

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD
15th FEBRUARY 2007**

**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL LEAVING CARE
SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2006**

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

**PAUL THOMPSON – EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR
EDUCATION & 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 2006, 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, services and facilities provided, staffing, and developments and issues for 2007.
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. That the Corporate Parenting Board recommends that the Executive should 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.

AUTHOR: Jane Young, Team Manager Leaving Care Service
TEL NO: 01642 354101

Address: 3 Park Road North, Middlesbrough
Website: <http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk>



**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL
LEAVING CARE SERVICE
PATHWAYS TEAM**

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2006

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

1. The Aims of the Leaving Care Service

The Pathways Team 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 Advisor.
- 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 to access 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 service.
- 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 Advisor.
- Financial Support to 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 Advisor from the Connexions Service
- A Supported Lodgings Scheme
- Access to national consultation events, training opportunities and projects.

4. Staffing of the Leaving Care Service during 2006

During 2006, the staff team within the Leaving Care Service has continued to be relatively settled. One full-time vacancy arose when Karen Turner decided to vacate her position in the team to undertake an extended secondment with the National Leaving Care Advisory Service. Paul Cooke was appointed to this vacancy in August 2006. In addition we have the services of one full-time team clerk who is employed by Hyder Business Services.

Details of the staff in post on 31st December 2006 are as follows:

| Name | Job Title | Qualifications | Experience |
|------------|--------------|---|---|
| Jane Young | Team Manager | C.S.S. 1988 PQ1 2001 PQ CHILD CARE 2004 Certificate In Management 2006 | With the Department Social Services since 1984. With the Pathways Team since November 2004. |

| | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Karen Douglas-Weir | Senior Practitioner | HNC in Social Care 1998 Dip SW 2000 PQ 1 2004 Connexions Diploma 2003 Practice Teachers Award 2005 B.A (Hons) in Advanced S W Practice 2006 | With the Department since 2001. With the Pathways Team since January 2005. |
| Paul Cooke | Personal Advisor | HNC in Care Practice and Management 2002 Dip SW 2004 | Worked in social care setting for 5 years prior to joining this department in August 2004 as a social worker in a Family Support Team. Paul joined Pathways Team in August 2006. |
| Ian Coates | Personal Advisor | Dip SW 2004 | With the Department since 1990 and with the Pathways Team since May 2005. |
| Helen Dean | Personal Advisor | RNMH – Mental Health Nursing | With the Department and Pathways Team since September 2004. |
| Suzanne Brennan | Personal Advisor | H.N.C. Social Care Dip SW 1999 PQ1 2004 | With the Department since 2000 and Pathways Team since October 2002. |
| John Hodgson | Personal Advisor | Working towards N.V.Q.3. | With the Department 18 years. With Pathways Team since 2001. |
| Moira Spencer | Personal Advisor | N.V.Q.3. | With the Department and The Pathways Team since 2003. |
| Sean Kershaw | Youth Development Worker | N.V.Q.3. | With the Department and Pathways Team 2002. |
| Denise Poskett | Young People Accommodation Worker | H.N.C Housing | With the Local Authority since 1990, with the Pathways Team since 2005. |

5. Activities and Developments during 2006

The Leaving Care Service has continued to support the work of Middlesbrough Independence Network (M.I.N) alongside our partner agency Barnardo's.

Make A positive Contribution

The Youth Development Worker, with the help of young people, produces a quarterly newsletter for young people and professionals.

We have continued to engage our young people in the development of the service. We have found the name 'Leaving Care Team' was causing some anxiety amongst young people. The feedback we were receiving was that young people thought it meant they had to leave their foster placement, which is certainly not the aim of the team. After lengthy consultation and following a vote by the young people, the team has been renamed the 'Pathways Team'.

We have had several consultation events during 2006. During care leaver's week in October we hosted a 'Barbi' and invited all young people. We created a 'Big Brother' style diary room and young people were asked to give their views about the service they received. In November 2006, a group of young people gave formal feedback on the Green Paper 'Care Matters' and attended an event at St James Park, Newcastle as part of a national consultation on 'Care Matters'.

We continue to complete interviews with young people who cease to be 'looked after' at 18 years and leave the service at 21 years.

Two of our young people have been involved in the 'What Makes the Difference' National Peer Research Programme. The young people and the Youth Development Worker spent a weekend with young people from around the country receiving training and guidance on how to conduct the interviews with their peers. The Youth Development Worker supported the young people to carry out 17 interviews with young people receiving a leaving care service from Middlesbrough. The results of the interviews are currently being analysed by the National Children's Bureau and we await their findings. We will receive feedback on our local information as well as the national picture. The two young people have found the experience very beneficial. They have developed skills and confidence, which appears to be impacting positively on other areas of their lives. The feedback we received from the facilitators of the scheme was extremely positive; we were advised that the young people were "a credit to our authority".

We have 2 young advisors in post. The 'After Care Group' has been re-established and meets on a monthly basis.

We have continued to strengthen our links with the Looked After Children's 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.

Enjoy and Achieve

The Pathways Team, Children Looked After Team and the Fostering Team have worked together to encourage young people to get involved in leisure activities. Our young people have participated in regional football events and Middlesbrough hosted a regional event in September 2006. The Big Lottery has funded a programme of activities over the last 12 months dedicated to Children Looked After and those Leaving care. These were very successful and we are very grateful for the support and commitment from Sarah Stephenson – Sports Development Officer.

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 Youth Development Worker and Children's Participation Officer supporting the young people to produce a video about 'Accommodation'.

