

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

THROUGHCHARE & AFTERCARE SERVICES

OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE AND PROCEDURES

Throughcare Policy and Procedures

Introduction

Policy should express the fundamental values, philosophy and culture of the organisation specific to. Throughcare Policy is the responsibility to act as a parent ensuring that the young person is prepared for independent life. Any service offered should express the rights of the individual and act with consistency and integrity. The service should be made available to all care leavers and those young people who have had substantial social work involvement.

Premise

Young people who have been accommodated by the Local Authority should not be expected to survive on their own without adequate support. Their personal history has often been characterised by traumatic experiences and disruption and as a result suffer limited life chances. They are, however, often expected to attain a degree of maturity well beyond that of the majority of their peers who remain within the family home until their early twenties.

Principles

The transition towards independence is a gradual and natural process. Individual young people will be ready for independence at varying stages of their life depending on their own unique circumstances.

Preparation towards adult life for a young person in care should be an ongoing process which develops throughout their time in care, especially during early adolescence. Young people should leave residential care when they are ready rather than at a predetermined chronological age.

Preparation and planning for young people requires significant resources to be made available if the young person is to have any meaningful choice in their future. Without sufficient resources allocated to the Throughcare process, the considerable investment made in receiving and maintaining a child in care may never be fully utilised.

Young people have the right to be consulted about every aspect of their transition towards independence. Only through working in partnership within the preparation and planning process can any support be meaningful. It is essential to recognise the diversity of the needs and wants of young people and respond sensitively.

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

Any young person leaving care should not expect to be isolated or lonely. Everyone in the community is inter dependant on others for social and personal needs. Hence, the expectation of a young person living independently should not mean that they must manage or cope alone.

Principles

Many young people leaving care want to return home to their parents and family. This desire should always be an assessed option within the Throughcare process.

Any preparation for a young person moving towards adulthood should respect and incorporate their diversity in relation to gender, sexuality and disability.

The preparation for young people living independently should involve the significant people in their lives. Within this network the young person should be central with his/her best interests at the fore in the formulation and implementation of all plans for their future.

Above all moving towards independence is a psycho-social transition. Therefore while practical skills are important, high priority must be placed on developing the self esteem and confidence of the young person with particular reference to interpersonal and relationship skills.

Moving towards independence is difficult for all young people with or without support from family or friends. Recognition that planned arrangements are not working is not an admission of failure.

Objectives

To assist and enable young people we work with to:

- a) Build relationships with others.
- b) Increase their self esteem.
- c) Develop practical and financial skills and knowledge.
- d) Create a safe and stable personal environment.

To advocate for young people in exercising their rights.

To assist departmental colleagues in preparing and implementing planned programmes relevant to the needs of the young people.

To establish positive relationships with Housing providers and develop a range of accommodation resources pertinent to the needs of young people, this will include supported flats and supported carers.

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

To engage in inter-disciplinary team work with those people providing the care, educational and health needs of the young person.

To encourage and support young people towards involvement in training, employment and leisure pursuits.

Objectives

To operate a Duty System within the Team between the hours of 09.00 and 17.00 (Mon – Fri).

To offer a service which recognises the need for flexibility, including access to the project between 09.00 and 21.00 (seven days per week).

To offer an Intensive Support Flat on a planned admission basis, with one bed reserved for emergency / direct access.

To provide a range of interventive methods, including group work and Drop-in facility, aimed at enabling young people to manage those problems / difficulties that might undermine their transition to independence.

To produce training materials and information packages relevant to young people moving towards adulthood.

To maintain records sufficient to ensure that planned programmes are implemented with efficiency and effectiveness.

To continually evaluate and critically assess the Throughcare service in order to ensure that it offers the highest quality of service to the young people.

Procedure for Referral

Request is made for a referral to Throughcare. Any request for Throughcare input should be based on the Social Workers assessment of the young person in conjunction with decisions / recommendations of a Child Care Review / Planning meeting.

All young people who are looked after and accommodated should be referred in writing to the Throughcare Team by the appropriate person (Social Worker, Residential Worker etc) when the young person is no younger than 15 years and 6 months. A pro forma referral form is available from the Throughcare Team, this also includes a form for the young person to complete. The referral should be accompanied by the latest SBR, LAC review report, and a care plan outlining that the young person is moving towards independence.

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

Once the Throughcare Team have received the referral forms they will send out a letter of confirmation to the worker and the young person. This letter will confirm that we have received the referral and will outline the next stage in the process.

The Throughcare Team meet every Tuesday to review recent referrals. At this meeting we will discuss the referral and look at the SBR and LAC minutes. If the Throughcare Team feel they are in a position to offer a service to the young person they will allocate a worker to the case. The Throughcare Team will respond with their decision within 48 hours of the referral being discussed.

