

**SCRUTINY REPORT**

**CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL**

**13 JANUARY 2016**

**SAFEGUARDING AND CHILDREN IN CARE  
SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE**

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**SUMMARY**

1. To provide the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel with information in respect of the following:
  - To determine the range of support that the Local Authority provides to assist young people leaving care with the transition to independent living.
2. This report answers each question in turn and provides evidence to suggest that services are robust, tailored to individual need and result in good outcomes for the majority of Middlesbrough's Care Leavers.

**INTRODUCTION**

3. Middlesbrough Council has a team dedicated to Care Leavers, named by Care Leavers as, the Pathways Team. For young people leaving care who have additional needs, there is the Transitions Team which is managed out of the Adult Social Care arm of the council, with input from Children's Safeguarding. The work of each team is underpinned by legislation, chiefly, the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 (Volume 3) and the Care Act 2014.
4. The Pathways and Transitions Teams work directly with young people to assess need and to plan for their individual transition to adulthood. The planning is person centred and aims to ensure that the young person has maximum opportunity to live a happy, healthy and fulfilling life and to make a positive contribution to their community.
5. The Pathways Team is currently working with 106 Care Leavers. The Pathways Team comprises a Team Manager, Assistant Team Manager, Social Workers, Personal Advisors, Nurses (LAC and CAMHS), Stronger

Communities Worker, Development and Accommodation Officer as well as a CICC apprentice. During the recent Ofsted inspection of Children's Services the Pathways Team received positive verbal feedback. The Ofsted inspectors were impressed with the range of multi-agency staff co-located within the Pathways Team and the positive impact on the outcomes for care leavers. The inspectors praised the Pathways Team for its transitions work, the experiences and progress of care leavers and the appropriate use of accommodation, including staying put. The inspectors also highlighted that the physical health and emotional resilience of care leavers is good.

6. The Transitions Team also received positive feedback in relation to their direct work with young people and how closely they are involved in planning for their own futures.

## **EVIDENCE/DISCUSSION**

**How many care leavers is the Local Authority still in touch with, a year after they have left care? How many is the Local Authority in touch with after three years?**

7. The Pathways Team is currently working with 106 Care Leavers.
8. The Pathways Team is in touch with 29 of 31 young people who left care in the last year.
9. The Pathways Team is currently in touch with 58 of 62 Care Leavers. These Care Leavers are 19 or 20 years of age.
10. The Social Worker/Personal Advisers make every attempt to engage Care Leavers and ensure the Local Authority fulfils its duty in regards to keeping in touch. However, sometimes Care Leavers (usually due to lifestyle choices) decide they no longer want to engage with services and therefore refuse to provide up-to-date information regarding their current circumstances and contact details.

**What are the outcomes of children who were formerly in the Local Authority's care?**

11. Overall 69% of Care Leavers are in education, training and employment (ETE) which is above the national average of 60%. There are 13 Care Leavers in higher education. This means that the Pathways Team has 12% of its Care Leavers attending higher education, which is double the national average of 6%.
12. There is an increase in young people in employment and in those young people accessing College.

13. Destinations for Care Leavers by Age (Count)

Count of Care leavers	Age						
Destinations	18	19	20	21	22	24	
College	11	6	4	1	0	0	22
Employment	2	5	4	0	1	0	12
NEET	8	15	15	3	0	0	41
Training	8	9	2	0	0	0	19
University	2	0	2	4	2	2	12
Grand Total	31	35	27	8	3	2	106

**How many formerly looked-after young people are NEET?**

14. The Pathways Team has 41 Care Leavers who are NEET, which equates to 39% of Care Leavers.

15. Reasons for NEET:

- Parenting
- Claiming Job Seeking Allowance and looking for progression
- Life Style Choices (Including serving prison sentences)
- Health (including emotional health)

**What support do care leavers receive and what information is available for young people leaving care?**

16. The Pathways Team has implemented the following support measures for Care Leavers:

- Employed a full time Therapeutic Worker in the team offering educational sessions, drop in support sessions for foster carers and residential staff, support to the worker, direct 1-1 work with care leavers, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Kick start group and training.
- A young person friendly building, with kitchen, shower, laundry and activities rooms.
- FromCare2work Employability scheme –there has been an increase of 8 young people at College, increase of 3 more young people are in employment, increase in young people at University in 2015.
- The Pathways team is dedicated to the From Care2Work Scheme and has secured the quality mark for the second time for 2 years in 2015. Quarterly meetings regarding from FromCare2Work take place.
- A full time worker has been seconded from stronger communities to support the reduction of NEET.

- New implementation of the post 16 Personal Education Plan.
- 13 young people continue to access the Pathways Team over the age of 21.
- Group activities for young people in the evening and during holidays.
- Access to Middlesbrough CICC.
- An allocated Personal Adviser / Social Worker.
- Financial support to young people.
- Access to accredited training.
- Access to a duty worker available during office hours Monday – Friday.
- Advice, information and guidance from Pathways workers and professionals from other agencies.
- Peer support; e.g. food shopping, paying bills.
- Links to other agencies and organisations.
- Access to the Designated Children Looked After Nurse.
- Staying put and Supported Lodgings Scheme in Middlesbrough.
- Access to regional and national consultation events, training opportunities and projects with NCAS.
- Participation & involvement in service development tasks.
- Access to appropriate accommodation and support (The Pathways Team has a joint working protocol with the Thirteen Group).
- Pathways Assessment of need focusing on future career planning, family, general support, Finances/budgeting, activities/social and housing.
- Access to a personal advisor who advocates for Care Leavers signposting them to other services/agencies.
- Individual Pathway Plan which is reviewed every six months.

