

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD
2nd March 2006

**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL LEAVING CARE
SERVICE – ANNUAL REPORT**

**JAN BRUNTON – EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S
SERVICES**

**PAUL THOMPSON – EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND
SKILLS**

**TERRY REDMAYNE – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN,
FAMILIES AND LEARNING**

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Corporate Parenting Board with the Annual Report of Middlesbrough Council's Leaving Care Service for the year 2005, attached as Appendix 1.

BACKGROUND

2. The Annual Report of Middlesbrough Council's Leaving Care Service gives information on the aims and objectives of the Leaving Care Service, the services and facilities provided, the staffing, developments and issues for 2006.
3. The Annual Report is intended to be a stand alone document.

OPTIONAL APPRAISAL

4. Not applicable to this piece of work.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

5. There are no immediate financial or legal implications in this report. There are no specific ward implications as the Leaving Care Service covers the whole of Middlesbrough.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advises the Executive to note the information relating to the Leaving Care Service.

REASONS

7. It is important that elected members are aware of this work in order that they can effectively fulfil their responsibilities as Corporate Parents to children looked after and those receiving Leaving Care Services.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL
LEAVING CARE SERVICE**

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2005

Issued by
The Leaving Care Service
Middlesbrough Independence Network
3. Park Road North
Middlesbrough

1. The Aims of the Leaving Care Service

The Middlesbrough Leaving Care Service, under the duties of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, will promote young people remaining in care until they are prepared and ready to leave and where possible beyond the age of 18. Once young people have left care, the service will actively support young people to lead positive lives as independent citizens.

2. Objectives

- Support young people in stable placements and maintain continuity of carers whilst 'looked after'.
- Support young people in their placement until prepared and ready to leave.
- Support young people in a range of accommodation that meets their needs once they have ceased to be 'looked after'
- Provide all young people with a Needs Assessment.
- Provide all young people with a Pathway Plan.
- Provide all young people with access to a Personal Adviser.
- To support and listen to young people in making decisions throughout the Pathway Planning process.
- To respond to the identified needs of young people using a variety of methods, for example individual and group work.
- Provide young people with adequate financial support.
- Support access to financial support through, for example, the Benefits Agency.
- Provide a gradual process to young people preparing them to leave care, paying particular attention to practical and financial skills and knowledge, enabling young people to build and maintain relationships with others and enabling young people to develop their self esteem, on an individual and group work basis.
- Maximise the education, training and employment outcomes of young people
- Ensure that there is contingency provision available to young people.
- Support young people to maintain relationships with others who provide them with support.
- To provide young people with a range of information such as the Leaving Care Guide, information about rights and entitlements, complaints, access to records and advocacy services.
- Provide young people with a range of opportunities to get involved with service development and give their views.
- Provide a service that reflects multi-agency working.
- Monitor and evaluate the above.
- Continued participation in the development of Middlesbrough Independence Network.

3. The Services and facilities provided by the Leaving Care Service to young people

- Activities and Drop-In Facilities within Middlesbrough Independence Network.
- Access to Art and Drama Projects.
- An allocated Personal Adviser.
- Financial Support to Eligible young people.
- Preparation for Independence Training.
- Access to a duty social worker available during office hours Monday – Friday.
- Advice, information and guidance for social workers and professionals from other agencies.
- Volunteer and sessional support
- Links to other agencies and organisations.
- Access to a dedicated Personal Adviser from the Connexions Service
- A Supported Lodgings Scheme

4. Staffing of the Leaving Care Service during 2005

During 2005, the staff team within the Leaving Care Service has had a relatively settled period. The full-time vacancy outstanding at the time of the last report was filled and a further permanent vacancy arose when Helen Waller left the team. Karen Turner was seconded to the National Leaving Care Advisory Service in a post as Regional Development Worker from May 2005 until April 2006 and this post has been temporarily filled by Claire Robinson.