Procedure for Referral

If the referral is successful the Throughcare worker will arrange to send out an information pack to the young person within 48 hours, this pack contains the basic information about the service and what the young person can expect from the Throughcare Team.

The Throughcare worker will arrange to meet the young person and the Social Worker within a week of the referral being accepted. This meeting will be informal and will give the young person an opportunity to meet the allocated worker. If the young person is from one of our Children's Units then there is every chance they will already know the worker but the meeting will still be arranged.

Within two weeks of the referral being accepted the allocated worker will arrange for a Core Group meeting to be set up. This meeting will be the main meeting to look at the areas of work that will be tackled by the Throughcare Team. The Throughcare worker will be responsible for arranging this meeting as well as sending out invites and arranging a minute of the meeting. (Core Group details on next page).

There will be a further Core Group meeting that will take place two months after the initial Core Group meeting. This meeting will evaluate how the work has been progressing and identify any other areas of work that may need to be undertaken.

There is a separate paper available which outlines the Core Group process. This also provides a 'flow chart' for easy reference.

The Throughcare Team will also accept self-referrals from young people who no longer have Social Work involvement, but who may benefit from a Throughcare Service. There is a separate leaflet available for this particular service which young people can access at Area Teams etc.

If the Throughcare Team decide that a young person is not ready for the service or that further care planning is required then the Throughcare Team will monitor this at 3 monthly intervals in order to ascertain the outcomes of alternative plans. There is a flow chart available outlining the process for re-referral.

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

Membership of Core Group

Core Members: Young Person
 Social Worker
 Throughcare Worker
 Co-ordinator (Residential)
 Foster Parent / Carer

Other members to be included as appropriate and dependant on wishes of the young person. For example parents, relatives, school, employer etc.

Aims of Meeting

To identify and discuss with the young person the main areas of preparation necessary for independence, and to address specific areas where further development is required. Issues to be addressed to include personal care, social networks, accommodation, income, education, training, health, leisure, finances, cooking and life history. For young people with special needs there may be other / additional areas which need to be addressed which are more relevant to their needs and which should be discussed at this stage.

A workable plan in detailing specific goals and objectives to be compiled with tasks and roles agreed amongst the group members. For example, it may be that a young person attends the projects group work programme, or takes responsibility for a certain aspect of their money management. (The assessment process should last approximately 6 weeks).

To decide on and notify those individuals who will attend subsequent planning meetings of the Core Group, having regard to the needs and wants of the young person. The date of the next meeting should be within a period of 4-8 weeks.

Minutes of the meeting should be distributed to all members by the Throughcare worker, incorporating specific details of agreed tasks and time scales, and the date and location of future meetings.

The Throughcare worker will commence an assessment of the young person in those areas pertinent to his / her transition to independence. Also, a comprehensive introduction should be given to the young person in relation to Throughcare Support Team, including availability of regular group activities and Drop-in facilities.

The Social Worker will continue to hold responsibility for the case management of the young person.

Preparation for the transition towards independence remains a process in which all core members' play and integral part, and ongoing assessment of needs of the young

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

person at this stage must remain a focused part of work with the young person by the Social Worker and carer(s).

Subsequent Planning Meetings

To review the assessment process and check the effectiveness of plans made at previous meetings. The planning and delegation of responsibilities should be an ongoing process within each meeting of the core group members. Meetings should occur every 4-6 weeks with the Throughcare worker responsible for organising and ensuring each member of the group receives minutes of the meeting.

Child Care Reviews (LAC)

The Throughcare worker should give a summary of the progress at core group meetings at the Child Care Review. When appropriate core group meetings may be postponed if it is felt that the Child Care Review will address the necessary issues with the relevant members present.

Consideration should be given at each Child Care Review as to the appropriateness of any Supervision Order, and to the time when the legal status might change to coincide with the leaving care plan.

Accommodation Resources

Any discussion by the core group as to the most appropriate form of accommodation should refer for advice to the Throughcare Team, who will hold current information and knowledge regarding local accommodation resources and will advise on the options available. Options which are currently available or which are in the process of being developed are:

- Furnished Flats (Being developed with housing)
- Own Tenancy
- NCH Hostel
- Supported Carers (Being developed)
- Return to the Family Home
- Hostel Accommodation
- Bed & Breakfast
- Barnardos 16+ (2 Places)

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

Moving Out

When the young person is offered accommodation, the Throughcare worker will co-ordinate a planning meeting with the core group immediately.