Stay Safe

The Supported Lodgings Scheme continues to grow. We currently have 6 providers, of these 5 are foster carer transitions, and we have had 1 provider approved through the Family Placement Panel. We have a further two applicants undergoing training and assessment. We have a contract with Supporting People who are now funding the scheme. In October 2006, we had our first Supporting People Review, which was very positive and concluded that we were meeting the objectives of the scheme and recommended continued approval. We are continuing to advertise for new providers and will have an article in the next Middlesbrough News

Housing Protocols continue to be implemented 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 have had negotiations and discussions with Erimus Housing around the allocation of tenancies to young people. We have recently implemented referral and support procedures and guidance. We have a named housing officer within Erimus Housing whose role is to act as a contact point for the Pathways Team. This role is in its early stages and we hope to develop our relationship in the coming months.

Over the last twelve months, our reliance on temporary emergency accommodation has drastically reduced; this is an achievement we are very

pleased with. Young People are staying in placement longer and we are able to plan with the young people and their carers the transition into independence.

Achieving Economic Well-being

We have continued to receive the services of 2 Connexions Personal Advisers (P.A.s) 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 concentrated on undertaking individual work with young people aimed at assisting them to access Education, Employment and/or Training. The workers are now firmly established within the team. We have evidence of the benefits of the posts through the development of career plans for our young people, pathway planning and joint working. Their specialist knowledge has been crucial to the development and implementation of the employability scheme.

Our Connexions PA worked alongside the team to facilitate the preparation for independence programmes.

With support from the Corporate Parenting Board and Corporate Management Team, we have developed and implemented our 'Employability Scheme'. This is a Middlesbrough Scheme but is also part of a national project 'What Makes the Difference'. The scheme provides work experience placements for young people within the council. It has been very successful with one young person securing permanent employment and several others experiencing the work environment, developing skills, experiences and knowledge. As the scheme progresses, we are continuing to evaluate and adapt to meet the needs of the young people and the employers.

Through 'What Makes the Difference' we are also a pilot area for 'Tuition Fees'. This project received funding of £30k to provide individual tuition to young people aimed at evidencing its impact, if any, on their achievements. Caroline Kendrick, Team Manager, Education of Children Looked After, is leading on the implementation of the scheme. We decided to concentrate the resources to support to young people in year 11 in the hope that the benefits will be maximised in the future. However, some care leavers are also accessing support via this resource.

'What Makes the Difference' has highlighted both employability and tuition fee schemes as models of good practice, which will be disseminated nationally.

We have developed links with the University of Teesside and are currently exploring ways in which we can encourage young people to go to university and support them through their studies. We currently have one young person attending university.

The 'Preparation for Independence' training continues to be facilitated by the team and we have secured Open College Network (OCN) accreditation so that young people will receive a recognised certificate on completion of the course. Following a group in September 2006, six young people will receive certificates in Job Seeking Skills, Healthy Eating and Cooking on a Budget, and Confidence Building.

Be Healthy

We continue to be co-located with the specialist nurse for Looked After children and young people and we try to maximise this opportunity to ensure our young people access health assessments, and health support and promotion.

All staff have received C-Card training.

The service has received support from named workers within the Eclipse and Make A Change substance misuse teams; the workers have attended the Pathways team meeting regularly and attend informal gatherings with our young people. This has been very beneficial to the young people, as some of those needing the service have made initial enquiries with workers through informal settings. We have also secured agreement that these agencies will change their criteria to provide services for our young people, where appropriate, up to 21 years, which young people have welcomed.

6. Developments and Issues for 2007

The Service Aims:

- 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 advisors role within the team.
- Continue to develop links with partner agencies and service providers.
- Continue efforts to improve the education, training and employment targets for young people.
- To continue to improve and develop the employability scheme by increasing the range of placements available, supporting and sustaining placements and exploring ways to secure follow on employment and training opportunities.

- Work alongside 'What Makes A Difference' Programme to disseminate our experiences and achievements to other Local Authorities.
- To increase the support provided to the team from the Connexions Service to a full-time post.
- Continue to provide training programmes for young people in preparation for independence and facilitate accreditation from 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.
- Facilitate a training programme to foster carers and residential workers on 'Preparation For Adulthood'.
- To continue to ensure that young people receiving services 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 having 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
- The Pathways Team has benefited from the services of the Health Co-ordinator for looked after children and young people; we hope to continue to increase young people access to health promotion.
- DISC will become the new provider of substance misuse and education services for Middlesbrough in April 2007. We hope to replicate and improve the service we currently receive with this new provider.
- We hope to strengthen our relationship with a designated CAMHS worker to ensure our young people have timely, appropriate access to mental health provision
- In collaboration with 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, which provides opportunities to share good practice and keep abreast of initiatives for care leavers on a national level. The North East Regional Leaving Care Development Worker Post Forum will not be funded by the regional Local Authorities from April 2007 so good practice and collaboration on a regional level will need to be encompassed in the current commitments of the team. However, we do value and recognise the opportunities regional working offers and would hope to maintain some regional participation and collaboration.
- Continue to facilitate a support group for young people who have left care and are living independently in the community.
- Ensure the robust use of the Transitions Forum to ensure that young people needing adult service are identified in a timely fashion to enable smooth transition of services.
- We have had an increase of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children within the last twelve months consequently we need to develop a policy,

procedures and guidance to ensure we are able to offer a quality service to those young people.

7. CONCLUSION

The Pathways Team has had a busy and productive year. We have been very fortunate to have had a stable, motivated and committed team. We continue to strive to provide a service that meets the group and individual needs of our young people, in the hope that our enthusiasm and positive actions will support our young people in aspiring to reach their full potential.

Jane Young
Team Manager Leaving Care Service

February 2006