Sean Kershaw - Youth Development Worker is currently seconded to a Locality Team and his post remains vacant. It is anticipated Sean will rejoin the team in April 06. In addition we have the services of a two job share team clerks who are employed by HBS.

Details of the staff in post on 31st December 2004 are as follows:

Name	Job Title	Qualifications	Experience
Jane Young	Team Manager	C.S.S. 1988 PQ1 2001 PQ CHILD CARE 2004	With Social Services since 1984. With the Leaving Care Team since November 2004.
Karen Douglas-Weir	Senior Practitioner	Dip SW 2000 Connexions Diploma 2003 Practice Teachers Award 2005	With Social Services since 2001. With the Leaving Care Team since January 2005.

Karen Turner	Personal Adviser	Dip SW Certificate in Social Policy and Welfare 2001 Practice Teachers Award 2003	With Social Services since 1980. With the Leaving Care Team since 1999. Seconded NLCAS from May 2005
Ian Coates	Personal Adviser	Dip SW 2004	With Social Services since 1990 and with the Leaving Care Team since May 2005
Helen Dean	Personal Adviser	RNMH – Mental Health Nursing	With Social Services and the Leaving Care Team since September 2004.
Suzanne Brennan	Personal Adviser	H.N.C. Social Care Dip SW 1999 PQ1	With the Department since 2000 and the Leaving Care Team since October 2002.
John Hodgson	Personal Adviser	Working towards N.V.Q.3.	With Social Services 18 years. With the Leaving Care Team since 2001.
Moira Spencer	Personal Adviser	N.V.Q.3.	With Social Services and the Leaving Care Team since 2003
Sean Kershaw	Youth Development Worker	N.V.Q.3.	With Social Services and the Leaving Care Team since 2002.
Denise Poskett	Young People Accommodation Worker	H.N.C Housing	With the Local Authority since 1990, with the Leaving Care Team since 2005

5. Activities and Developments during 2005

The Leaving Care Service has continued to support the work of the Middlesbrough Independence Network (M.I.N) alongside our partner agencies, Barnardo's, Connexions, P.A.Y.P. (Positive Activities for Young People) Team, Eclipse and M.A.C (Make a Change).

Access to the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children.

A quarterly newsletter is produced by the youth development worker, with the help of young people, for young people and professionals.

Art & That – the youth development worker secured independent funding to engage young people in creative arts aimed at building their self-esteem and self confidence. This project has continued over the last 12 months with the young people producing the Middlesbrough Jigsaw and displaying their work at the Ignite Arts Event at the SAGE.

The personal advisers and young people exceeded targets for completion of needs assessments and Pathway Plans.

We have recruited new Young Advisers but unfortunately due to the vacant post of Youth Development Worker this is an area that requires further work in April 2006.

The Leaving Care Team, Children Looked After Team and the Family Placement service have worked together to encourage young people to get involved in leisure activities. Our young people have participated in two regional football events and there are more planned for this coming year. We approached Middlesbrough Council Sport & Leisure Department to look at ways we can work together to assist young people to access activities. As a consequence of our discussion, the Sport & Leisure Service within the Council has been successful in gaining a Big Lottery Bid. This will fund a programme of activities for the next 12 months dedicated to Children Looked After and those Leaving Care.

The Youth Service has also been part of the above development and through this process we have established an effective partnership with colleagues in this Service who have provided facilities at youth clubs and youth workers to support young people.

We have strengthened our links with the Children Looked After team through joint team meetings and a development day. We have developed a procedure for the transfer of cases to ensure a smooth transition for young people across the teams.

The Supported Lodgings Scheme has been successfully implemented. We currently have 5 providers who have transferred to the scheme from the fostering team and another 3 providers who are currently going through our assessment and approval stages. We have met the target for providers this year and are very pleased with our achievements in this area. We hope to continue to increase our resources in the coming years. We have successfully completed an application to Supporting People to finance the scheme, which should be available from April 2006. This funding will completely finance the scheme and give us the funding to 'market' our scheme more robustly which in turn, should increase our resource base.

