8GW

Tel: 0114 279 8889

7.4 Sharing information between service providers

Information sharing is vital for effective partnership working and to ensure that young people are helped to access the network of local services. In order for young people to receive seamless and integrated support it is crucial for all local agencies to be aware of one another and have a good understanding of the range of services on offer. For example, in order for young people to be housed appropriately, service providers must be clear about what accommodation and support they are able to provide and be able to offer young people reliable information about the benefits and limitations of the available accommodation.

Leaving care forums can often facilitate better understanding between service providers and facilitate information sharing mechanisms and protocols. Developing joint training and assessment procedures can also help to develop good working relationships and the flow of communication between agencies. Delivering services in a multi-agency setting can be an excellent way of sharing information and establishing common goals.

Just Drop-In, Macclesfield

Just Drop-In offers a multi-agency approach to advice, information and assistance for those aged between 12 and 25 years old. Situated in shop-fronted premises in the centre of Macclesfield, Just Drop-In provides access to the internet, assistance with CVs and focused information sessions relating to housing, health promotion, substance misuse, careers and counselling.

Agencies involved are local churches, youth service, Citizens Advice Bureau, Connexions, housing department, social services and Macclesfield Accommodation Care and Concern.

Contact: Just Drop-In
17A Chestergate
Macclesfield
Cheshire
SK11 6BX

Tel: 01625 507330



8. Monitoring, evaluating and future planning

8 Monitoring, evaluating and future planning

Introduction

Although the views of those in and leaving care should form an important basis for evaluating a care leaving strategy, local authorities will also need to introduce other performance indicators and measures with which to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of individual services. Monitoring should be used to examine service provision and practice in order to identify any unmet needs and make appropriate changes. It is also important that local authorities record and monitor information about ethnicity and disability so that they can ensure that they are providing inclusive services that respond appropriately to the diverse needs of care leavers.

8.1 Monitoring

Local authorities need to monitor processes and outcomes to inform judgements about how successful preparation for independence work is in enabling young people to make a smooth transition to independence.

Monitoring Keeping in Touch Arrangements, Waltham Forest

The London Borough of Waltham Forest has purchased a computer program that collates information on outcomes for care leavers. The program allows some flexibility in the data collected from the young person, which can be used to follow young people's progress through education, training and employment, as well as their housing situation. The system can also be used to monitor and record contact with young

people and highlight when a contact meeting is due.

Contact: 16+ Services
London Borough of Waltham Forest
14 Prospect Hill
London
E17 3EL

Tel: 020 8496 2855

Monitoring Outcomes for Care Leavers, Ealing

The London Borough of Ealing's Corporate Parent Panel closely monitors the outcomes and life opportunities of young people leaving care. Councillors lead the panel, which includes representatives from young people in and leaving care and the local agencies working to support them. The panel regularly receives reports on:

- The educational achievements of all care leavers and children in care.
- Their health needs.
- Numbers coming into and leaving care and their destinations.
- Numbers engaged in further and higher education and numbers employed or unemployed.
- The housing and support needs of care leavers.
- Social and other achievements of young people in care and care leavers.

A number of key service developments has been introduced in response to the monitoring of outcomes for young people. These include the development and expansion of a drop-in centre that provides a one-stop-shop of education, careers, health, youth work, finance and advocacy support for care leavers. The monitoring has helped to ensure that care leavers have access to computers and specialist finance and housing benefit advice. The panel has secured a commitment from the council to support care leavers in higher and further education with a package of up to £5,000 each year.

Contact: Housing and Social Services
Department
London Borough of Ealing
Town Hall Annexe
Uxbridge Road
London
W5 2HL

Tel: 020 8758 5257

8.2 Evaluating and learning from others

The evaluation of service provision should also be benchmarked against other local authorities to ensure that services are monitored rigorously, to generate provision that results in Best Value, and to share good practice and learn from the experiences of other service providers. It is vital that local authorities share good practice and deliver services of a similar quality in order for care leavers across the country to have the same opportunities and life chances.

The National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum

The National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum provides the opportunity for local authorities to develop service standards, review and benchmark services against these standards and take part in the sharing and development of best practice in leaving care. Service standards are being developed to cover every aspect of the services that local authorities provide for young people.