The purpose of this meeting is:

- a) To decide if the young person is ready to move to the proposed accommodation.
- b) To assess the suitability of the accommodation.
- c) What work (furnishings / decorations) will be required to upgrade the accommodation to acceptable standards for the young person and the department?
- d) To ensure necessary financial arrangements have been made and all appropriate income and benefits have been accessed.
- e) Establish a suitable time scale for moving to the new accommodation.
- f) To set contingency plans in the event of the current plan being unsuccessful. It is often the reality that even well planned moves from care establishments can break down shortly after the young person has moved to their new accommodation. It is therefore necessary that a 'return to home' policy be part of any contingency plan in the event of the young person suffering stress or difficulty at the early stages of their move from the establishment they are leaving. This should be achieved by maintaining the young persons bed open until the planned assessment meeting which will take place $\frac{3}{4}$ weeks after the move.

Not only does a return home policy minimise the disruption for the young person involved, it would serve to reduce the anxiety that many young people have towards leaving care, thus serving as essential preventative strategy within the Throughcare process.

This system should operate in all circumstances, i.e. moving to Supported Carer, Own Tenancy, Supported Tenancy etc.

The available options should be discussed prior to the transition so that the young person understands how the support system will operate.

Where accommodation is planned with approved Supported Carers or on a shared tenancy basis, the young person should have a series of planned introductory meetings prior to the placement commencing.

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

Financial Assistance / Grants for Setting up Home

In order to facilitate the furnishing, decorating and equipping of an accommodation, the following should be considered:

Community Care Grant

Application should be made to D.S.S. for a Community Care Grant immediately following a formal offer of accommodation. This grant is intended for the purchase of furniture, household equipment and bedding.

If a young person is refused a Community Care Grant the Social Worker or Throughcare worker, where appropriate, assist that person on requesting a review of the decision by the Social Fund Officer.

Section 29

A grant from the Social Work Department under Section 29 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 should be assessed since the items for which the D.S.S. allows payment are insufficient to meet the standards which the Department wishes to set for young people in Local Authority care.

The young persons spending of Section 29 money or a Community Care Grant will need supervising e.g. Throughcare worker, Social Worker, Residential Co-ordinator. Any such arrangements should be recorded in the written agreement from the planning meeting.

Financial Assistance to Tenants in Rented Accommodation

For young people moving into a more independent setting an application, if appropriate, should be made for Housing Benefit prior to the tenancy placement commencing. This will now come under the THB agreement as of 2004.

Supported Lodgings

Payment to Supported Carer providers will be made up from a combination of Housing Benefit and contributions from the Social Work Department and young person.

Moving In

The Throughcare Worker should work through the 'Moving In' checklist with the young person, ensuring that their immediate needs are being met. Practical details of assistance needed to move in should be arranged amongst the core group with clear decisions on areas of responsibility.

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

Follow Up Visits

Every effort should be made to ensure that the young persons move into their new home is a positive and enjoyable experience. It is important to be aware that the initial euphoria a young person may feel when moving into a place of their own can rapidly disappear. Loneliness and isolation, combined with low income, create difficulties for many young people striving to establish an independent lifestyle. It is in this period, immediately after the move, that the young person may be in most need of assistance and support.

Visits

The Throughcare worker should ensure that either they in person or another member of the core group arrange to visit the young person:

- (1) Daily for the first week
- (2) Twice weekly for four weeks thereafter

Such visits are in addition to the group work support (Forums) and Drop- in facilities offered to the young people involved with the Throughcare Support Team.

A meeting of the core group should be held within 4 weeks of the young person's move to discuss the progress and problems of the young person, the future pattern of the support and visiting, and the appropriateness of his/her previous placement being kept open. It is at this point, that if there is no immediate need for the young person to return to previous accommodation that the bed space can be considered vacant.

After Care Review

A core Group review should be held 1 month after the young person has left their residential or foster care placement in order to evaluate the Throughcare programme and to decide on any necessary changes to existing plans.

Follow –up Core Group Meeting

Six months after the young person has moved into their new accommodation (i.e. Three months after the core group review) the Core Group should meet to assess the current situation and ensure that the future support needs of the young person will be planned for. Consideration will also be given to the appropriateness of the closure of the case by the Social Worker.

Case Closure

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

It is essential that the decision to close a case by the Social Worker be made according to the needs of the individual young person and not based on chronological age. Any withdrawal by the Social Worker should not occur prior to the 6 month Follow – up Core Group meeting where a full assessment of the need for continued social work involvement can be made, at the planning meeting in consultation with those involved in the support of the young person.

Ongoing Support

The young person will continue to be involved in receiving a service from the Throughcare Support Team in accordance to their wishes.

