Supporting Care Leavers

1. **Purpose**
   1. This policy shall apply to all employees of Omega Care Group including full-time staff, part-time staff, temporary staff and bank staff.
   2. This policy shall apply to all young people admitted into the care of Omega Care Group
   3. This policy outlines Omega Care Group’s commitment to support children and young people to grow, flourish and achieve, through a positive environment.
2. **Guidance and Legislation** 
   1. The policy applies to:
      1. The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers (January 2015)
      2. The Care Standard Act 2000
      3. The Care Leaver's Charter
      4. Department of Education, applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers (2017)
      5. Extending Personal Adviser Support to All Care Leavers to Age 25: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (February 2018)
      6. Local Offer Guidance: Guidance for Local Authorities
   2. This policy applies to the following Regulation in the Children Homes Regulations 2015:
      1. The Care Planning Standard (Regulation 14)
      2. The Children’s Views, Wishes and Feelings standards (Regulation 7)
      3. Engaging with the Wider System to Ensure Each Child’s Needs are Met (Regulation 5)
3. **Definitions** 
   1. Eligible Young People
      1. Aged 16 or 17 years of age and have been Looked After for a period or periods totalling at least 13 weeks. This must be after their 14th birthday and are still Looked After.
      2. Series of short-term placements of up to four weeks where the child has returned to the parent does not meet this criterion.
      3. There is a duty to support these young people up to the age of 18.
   2. Relevant Young People
      1. Aged 16 or 17 years of age and are no longer Looked After. Previously would have met the criteria of Eligible Young Person when Looked After however returned to the care of parent for 6 months following leaving care.
      2. A young person is also "relevant" if, having been looked after for three months or more, he or she is then detained after their 16th birthday either in hospital, remand centre, young offenders' institution or secure training centre. There is a duty to support relevant young people up to the age of 18.
   3. Former Relevant Young People
      1. They are aged 18 to 21 (or up to 24 if in full-time further or higher education) and have left the Looked After service having been previously either "eligible", "relevant" or both. Consideration is required regarding the need to support these young people. Placing Authorities also have a duty to pay a higher education bursary.
   4. Qualifying Young People
      1. They are over the age of 16 and under the age of 21, and have been Looked After or, if disabled, Privately Fostered after reaching 16, but do not qualify as eligible, relevant or former relevant. They may receive support, advice and assistance.
   5. Personal Adviser
      1. Individual appointed to support eligible young person, relevant young person, or former relevant child.
      2. Must be updated on the young person’s progress and wellbeing.
      3. It is of best practice, they are introduced within the first Looked After Review after the young person's 16th birthday and will occupy a key role in preparing the young person for independence and providing support after they cease to be looked after.
      4. Responsible Authority will detail the scheduling of appointing personal advisors.
      5. The personal advisor is an essential role in the assessment, planning and review of services as set out in the Pathway Plan.
      6. Where accommodation is provided to a young person by the responsible authority under section 23B or section 24B of the Children Act 1989, the Personal Adviser must visit the Relevant child or Former Relevant child at that accommodation:
         * Within 7 days of the accommodation first being provided.
         * Before the review of the Pathway Plan
         * Intervals no longer than two months.
   6. Pathway Plan
      1. Details the parameters of the journey to the young person leaving care and required support needs
      2. The duration of the plan can exceed their admission into Omega Care Group and is valid until they are 21; and up to 24 if in education.
4. **Procedure** 
   1. The responsibility of the preparations and planning of a young person leaving care is located with the Placing Authority.
   2. Each local authority should have its own procedures for young people Leaving Care,
   3. Omega Care Group will seek copies of procedures for the arrangements of leaving care and will work in conjunction with social workers to embed a robust leaving care plan. The procedures for each local authority are termed ‘Local Offers’.
   4. Omega Care Group, recognise from time to time, procedures from the placing authority may be absent, therefore Omega will seek the following actions:
      1. Staff in the home must help the young person prepare for transition regarding self-help skills and living independently and assist in the pathway planning process.
   5. Omega Care Group will support young people to achieve the required skills necessary to support them to leave care successfully through:
      * 1. Independent Living Program
        2. Compass
        3. Training hub
        4. Key work or development Sessions (sector dependant)
        5. Completion of essential documentation pack
        6. Registering with relevant housing associations and housing scheme
        7. Registering with relevant employment and benefit support.
      1. Omega Care Group will advocate for eligible, relevant, and former relevant young people (where relevant) to receive a multi-agency assessment of their needs and abilities to live independently. This will be informed by the ongoing assessment, planning and review which takes place throughout the period they are Looked After.
      2. Staff will advocate for a Pathway Plan is created central to the above assessment.
         1. The Pathway Plan will continue in place for eligible, relevant, and former relevant young people.
      3. The young person will be encouraged to have a copy of their pathway plan alongside one being stored in the relevant young person’s file.
      4. The Pathway Plan should be reflective of their Residential Care Plan and be regularly reviewed (Children Residential only)
         1. Where the young person remains to be in the care of the local authority, the placement plan requires details of the arrangements to achieve the pathway plan.
         2. The Placement Plan will continue to be the responsibility of the home where the young person is placed and must outline the arrangements in place for supporting the Pathway Plan. The Placement plan is a local authority document however the home must have clear communication to ensure the remit of the provision is clarified with the local authority.
         3. Children Residential will ensure all Residential Care Plan will aid the development of skills required for adult hood.