The Forum is serviced and facilitated by First Key. Local authority members meet for four two-day meetings each year. In between meetings they are engaged on a benchmarking process of data collection and comparison of their leaving care service. Members also have access to a range of First Key training, consultancy and project services.

Since its establishment in 2000 nearly 30 local authorities have taken part in the Forum and most have remained members for at least two years.

Contact: First Key
Leeds Office
Oxford Chambers
Oxford Place
Leeds
LS1 3AX

Tel: 0113 244 3898

The Quality Protects Good Practice Database

Information on the Quality Protects programme can be found on the Department of Health website. The website includes a good practice database, containing information on initiatives and projects that have contributed to the aims of Quality Protects. The entries reflect local circumstances and can be used as a tool in stimulating discussion and consideration of the issues related to Quality Protects and the needs of young people leaving care.

Contact: www.doh.gov.uk/qualityprotects

8.3 Future planning

Local authorities must have systems in place that continually assess and forecast services to best meet the needs of young people as they leave the care system. Local authorities must also have good information upon which to base future planning. Forecasting the need for future services is vital in order to ensure that local authorities work strategically and are fully prepared to respond to the needs of young people when they leave care.

Housing and social services departments also need effective information systems to anticipate how many young people are likely to leave care at any given time and the number and type of accommodation units that may be needed. It is also important to forecast the likely support needs of future care leavers so that services are in place to meet their needs when they start to live more independently.

Kent 16plus Service

The 16plus Service consists of four multi-disciplinary teams created through a partnership between Kent County Council and RPS Rainer. The purpose is to help young people aged 16 and over living in foster or residential care to reach their potential and maximise their options for the future.

Each team has an accommodation officer who manages a supported lodging scheme and develops services in partnership with local housing providers. Through the use of the young person's Pathway Plan and continued statistical monitoring, it calculates the number of young people leaving care each year, the geographic area they wish to live in and the type of accommodation they prefer.

This forecasting enables the accommodation officer to anticipate the number and type of accommodation units likely to be needed by young people leaving care. The officer can then work effectively with local housing providers to offer young people a range of accommodation options including supportive lodgings, flats, bedsits and shared housing.

Contact: 16plus Service
Bishops Terrace
Maidstone
Kent
ME14 1LA

Tel: 01622 772250

Annex A - Contact details

Annex A - Contact details for further information

2 IMPROVING PREPARATION FOR LEAVING CARE

2.1 *Timely preparation*

Hounslow Social Services
The Civic Centre
Lampton Road
Hounslow
TW3 4DN
Tel: 020 8583 3057

The Curriculum and Project Development Unit
Birmingham City Council Youth Service
Ladywood Arts and Leisure Centre
316 Monument Road
Ladywood
Birmingham
B16 8TR
Tel: 0121 464 1709

2.2 *A holistic approach*

16+ Services
London Borough of Waltham Forest
14 Prospect Hill
London
E17 3EL
Tel: 020 8496 2855

2.3 *Creative approaches to delivery*

Cheshire County Council
County Hall
Chester
CH1 1BW
Tel: 01244 602222

Manchester Leaving Care Service
36 Monton Street
Moss Side
Manchester
M14 4LT
Tel: 0161 226 6722

Leaving Care Team
Adolescent Resource Centre
London Borough of Redbridge
Station Road
Barkingside
Essex
IG6 1NB
Tel: 020 8478 3020

MACC
1 Glegg Street
Macclesfield
Cheshire
SK11 7AJ
Tel: 01625 502540

2.4 Cultural issues

Learning and Development Team

Liverpool City Council

Ebony House

Newhall Campus

Longmoor Lane

Fazakerley

Liverpool

L10 1LD

Tel: 0151 521 3181

3 PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATE RANGE OF ACCOMMODATION

3.1 *What is an appropriate range?*

Housing Directorate

London Borough of Redbridge

17-23 Clements Road

Ilford

Essex

IG1 1AG

Tel: 020 8478 3020

Leaving Care Team

Adolescent Resource Centre

London Borough of Redbridge

Station Road

Barkingside

Essex

IG6 1NB

Tel: 020 8478 3020

16+ Services

London Borough of Waltham Forest

14 Prospect Hill

London

E17 3EL

Tel: 020 8496 2855

Holmdene Housing Limited

131 Anerley Road

London

SE20 8AJ

Tel: 020 8778 8275

Centrepont
Central Office
Neil House
7 Whitechapel Road
London
E1 1DU
Tel: 020 7426 5300