Contents:

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Management Structure**
- 3. Referrals**
- 4. Planned Placements**
- 5. Respite and Emergency Placement**
- 6. Transfer of Placement**
- 7. Young People Returning to Care Placement from an Aftercare Placement**
- 8. Links with Children's Units**
- 9. Links with Residential Schools**
- 10. Links with Family Placement**
- 11. Supported Carers**

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

12. Supported Tenancies

13. Links with Independent Providers

THROUGH CARE AND AFTER SERVICES:

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This note provides advice to operational units about the structure, objective, responsibilities and procedures of the Throughcare and Aftercare Team at Stewart Street Social Work Office.

1.2 Throughcare is the process by which the local authority plans and prepares a young person they are looking after, for the time when he or she will cease to be looked after.

Aftercare is the provision of advice, guidance and assistance when a young person ceases to be looked after.

1.3 The Throughcare and Aftercare Team will work from a young person's centred perspective and will apply the core principles from the children's (Scotland) 1995 in its approach:

- The Welfare of the young person is the paramount consideration
- The views of the young person should be ascertained and taken into account in respect of any significant decision about him/her.
- The local authority has a duty to provide advice and assistance with a view to preparing the young person for when he/she is no longer looked after by the local authority.
- The local authority has a duty unless they are satisfied that the young person's welfare does not require it. To advise, guide and assist young people in their area who were being looked after at school leaving age or thereafter and who are not yet 19 years of age.

1.4 The Throughcare and Aftercare Team will work collaboratively with area teams and other operational units in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for children.

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

1.5 The Throughcare and Aftercare Team are committed to ensuring the highest standards of practise when working with young people, within this we will also strive to achieve the principles of Best Value.

THROUGH-CARE AND AFTER SERVICES:

2.0 Management Structure

2.1 The Throughcare and Aftercare tem management structure and specific areas of responsibilities are:

Head of Children & Families: Tony Keogh

Service Delivery Co – coordinator: Freda Mc Shane

Social Work Resource Manger: Anne Marie Shields

Throughcare & Aftercare Manager: Alex Gillon Tel: 570 2408

- Link person to Children & Families
- Development & Support of Supported Carers
- Link person to Housing
- Development of Housing Accommodation
- Link person to NCH
- Development of Throughcare Service Delivery

Throughcare Development Officer: Heather Hunter Tel: 570 2448

- Link person to Residential Units
- Link person to Barnardos 16+
- Link person to Area Teams throughout Authority
- Development of Throughcare & Aftercare Forums
- Link person to Housing Support Officers

Throughcare Support Worker: Connie O'Hara

- Support Worker to young people
- Link person to Residential Schools
- Link person to Area Teams
- Link person to Carers Scotland
- Link person to Includem



Social Work Throughcare Support Services

THROUGHCHARE AND AFTER SERVICES:

3.0 Referrals

- 3.1 All young people who are looked after and accommodated should be referred in writing to the Throughcare Team by forwarding the appropriate referral form along with copies of the last LAC review form and Social Work SBR if appropriate. This should be done by the allocated Social Worker. This should be done when the young person is of the appropriate age.
- 3.2 If the young person's care plan indicates that they are moving on to independence, then a Throughcare Worker will be allocated to start working with the young person at their next Looked After Review (or earlier if there are specific issues).
- 3.3 If the young person's care plan indicates an alternative plan, such as rehabilitation home, then Throughcare will monitor this at 6 monthly intervals in order to ascertain the outcomes of alternative plans, with a view to future planning for service needs.
- 3.4 The Throughcare and Aftercare Team will operate a daily duty system from Stewart Street who can be contacted on 0141 570 2448.

4.0 Respite and Emergency Placements

- 4.1 In general, Aftercare resources such as supported tenancies or supported carers are only successful; if placements are made on a planned basis.

Requests for respite or emergency placements from the Throughcare Team must be routed through the Children & Families Duty System who will assess the request and negotiate with Throughcare in regard to the appropriateness of the request, resource availability and duration of the proposed placement.

5.0 Transfer of Placement

- 5.1 Throughcare will alert Children & Families Duty System to any proposed transfer of young people from one Aftercare placement to another. This includes young people who are no longer looked after by the Department up to the age of 18 years.

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

6.0 Young People Returning to a Care Placement from an Aftercare Placement

- 6.1 All requests to return a young person to a care placement from an Aftercare placement must be negotiated with Throughcare and Children & Families Duty System.