Housing Protocols have been developed with Independent Service Providers and we have initiated minimum standards and inspections for all accommodation providers. In the last year we have strengthened the team's links with providers and are actively working with them to improve services to young people.

We are concerned about the implementation of Erimus Housing's 'Choice Based Letting Scheme' although acknowledge that the scheme is in its early stages. Due to the extensive redevelopment within the town there are limited housing options available for young people leaving care. Our concerns are as follows;

- Care Leavers are placed within Band 2 for allocation of properties however there is a lack of suitable properties available to bid against.
- The high demand on so few properties potentially results in the bidding process being withdrawn. For example, if 35 bids or more are received on one property the priority banding is no longer applicable and the decision on allocation then goes to 'length of time on the waiting list'. Given the nature and circumstances of our young people, this system puts them at a disadvantage.
- Changes in the allocations policy around age restrictions have resulted in very little single person's accommodation being available to this age group.
- Many existing applications were not categorised correctly at the point of change over to the scheme, consequently Leaving Care Personal Advisers have had to provide new information and young people have lost time on the waiting list and opportunities to bid successfully.

We would recommend that young people leaving care are rehoused via 'management lets' this would enable the leaving care team to work closely with Housing Officers to identify suitable accommodation and we can ensure appropriate planning takes place to assist in providing stability and successful tenancies for young people.

In October 2005, following negotiations with the Connexions Service, we secured the services of 2 Connexions Personal Advisers for one day per week. The Connexions P.A.'s now have assumed Connexions case work responsibility for all leaving care young people and their work has been concentrated around individual work with young people aimed at assisting them to access Education, Employment and Training. We are hoping to secure further time from Connexions to work alongside the Leaving Care team to implement a National Pilot Scheme 'What Makes A Difference'. This pilot aims to improve the employability outcomes for young people by providing work experience and placement opportunities.

6. Developments and Priorities for 2006

Over the coming year, the Service aims to achieve the following targets:

- Maintain stability and continuity of Leaving Care Service.
- To continue with the progress of the Supported Lodgings Scheme.
- To work alongside Erimus Housing and other housing providers to ensure young people have access to planned, suitable housing that meet their needs.

- To explore opportunities to provide safe, appropriate emergency accommodation for young people.
- Develop young advisers role within the team.
- Continue to develop links with partner agencies and service providers.
- Continue efforts to improve the education, training and employment outcomes for young people.
- Implement the National 'What Makes A Difference' Pilot Programme by providing work experience placements through the Local Authority, for young people Looked After or who have left care.
- Continue to provide training programmes for young people in preparation for leaving care and to gain accreditation for this programme with the OCN North East to enable young people to gain a recognised qualification.
- Continue to strengthen links with 'Looked After Teams' to ensure a smooth transition for the young person from the Looked After Service to the Leaving Care Service.
- To continue to ensure that 100% of young people receiving a service have a Needs Assessment and Pathway plan.
- Continue to engage and consult with young people with regards to the development of M.I.N. and the Leaving Care Service.
- Continue to promote young people gaining appropriate access to the facilities within Middlesbrough Independence Network and work with partner agencies to maintain and improve the services we provide to young people
- Implement the Financial Policy
- The Leaving Care Team has benefited from the services of the Health Co-ordinator for looked after children and young people. We hope to build on the success of the last year and increase young people's access to health promotion.
- Continue to work closely with the designated Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service(CAMHS) worker to ensure our young people have timely, appropriate access to mental health provision.
- In collaboration with the CAMHS service, we hope to provide a group work programme aimed at promoting positive mental health for our young people.
- Continue the active participation in the National Benchmarking Forum and the North East regional Leaving Care Forum, which provides opportunities to share good practice and keep abreast of initiatives for care leavers on a national and regional level.
- Facilitate a support group for young people who have left care and are living independently in the community.
- Participate in regional and local initiatives to enable young people leaving care to engage in leisure and cultural activities.

Jane Young
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