Stonham Lillie Road Project
321 Lillie Road
London
SW6 7LL
Tel: 020 7385 4544

3.2 *Joint protocols and multi-agency accommodation strategies*

Centrepont
Central Office
Neil House
7 Whitechapel Road
London
E1 1DU
Tel: 020 7426 5300

Welwyn Hatfield Council
51 Bridge Road East
Welwyn Garden City
Hertfordshire
AL7 1JR
Tel: 01707 357000

Housing Directorate
London Borough of Redbridge
17-23 Clements Road
Ilford
Essex
IG1 1AG
Tel: 020 8478 3020

Corporate Parent (Housing Needs)
London Borough of Lambeth
190 Kennington Lane
London
SE11 5DX
Tel: 020 7926 6304

4 TAILORING INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT FOR CARE LEAVERS

4.1 *Role of the personal adviser*

NCH London Region
22 Lucerne Road
London
N5 1TZ
Tel: 020 7704 7070

4.2 *Developing networks of support*

Daybreak Family Group Conferences
5 Vears Lane
Colden Common
Winchester
Hants
SO21 1TQ
Tel: 01962 717373

Care Leavers Association (CLA)
59 Peverel House
Stour Road
Dagenham
Essex
RM10 7HZ
Tel: 0161 881 5510

Friends for Leisure
Weston Community Centre
Earlsway
Macclesfield
Cheshire
SK11 8RL
Tel: 01625 613433

16+ Services
London Borough of Waltham Forest
14 Prospect Hill
London
E17 3EL
Tel: 020 8496 2855

Kent Community Housing Trust
Bridgewood House
8 Laker Road
Rochester
Kent
ME1 3QX
Tel: 01634 869880

4.3 *Specific support and improved transition between services*

Youthful Minds

25 Covent Garden

Middle Hillgate

Stockport

SK1 3AX

Tel: 0161 477 1598

Leaving Care Team

London Borough of Hounslow

8 School Road

Hounslow

Middlesex

TW3 1QZ

Tel: 0117 903 1749

Leaving Care Team

Adolescent Resource Centre

London Borough of Redbridge

Station Road

Barkingside

Essex

IG6 1NB

Tel: 020 8478 3020

IMPACT Project

Addaction

59 Compton Road

London

N1 2YT

Tel: 020 7704 1700

GLYAM

Cheshire County Council

Youth Services

Nexus House

Thackeray Drive

Chester

CH3 5LP

Tel: 01625 501203

Wakefield Young Families Project

Flanshaw Childrens Centre

6 Springfield Grange

Flanshaw

Wakefield

WF2 9QP

Tel: 01924 304152

5 ACCESSING EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

5.1 *Support with education*

Department of Social Services
Wigan Council
80 Ribble Road
Platt Bridge
Wigan
WN2 5EW
Tel: 01942 769763

University of Southampton
Highfield
Southampton
SO17 1BJ
Tel: 02380 592564

Joint Educational Trust
6 Lovat Lane
London
EC3R 8DT
Tel: 020 7283 3445

The Buttle Trust
Audley House
13 Palace Street
London
SW1E 5HX
Tel: 020 7828 7311

5.2 *Support with training and employment*

The Who Cares? Trust
Kemp House
152-160 City Road
London
EC1V 2NP
Tel: 020 7251 3117

Leaving Care/After Care Team
Stoke on Trent City Council
245 Hartshill Road
Stoke on Trent
ST4 7NQ
Tel: 01782 233575

Services for Children and Families
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council
Civic Centre
Regent Street
Gateshead
NE8 1HH
Tel: 0191 433 2475