7.0 Links with Residential Units

- 7.1 Throughcare will allocate a named Resource Worker to each of the Residential Units working with teenagers. This is in order to provide a bridge for young people moving onto independence and to work with Residential Unit staff options available for the young people and helping to prepare for independence in line with their care plan. The Throughcare Team Leader will oversee the planning and casework with the Throughcare workers.
- 7.2 A Throughcare Resource Worker will attend the Residential Network meeting every other month and Residential Managers will be invited to attend the Throughcare Team meeting every 3rd month in order to review Throughcare involvement and joint working between Throughcare and Residential Units. This will involve sharing strategy and action plans and agreeing a way forward.
- 7.3 A monthly meeting should take place between the Throughcare Team Leader, Throughcare Resource Worker and the Residential Unit Leaders to discuss specific young people in order to address any issues, promoting high quality or joint working in practise. A priority will be to ensure young people with Throughcare needs and Aftercare plans are processed.
- 7.4 Throughcare require to have close links with these units so that there is an overview of projected work and future admissions to the units, also to ensure that all young people receive appropriate support and service upon their discharge.
- 7.5 It is expected that there will be regular joint working between Throughcare and the Units as well as shared strategy, action plans, training and development.
- 7.6 The Throughcare Team Leader will liaise with the Children & Families Team Leader to ensure that the Department are updated with information on case work being carried out by the Throughcare Team. Children & Families will send copies of paperwork received from Area Teams to the Throughcare Team to allow Throughcare to keep their own files up to date.



Social Work Throughcare Support Services

7.7 The Throughcare Team will run their own care pathways plan for young people in Residential Units in accordance with the pathways plan. This will only come into operation when these materials have been developed by the LAC Working Party. This will allow for both care plans to run simultaneously but focusing on their own particular areas of work. This can only be done in a joint working process.

8.0 Links with Residential Schools and Criminal Justice

8.1 The Throughcare Team will establish links with the main Residential Schools which will give placements to young people from East Dunbartonshire. It is our intention to allocate a Throughcare Resource worker to act as the Link Person for these schools to ensure involvement in planning Throughcare services for these young people and to provide a supportive bridge for their discharge. This work will be overseen by the Throughcare Manager who will meet with the Principle of the school on a quarterly basis.

8.2 Throughcare will allocate a Throughcare Support Worker to the young people who are on remand or in custody to ensure that they have appropriate care plans and that they receive support and services on their release. This will be done in conjunction with the Criminal Justice Team.

8.3 The Throughcare Manager will continue to build links with the Criminal Justice Team in order to consider a range of services and developments for the young offenders.

8.4 Throughcare will allocate a Support Worker to a young people who are in CAPS placements in order to plan support and services for the end of their placement.

8.5 If the young person's care plan indicates a return to their family, Throughcare will offer the young person an input about their options and entitlements and ensure that they have a contact point with Throughcare in case they require Aftercare services in the future.

8.6 If the young person's care plan indicates a return to a Residential unit, Throughcare will continue to support the young person within their new unit.

8.7 If the young person's care plan indicates Aftercare services the appropriate support will be organised as agreed on a planned basis as part of the young persons care plan.

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

8.8 The Throughcare Manager will work with Residential Schools to ensure that Throughcare Standards are being implemented in line with the National Throughcare Standards Policy and Procedure.

8.9 The Throughcare Development Officer will monitor all care plans for young people over 15 years of age in Residential Schools to ensure appropriate care plans are in place and being progressed.

9.0 Supported Carers

9.1 The Throughcare Manager will be responsible for the recruitment of, support and management of East Dunbartonshire's Supported Carers and will allocate workers for the support of young people in their care.

9.2 Guidance and Procedures for Supported Carers is in the process of being drawn up and will be available for consultation early next year.

10.0 Supported Tenancies

10.1 The Throughcare Development Officer will be responsible for the Management of Supported Tenancies and for the support of the young people living in these tenancies.

10.2 Guidance and Procedures for Supported Tenancies is in the process of being drawn up and will be available for consultation by the end of this year.

11.0 Links with Independent Providers

11.1 The Throughcare Manager and Development Officer will continue to maintain links with Independent Providers.

11.2 The main Independent Providers are: Barnardos 16+, Dorothy McCall House and various hostel establishments throughout East Dunbartonshire and Glasgow.

11.3 Throughcare will monitor practice within these establishments by having regular contact and the monitoring of inspection reports.

The publishing of the new "Supporting Young People Leaving Care in Scotland" brings in new legislation, regulation and guidance. Below is a short description of some of the contents of the new Regulation and Guidance.

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

There will be presentations for all social work staff on this subject in the coming months. One of the main areas for you to consider is the new categorisation of young people you are looked after, below is a shot synopsis of the new categories.

Under Section 29 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 there is a statutory duty for local authorities to carry out an assessment of the needs of **all** young people over school age leaving their care. It is not expected that all such young people will need the full range of services. In particular, the provision of regular cash support should be limited to those who have been looked after away from home for over three months (see Chapter IX below). However each young person should have their circumstances considered before any decision is made and the outcome of that decision should be recorded in writing.