**What do care leavers say about their experience of leaving care and the support that is/was provided?**

17. During the recent Ofsted inspection the Care Leavers who had the chance to speak to inspectors were very complimentary in respect of the support and the service they receive from the Pathways Team.
18. Care Leavers are asked to complete questionnaires post 18 and post 21 years of age.
19. Pathways Plans are reviewed every six months with the young person and their views recorded.
20. A 'Suggestion Box' is located in the reception area of the Pathways building.
21. Children in Care Council (CICC) regularly hold events for young people.
22. Care Leavers are asked and encouraged to participate in service development tasks.
23. It is recognised that Care Leavers have the opportunity to voice their opinions and share their experiences of leaving care and the support provided. However, the Pathways Team acknowledge more time needs to be spent ensuring questionnaires are completed and that this information is collated and analysed in order to produce a more focused service delivery.

**What assessments and support is there for disabled young people to make successful transition to adult services?**

24. When young people who are looked after and supported by the Local Authority's Children with Disabilities Team are approaching the age of 14, their circumstances and needs are presented to the Transitions Forum, which establishes what support they may need through adolescence and up to the age of 25. On establishing need, the Transitions Team will then allocate a Social Worker whose role is to co-ordinate services to ensure that the young person receives specialist support throughout their journey to adulthood.
25. In line with the Care Act 2014, the young person will have a 'person centred plan' prior to them becoming 18 and an indicative allocation of budget. There will also be an awareness by this time of their eligibility for specialist provision, through the development of the plan and via the 'Tracking Group' which follows the individual's progress after their presentation to the Transitions Forum.
26. Young people who have been looked after and who have additional needs have the same rights to Care Leaving Services as do any other care leavers. If appropriate, they can receive services up to the age of 25 years and after that any service being provided will remain under review. If they require ongoing support, they will be referred to the adult services Intervention Team.

27. Social Worker Karen Mitchell (Transitions Team) has provided two anonymised 'case studies' to help illustrate the types of support provided to young people, with outcomes. (Appendix 1)

## **CONCLUSION**

28. The Pathways Team continues to offer Care Leavers a high level of support and guidance with the aim of ensuring young people have maximum opportunity to leave a happy, healthy and fulfilling life and to make a positive contribution to their community. During the recent inspection of Children's Services the Pathways Team received positive verbal feedback from inspectors for its transitions work, the experiences and progress of care leavers and the appropriate use of accommodation, including staying put. The inspectors also highlighted that the physical health and emotional resilience of care leavers is good. The inspectors were also impressed with Pathway plans and with the range of multi-agency staff co-located within the Pathways Team and the positive impact on the outcomes for care leavers.
29. The Pathways Team is committed to ensuring Care Leavers receive the necessary support and guidance in order to improve their chances of successful engaging in education, employment and training. The Ofsted inspection reaffirmed that the Pathways Team is providing a good service to its young people and Care Leavers. However, there are always improvements to be made in order to ensure Care Leavers receive the necessary support required to achieve their full potential.
30. The Pathways Team needs to ensure Care Leavers are completing the post 18 and post 21 questionnaires in order to ascertain their views on the support they received. The information obtained needs to be collated and analysed periodically in order to improve service delivery.
31. In order to ensure Care Leavers views are heard and we continue to improve opportunities for them to successfully engage in education, training and employment, the Pathways Team will be focusing on the following areas of development:
- To support, mentor and encourage young people to continue to run their Children in Care Council.
  - To work with stronger communities and other providers to set up a pre apprenticeship training programme which will incorporate preparation for independence.
  - To progress links and ensure Care Leavers have a 'marker' with the Department of Work and Pensions.
  - To monitor the Middlesbrough Care Leavers Charter.
  - To produce a newsletter in order raise awareness of issues and ascertain views of Care Leavers

- To ensure Care Leavers complete post 18 and 21 questionnaires in order to ascertain their views and the information analysed in order to improve services.
- To continue to improve and develop the 'From Care2Work' employability scheme by supporting and sustaining placements and exploring ways to secure follow-on employment and training opportunities, in keeping with the fromCare2work action plan.
- To prepare to run a breakfast presentation for local businesses to increase working experience for care leavers
- To roll out the new rights and entitlements booklet and make sure it is available on the web site
- To run an emotional wellbeing group.
- The specialist nurse and Pathways to produce a Leaving Care Standard Operational Procedure to provide clear processes around delivering health assessments and Passports.
- To continue with the 'Axxess' support group for young people who are preparing to leave or who have left care.
- To continue to build on the Peer Support mentoring role and independence group within the team.
- To work in partnership with Teesside University to run a motivational day to raise aspirations and to encourage further / higher education and sign up to work experience.
- To monitor the 'staying put' and the 'supported lodgings' schemes in relation need (sufficiency) and to outcomes for young people.
- To ensure that our young people have access to the 'Get Ready for Adult Life' DVD or pack
- To implement the newly reviewed Middlesbrough Pledge

32. Members of the Panel are asked to note the information contained within this report in respect of the support for young people leaving care in Middlesbrough.

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