6 IMPROVING THE PARTICIPATION OF CARE LEAVERS

Housing and Social Services

Luton Borough Council

Unity House

111 Stuart Street

Luton

LU1 5NP

Tel: 01582 547622

Manchester Leaving Care Service

36 Monton Street

Moss Side

Manchester

M14 4LT

Tel: 0161 226 6722

Dorset County Council

County Hall

Dorchester

Dorset

DT1 1XJ

Tel: 01305 224643

National Children's Bureau

8 Wakley Street

London

EC1V 7QE

Tel: 020 7843 6000

7 PROVIDING CLEAR INFORMATION FOR CARE LEAVERS

7.1 Creative approaches to delivering information to care leavers

Leicestershire County Council

County Hall

Glenfield

Leicester

LE3 8RL

Tel: 0116 265 7404

Northumberland County Council

County Hall

Morpeth

Northumberland

NE61 2EF

Tel: 01670 533878

The Care and After Team

Bristol City Council

Ridingleaze House

Lawrence Weston

Bristol

BS11 0QE

Tel: 0117 903 1749

Stonethrow

Info@stonethrow.co.uk

www.stonethrow.co.uk

Tel: 01782 392663

7.2 *Clarity about financial arrangements*

16+ Services

London Borough of Waltham Forest
14 Prospect Hill
London
E17 3EL
Tel: 020 8496 2855

Social Services

Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Marion Walker House
Fredrick Street
Oldham
OL8 2SW
Tel: 0161 626 4947

7.3 *Independent advice and advocacy*

East Cheshire Advocacy

The Moss
4-6 Congleton Road
Macclesfield
Cheshire
SK11 7UE
Tel: 01625 534889

The Children's Society

PACT Yorkshire
George House
York
YO1 9QB
Tel: 01904 639056

Leaving Care/After Care Team

Stoke on Trent City Council
245 Hartshill Road
Stoke on Trent
ST4 7NQ
Tel: 01782 233575

CAST

Unit 5
Waverley House
10 Joiner Street
Sheffield
S3 8GW
Tel: 0114 279 8889

7.4 *Sharing information between service providers*

Just Drop-In

17A Chestergate
Macclesfield
Cheshire
SK11 6BX
Tel: 01625 507330

8 MONITORING, EVALUATING AND FUTURE PLANNING

8.1 *Monitoring*

16+ Services

London Borough of Waltham Forest
14 Prospect Hill
London
E17 3EL
Tel: 020 8496 2855

Housing and Social Services Department

London Borough of Ealing
Town Hall Annexe
Uxbridge Road
London
W5 2HL
Tel: 020 8758 5257

8.2 *Evaluating and learning from others*

First Key

Leeds Office
Oxford Chambers
Oxford Place
Leeds
LS1 3AX
Tel: 0113 244 3898

Quality Protects

www.doh.gov.uk/qualityprotects/index.htm.

8.3 *Future planning*

16Plus Service

Bishops Terrace
Maidstone
Kent
ME14 1LA
Tel: 01622 772250

OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS

Department of Health
www.doh.gov.uk

Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions
www.dtlr.gov.uk

Centrepoint
www.centrepoint.org.uk

Connexions
www.connexions.gov.uk

Supporting People
www.spkweb.org.uk

Children and Young People's Unit
www.dfes.gov.uk/cypu

Annex B - Definitions

Annex B - Definitions

STANDARD 6 OF THE NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR CHILDREN'S HOMES

Standard 6.1 requires that –

[The registered manager of a children's home] ensures that there is a comprehensive plan for young people preparing to leave care and to move into independent or semi-living, which specifies the support and assistance that they will need to enable a successful transition into adulthood, and which is implemented in practice. This plan is consistent with the young person's placement plan and any care plan, and is consistent with and also contributes to the Pathway Plan and any transition plan for children with disabilities and special educational needs.

Standard 6.7 requires that –

The daily life of the home provides opportunities for all children in the home, appropriate to the age and needs of each child, for the development of knowledge and skills needed by the child for future independent living.

Children's Homes: National Minimum Standards (Department of Health 2002)
www.doh.gov.uk/ncsc

CHILDREN (LEAVING CARE) ACT 2000 – SUMMARY OF AVAILABLE SERVICES

Who is affected?