In the Regulations the following terms are used to describe the different categories of looked after young people who are to be supported under these arrangements:

Under section 17 (2) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 local authorities have a duty to provide advice and assistance with a view to preparing a young person for when they are no longer looked after by the local authority. A young person who is over school leaving age but less than eighteen years of age and who is being looked after by a local authority is referred to as a "**currently looked after person**"

A young person who the local authority has a duty to provide to provide support and assistance under section 29 (1) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 - that is one who has left care over school leaving age but who is under 19 years of age - is referred to as a "**compulsory supported person**"

A young person who has made an application to a local authority for assistance in terms of section 29 (2) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 - that is a young person who left care over school leaving age and is now nineteen or twenty years old - is referred to as a "**prospective supported person**"

A young person who a local authority has agreed to provide support and assistance to in terms of section 29 (2) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 - that is a prospective supported person the authority has agreed to support - is referred to as a "**discretionary supported person**"

The authority has a duty to perform a needs assessment on all **currently looked after**, **compulsory** and **prospective supported** persons. It also has a duty to provide a pathway plan and appoint a life coach for all **compulsory** and **discretionary supported persons**, and may provide a pathway plan and a life coach for currently looked after persons.

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

RESPONSIBLE LOCAL AUTHORITY

The regulations make clear that the responsible local authority is the authority that is looking after, or last looked after, the young person.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Amendments to section 29 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 require the authority to carry out a needs assessment for each young person who has left care after school leaving age with a view to determining what advice, assistance and support the authority should provide. In addition, the regulations require the local authority to carry out a needs assessment for aftercare services on young people who are over school leaving age but are still in care.

Local Authorities must develop a robust and transparent framework which both addresses the needs of the young person leaving care and their continued need for support thereafter. The local authority should consider and agree with young people how their support is to be delivered. The needs assessment will then be the basis for preparing the Pathway Plan.

Each local authority must prepare a written statement setting out in general terms how the needs of compulsory supported persons and discretionary supported persons are to be assessed. This should give details of the authority's approach to carrying out needs assessment, for example what material the authority uses, whether the assessment will be done by a dedicated throughcare and aftercare team, and what meetings the young person will be expected to attend. The statement should include useful contacts within the authority and in other agencies, such as local Careers Scotland offices.

For each individual case, the authority must specify—

Who will be responsible for co-ordinating and taking forward the assessment;

The timetable for the assessment; who is to be consulted for the assessment;

How the outcome of the assessment is to be recorded; and

What the young person can do if they are unhappy with any part of the process or the outcome of the assessment.

The authority must make sure that the young person and those people whom it consults as part of the assessment process have a copy of the statement.

The responsible authority must complete the needs assessment within three months of a young person's becoming a compulsory or prospective supported person whether they do so on turning sixteen or later. When it puts together the timetable for a young person's assessment the authority should bear in mind any considerations such as

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

forthcoming exams, and take all reasonable steps to avoid disrupting the young person's preparation for them.

Only in exceptional circumstances should a young person not have their needs assessment and pathway plan completed before they leave care. It is expected that all young people will have had their needs assessed before they leave care and a plan in place as to their future. If an authority knows that a young person whom it is looking after is about to become a compulsory supported person on at the age of sixteen (that is it is planned that the young person will cease to be looked after on or soon after their sixteenth birthday), they can undertake any preparatory work ahead of that date but the assessment cannot be finalised until the young person is over school leaving age. In other cases where the young person is still in care the authority will want to balance the need for planning to meet the young person's needs when they do leave care with the risk of disrupting their care placement by raising expectations that they will be leaving care soon. Generally a needs assessment can be done and a pathway plan prepared for a currently looked after person without them needing to leave care, so authorities need not delay the process because of the risk to the current placement.

The responsible authority must keep a written record of the information obtained during an assessment, of the deliberations of any meeting held in connection with any aspect of an assessment; and the outcome of the assessment.

The regulations specify the essential issues which the authority should address during an assessment. These are:

The young person's health and development

Needs for education, training or employment

Needs for care and support

Accommodation needs

Financial needs

The extent to which they possess the practical and other skills necessary for independent living

The support available from family and other relationships

The authority may consult a number of other people in carrying out the assessment as well as the young person themselves. These could include parents, or anyone with parental responsibility, any person who cares for them on a day to day basis, a representative of the school or college (such as a class teacher or someone chosen by the young person), an independent visitor if they have one, the GP or other appropriate health professional, the life coach, and anyone else whom the responsible

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

authority or the young person considers relevant. For example, the young person might already have access to an adviser from Careers Scotland. If the young person has any particular needs relating to communication or cognitive impairment it will be important that at least one person involved in the needs assessment has a clear understanding of how they express their wishes and feelings. The views of these people can be essential in giving a full picture of the young person's needs in the areas detailed in the regulations.