Eligible children	<p><i>Children Act 1989</i> <i>Schedule 2 Part II</i> 19B(2) In sub paragraph (1) “eligible child” means, subject to subparagraph (3), a child who:</p> <p>a) is aged sixteen or seventeen; and</p> <p>b) has been looked after by a local authority for a prescribed period, or periods amounting in all to a prescribed period, which began after he reached a prescribed age and ended after he reached the age of 16.</p> <p><i>Children (Leaving Care)</i> <i>Regulations 2001 Regulation 3</i> 1) For the purposes of 19B(2)(b) of Schedule 2 to the Act, the prescribed period is 13 weeks and the prescribed age is 14. Relevant children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who are still looked-after.
Relevant children	<p><i>Children Act 1989</i> 23A(2) in subsection (1) “relevant child” means (subject to subsection (3)) a child who:</p> <p>a) is not being looked after by any local authority;</p> <p>b) was, before last ceasing to be looked after, an eligible child for the purposes of paragraph 19B of Schedule 2; and</p> <p>c) is aged sixteen or seventeen.</p> <p><i>Children (Leaving Care) Regulations 2001 Regulation 4</i> 2) For the purposes of section 23A(3), the category of children described in paragraph (2) is an additional category of relevant children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, and have been looked after at some time while 16 or 17, and who have left care. <p>Additional groups of relevant children are those who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Would have been relevant children but for the fact that on their 16th birthday they were detained through the criminal justice system, or in hospital.

	<p>3) Any child aged 16 or 17 (not being subject to a care order¹) who:</p> <p>a) at the time when he attains the age of 16 is detained or in hospital; and</p> <p>b) immediately before being detained or admitted to hospital was accommodated by a local authority for a period of at least 13 weeks which began after he reached the age of 14.</p> <p>4) For the purposes of this regulation, “detained” means detained in a remand centre², a young offender institution or a secure training centre, or any other institution pursuant to an order of a court.</p> <p>7) Where a family placement within the meaning of paragraph (5) breaks down and the child ceases to live with the person concerned, the child is to be treated as a relevant child.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have returned home but the return has broken down.
Former relevant children	<p><i>Children Act 1989</i></p> <p>23C(1) Each local authority shall have the duties provided for in this section towards:</p> <p>a) a person who has been a relevant child for the purposes of section 23A (and would be one if he were under eighteen), and in relation to whom they were the last responsible authority; and</p> <p>b) a person who was being looked after by them when he attained the age of eighteen, and immediately before ceasing to be looked after was an eligible child, and in this section such a person is referred to as a “former relevant child”.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people aged 18-21 who have been either eligible or relevant children, or both. If at the age of 21 the young person is still being helped by the responsible authority with education or training, he or she remains a former relevant child to the end of the agreed programme of education or training even if that takes him or her past the age of 21.

1 A “care order” is defined in section 105(1) of the Act by reference to section 31(11) of that Act.

2 For remand centres, young offender institutions and secure training centres, see section 43 of the Prison Act 1952 (15&16 Geo 16 and Eliz 2 c. 52) as amended by the Criminal Justice Act 1982 (c. 48) section 11, Criminal Justice Act 1988 (c. 33), paragraphs 11 and 12 of schedule 15, and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (c. 37), paragraph 6 of Schedule 8.

<p>Qualifying children and young people over 16</p>	<p><i>Children Act 1989</i></p> <p>24 (1) In this Part “a person qualifying for advice and assistance” means a person who:</p> <p>a) is under twenty-one; and</p> <p>b) at any time after reaching the age of sixteen but while still a child was, but is no longer, looked after, accommodated or fostered.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any young person aged under 21 (under 24 if in education or training) who ceases to be looked after or accommodated in a variety of other settings, or privately fostered, after the age of 16. This includes: • Young people who leave care after October 2001, at or after the age of 16, but do not qualify as eligible children. • Young people who left care before October 2001.
<p>The responsible authority</p>	<p><i>Children Act 1989</i></p> <p>23A(4) In subsection (1) the “responsible local authority” is the one which last looked after the child.</p>	<p>The council which last looked after the child or young person.</p>

Who gets what?