The young person themselves should play the central role in the assessment process. When deciding who needs to be involved in the assessment, the responsible authority should take into account the wishes of the young person.

The responsible authority can request assistance to carry out duties specified in the assessment framework from other local authorities.

PATHWAY PLAN

Under the new guidance each young person will have a Pathway Plan. This plan will be done in conjunction with the Core Group Meeting mentioned earlier.

The Pathway Plan is an opportunity to explore with the young person their wishes and aspirations for the future and how they can be assisted in meeting them. The young person should be encouraged and guided to articulate what they want from their future. As with all young people these can change and any discussion should look at alternative or related options.

A pathway plan must be completed for each compulsory supported young person within 14 days of completing the needs assessment. For a prospective supported young person, applying for assistance under section 29(2), the local authority should decide whether to provide support to the prospective supported person within 7 days of completing the needs assessment. The authority should notify the prospective supported young person of their decision within 7 days of reaching their decision.

The Plan must cover at least the following topics:

The outcome of the needs assessment.

A statement of the wishes and aspirations of the young person.

The nature and level of contact of personal support to be provided, and by whom, to the young person.

A programme to develop the practical and other skills necessary for the young person to live independently.

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

A detailed plan for the education or training of the young person, including how the responsible authority will assist the young person in relation to employment or other provisional activity or occupation.

The financial support to be provided to the young person, in particular where it is to be provided to meet his accommodation and maintenance needs.

The health needs, including any mental health needs, over the young person, and how they are to be met.

The support to be provided to enable the young person to develop and sustain appropriate family and social relationships.

Details of the accommodation the young person has to occupy.

For each of these topics the plan must set out how the responsible authority plans to meet the needs identified through the assessment, and the timetable for actions required to do so. The plan should identify when other agencies will contribute to the targets set, whether within the authority like the housing department, or out-with it, like a training college or Careers Scotland.

It is important to recognise that a young person may not always be successful the first time that they attempt adult living and may need help more than once. Some young people will need more support than others and the Pathway Plan should reflect this.

The Plan must be recorded in writing. The responsible authority must keep a copy and must provide one for the young person in a form which is accessible to them. The authority should consider whether anyone else should have a copy of all or part of the plan. Normally any other agencies that are identified as helping to meet the targets should be informed of their proposed role. The authority should seek and take account of the young person's views about who should have a copy of their Plan.

REVIEW OF THE PATHWAY PLAN

It is important to recognise young people's expectations and circumstances can change quickly. The Plan will therefore be a living document which recognises this and can be amended accordingly. The responsible authority shall arrange a review if the young person asks for one; if the life coach asks for one; or at least every six months. This will ensure that Plans remain current and relevant for the young person. It will also provide an opportunity to make sure that any partners in delivery have met, or are meeting their agreements.

The purpose of regular review is to check that the goals and milestones are still right for the young person and are still being met, or to set new targets if the young person has achieved those previously identified. It will make sure that levels of support are

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

adequate and are being delivered according to plan. It will take account of any unexpected developments and will revise the Plan accordingly.

It will be important to seek and take account of the views of the same people as were involved in the assessment. This means that those involved in the review should normally be the life coach, the case holder, the social worker and the young person. It may also be appropriate for other people also to attend if, for example, they are contributing to one of the elements of the Pathway Plan or if they played an important role at the needs assessment. Barriers to communication should be tackled in the same way as when constructing the Pathway Plan.

It is vital that the young person is involved in the Review. If a young person needs to travel for this purpose reasonable travel and subsistence costs should be covered. If the young person cannot or will not discuss face to face, the responsible authority should try to find an acceptable alternative to reviewing the Plan with them, such as by e-mail or telephone. If none of this is possible the Plan can be reviewed without the young person's help, but this should be very much the exception.

The results of the review must be recorded in writing. The responsible authority and the young person should each have a copy. Other copies should be available as set out for the Plan itself.

MANNER IN WHICH ASSISTANCE IS TO BE PROVIDED

The authority should make clear in the Pathway Plan what assistance will be given to the young person, who will provide it and when it will be provided. They should be made aware of the appeals procedure should they wish to challenge any decision at any stage.

Learning to manage money and a budget is an important step on the road to independent living. Young people should be encouraged at early age to open a bank account and learn to manage money. The Pathway Plan should have identified any needs in this area. Any financial assistance should be paid through bank accounts except in exceptional circumstances.

All young people should receive a package of support which meets their basic requirements. This will be based on individual circumstances and needs identified in the needs assessment.

Given the different components that will make up such a package this could be cash and/or payment in kind. However, regular cash support to replace DWP benefits should normally only be given to sixteen and seventeen year olds who have been looked after away from home for over three months since the age of 14. It is this category that have had their entitlement to DWP benefits withdrawn under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. These young people should receive at least the

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

equivalent of the DWP benefits available to 16 and 17 year olds at any particular time.
. This information is available to local authorities from the DWP.

In assessing the need for regular cash support capital and income should be treated according to the DWP regulation on Income Support (capital up to £3,000 is disregarded and capital of £8,000 or more gets no assistance). Any such funds should be recorded in the young person's assessment.

If a young person has received Criminal Injury Compensation this should be disregarded when calculating cash assistance. However the local authority should ensure that anyone with such funds has access to independent financial advice.

In addition to regular cash support the local authority may under certain circumstances consider that a cash payment to their young people would be appropriate. For example a young person may need suitable clothes for an interview and the authority would wish to assist with such a purchase. Regular cash support may also be made available to other young people in exceptional circumstances, for example they cannot live at the family home because of concerns about their safety.

ACCOMMODATION

The provision of suitable accommodation can make an enormous difference to a young person in making a successful transition to adult living. The Pathway Plan will have set out what kind of accommodation best meets the needs of the young person and how this is to be obtained.

Where the responsible authority has assisted a compulsory or a discretionary supported person by providing them with or supporting them in accommodation the authority must ensure that any such accommodation is suitable. This means that a young person's particular health issues should be taken into account when considering whether accommodation meets a young person's needs. Consideration should also be given to where the accommodation is located. For example it may be important for a young person to be close to support networks or to have easy transport links to their place of study or employment. These issues should be explored in the Pathway Plan and the young person's wishes taken into account.

If the accommodation provider will come into direct contact with the young person references should be taken up and appropriate checks carried out.

It is known that one of the main worries for young people in further or higher education is their accommodation arrangements during vacations. Local authorities will therefore need to ensure they are aware of the accommodation terms and make arrangements to cover any vacation gap.

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

Local authorities should bear in mind the provisions of section 30 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 which allows an authority to provide financial assistance towards expenses of education or training.

The Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 has amended section 25 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. This amendment means that persons aged 16 or 17 assessed as homeless are now included in the statutory definition of applicants to be considered as having a priority need for accommodation. In addition, anyone assessed as homeless who is aged 18 to 20 who was looked after by a local authority when they ceased to be of school age or at any subsequent time will also be considered to be in priority need.

Looked After Children received assistance with housing support services to 1 April 2003 under the arrangements for Transitional Housing Benefit. New arrangements for housing support services were introduced on 1 April 2004 under the Supporting People initiative and local authorities have power to pay grant for these services under the Housing Scotland Act 2001 (Housing Support Services) Regulations 2002 introduced under conditions of grant.

RIGHT TO MAKE REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS

It is important that young people have swift access to an appeals system that is transparent and easy to understand. The Regulations set out the procedures that must be followed by the responsible authority should they receive a representation from a complainant. They lay out the time periods for notification at each stage that must be adhered to by local authorities. The responsible authority should continue providing support to the young person while any appeals process is on-going.

Young people should have access to independent advocacy services to assist them when making a case and to help them see their case through to completion.

If the young person has any particular needs related to impairment, the responsible authority should make sure meetings and information are accessible to them.

The responsible authority should make every effort to ensure that the young person can attend any meetings should they wish to do so, for example by paying travel and subsistence costs.

The authority should appoint a nominated officer to co-ordinate the authority's complaints and representations procedures.

The emphasis in all cases should be to ensure that the complaint is resolved informally as quickly as possible. The authority should seek to discuss the complaint with the young person, take account of their point of view, and any submission made on the young person's behalf by an advocacy service at this point, and to accommodate the representations made.

Social Work Throughcare Support Services

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally within 14 days the nominated officer should be informed and the authority should appoint an independent person to consider the representation with the authority and any actions the authority wishes to take. The authority should have its answer to the complaint with 28 days of the informal procedure failing to bring a resolution.

The young person has a right of appeal to a panel, which will consider the representation along with any further written or oral submissions on behalf of the young person or the authority. The panel should consist of at least three people, one of them independent, and any authority officers should not have been previously involved in the case. The panel must meet within 28 days of the young person appealing and must give its decision, with its reasons, 24 hours after meeting.

There will be ongoing changes to this document over the next few months due to the new regulation and guidance. I will post out up-dates to you which you can then add to this copy. The Throughcare Team will be arranging to visit each section in the department to give a presentation on work being carried out by the Throughcare Team and this will also include the latest information in relation to the new regulation and guidance.