<p>Eligible children</p>	<p><i>Part II Schedule 2 paragraph 19C</i></p> <p>A local authority shall arrange for each child whom they are looking after who is an eligible child for the purposes of paragraph 19B to have personal adviser.</p> <p><i>Part II Schedule 2 paragraph 19B(4)</i></p> <p>For each eligible child, the local authority shall carry out an assessment of his needs with a view to determining what advice, assistance and support it would be appropriate to provide him under this Act:</p> <p>a) while they are still looking after him; and</p> <p>b) after they cease to look after him.and shall then prepare a Pathway Plan for him.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the provisions of the looked-after system. • Personal adviser. • Needs assessment. • Pathway Plan.
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Relevant children	<p><i>Section 23B(2)</i> It is the duty of each local authority to appoint a personal adviser for each relevant child (if they have not already done so under paragraph 219C of Schedule 2).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal adviser.
	<p><i>Section 23B(3)</i> It is the duty of each local authority, in relation to any relevant child who does not already have a Pathway Plan prepared for the purposes of paragraph 19B of Schedule 2:</p> <p>a) to carry out an assessment of his needs with a view to determining what advice, assistance and support it would be appropriate for them to provide him under this Part; and</p> <p>b) to prepare a Pathway Plan for him.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs assessment. • Pathway Plan. • Accommodation and maintenance Section 23B(8). • Assistance to achieve the goals (eg educational goals) agreed and set out in the Pathway Plan.
	<p><i>Section 23B(8)</i> The responsible local authority shall safeguard and promote the child's welfare and, unless they are satisfied that his welfare does not require it, support him by:</p> <p>a) maintaining him;</p> <p>b) providing him with or maintaining him in suitable accommodation; and</p> <p>c) providing such other support as may be prescribed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The responsible authority must keep in touch

	<p><i>Section 23B(11)</i> If the local authority have lost touch with a relevant child, despite taking reasonable steps to keep in touch, they must without delay:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> consider how to re-establish contact; and take reasonable steps to do so, and while the child is a relevant child must continue to take such steps until they succeed. <p><i>Regulation 11</i> For the purposes of section 23B(8)(c) (support for relevant children), the responsible local authority must provide assistance, which may be in cash, in order to meet the child's needs in relation to education, training or employment as provided for in his Pathway Plan.</p>	
Former relevant children	<p><i>Section 23C(2)</i> It is the duty of a local authority to take reasonable steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> to keep in touch with a former relevant child whether he is in their areas or not; and if they lose touch with him, to re-establish contact. <p><i>Section 23C(3)</i> It is the duty of a local authority:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> to continue the appointment of a personal adviser for a former relevant child; and to keep his Pathway Plan under regular review. <p><i>Section 23C(4)(a)</i> It is the duty of the local authority to give a former relevant child:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> assistance of the kind referred to in section 24B(1), to the extent that his welfare requires it; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The responsible authority must keep in touch. • Personal adviser • Pathway Plan • Assistance with employment • Assistance with education and training. • Assistance in general.

	<p>b) assistance of the kind referred to in section 24B(2), to the extent that his welfare and educational or training needs require it;</p> <p>c) other assistance, to the extent that his welfare requires it.</p> <p><i>Section 23C (7)</i> If the former relevant child's Pathway Plan sets out a programme of education or training which extends beyond his twenty-first birthday:</p> <p>a) the duty set out in subsection (4)(b) continues to subsist for so long as the former relevant child continues to pursue that programme; and</p> <p>b) the duties set out in subsections (2) and (3) continue to subsist concurrently with that duty.</p> <p><i>Section 23C(9)</i> Section 24B(5) applies in relation to a person being given assistance under subsection (4)(b) as it applies in relation to a person to whom section 24B(3) applies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vacation accommodation for higher education or residential further education if needed.
<p>Qualifying children and young people over 16</p>	<p><i>Section 24A(3)</i> If the conditions are satisfied:</p> <p>a) they shall advise and befriend him if he was being looked after by a local authority or was accommodated by or on behalf of a voluntary organisation; and</p> <p><i>Section 24(4)</i> In the case of a person qualifying for advice and assistance by virtue of subsection (2)(a), it is the duty of the local authority which last looked after him to take such steps as they think appropriate to contact him at such times as they think appropriate with a view to discharging their functions under sections 24A and 24B.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The same benefits as under section 24 before amendment <p>In addition,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The responsible authority must keep in touch with local authority care leavers as they think appropriate in order to discharge their functions under sections 24A and 24B

Section 24B(3)

This subsection applies to any person who:

- a) is under 24; and
- b) qualifies for advice and assistance by virtue of section 24(2)(a), or would have done so if he were under twenty-one.

Section 24B(5)

Where the local authority are satisfied that a person to whom subsection (3) applies who is in full-time further or higher education needs accommodation during a vacation because his term-time accommodation is not available to him then, they shall give him assistance by:

- a) providing him with suitable accommodation during the vacation; or
- b) paying him enough to enable him to secure such accommodation himself.

- Local authority care leavers are entitled to assistance with education and training up to the age of 24.
- Local authority care leavers are entitled to vacation accommodation for Higher Education courses or residential Further Education courses if necessary.

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