

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL LEAVING CARE  
SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT**

**MIKE CARR – EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN’S  
SERVICES**

**GILL ROLLINGS – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF  
CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND LEARNING**

**22<sup>nd</sup> JANUARY 2009**

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**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 2008, 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 service and facilities provided, the staffing, developments and issues for 2009.
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 about 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  
PATHWAYS TEAM**

**ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2008**

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 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 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.
- Implement the legislative requirements and practice guidance contained with the Children and Young Persons Bill 2008.

### 3. The services and facilities provided by the Pathways Team to young people

- Group Activities for young people on an evening and during holidays.
- An allocated Personal Adviser / Social Worker.
- Financial Support to young people.
- Access to accredited '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
- Access to a dedicated Substance Misuse Worker
- Access to the Designated Children Looked After Nurse.
- A Supported Lodgings Scheme
- Access to regional and national consultation events, training opportunities and projects
- Participation & Involvement in Service Development Tasks
- Employability Scheme
- Opportunity to apply to become a Peer Support Volunteer
- Provide services to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

### 4. Staffing of the Leaving Care Service during 2008

During 2008 the staff team within the Leaving Care Service has continued to be very settled. There have only been two changes to the team, one is a new team clerk, and the other is an additional post of a social worker for unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

Details of the staff in post on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008 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 Social Care Dip SW 2000 PQ 1 2001 Connexions Diploma 2003 Practice Teachers	With the Department since 2001. With the Pathways Team since January 2005.

		Award 2005 B.A (Hons) in Advanced Social Work 2006.	
Paul Cooke	Personal Adviser	HNC in Care Practice and Management 2002 Dip SW 2004 PQ1-2007. Working towards PQ BA (Hons) Specialist Social Work.	With the department since 2004. Paul joined Pathways Team in August 2006.
Ian Coates	Personal Adviser	Dip SW 2004 Working towards PQ BA (Hons) Specialist Social Work.	With the Department since 1990 and with the Pathways Team since May 2005
Helen Dean	Personal Adviser	RNMH – Mental Health Nursing	With the Department and Pathways Team since September 2004.
Suzanne Brennan	Personal Adviser	H.N.C. Social Care Dip SW 2000 PQ1 2003. Practice teachers award 2006. Working towards PQ BA (Hons) Specialist Social Work.	With the Department since 2000 and Pathways Team since October 2002.
John Hodgson	Personal Adviser	Working towards N.V.Q.3.	With the Department 18 years. With Pathways Team since 2001.
Moira Spencer	Personal Adviser	N.V.Q.3. Currently seconded on the BA (Hons) Social Work.	With the Department and The Pathways Team since 2003
Sean Kershaw	Youth Development Worker	N.V.Q.3. N.V.Q. 4 2007 currently seconded on the BA (Hons) Social Work.	With the Department and Pathways Team 2002.
Denise Poskett	Young Person's Accommodation Worker	H.N.C Housing Housing Studies degree Member of the Chartered Institute Housing	With the Local Authority since 1990, with the Pathways Team since 2005
Tony Reeve	Social Worker UASC	CQSW 1975	With the Local Authority since 1970, with the Pathways Team since January

			2008
Sue Holmes	Personal Adviser	NVQ 3 NVQ 4 Counselling Award	With the department since October 1993. With Pathways Team since April 2008

## 5. Activities and Developments during 2008

### Making A Positive Contribution

The Pathways Team, with the help of young people, produces a quarterly newsletter for young people and professionals.

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

Young people are encouraged to participate in service development and delivery.

The vast majority of young people participate in reviewing and formulating their Pathway Plan on a six monthly basis.

Young people within the Pathways Team are involved in the recruitment and selection of staff, not only of staff within the Pathways Team but for positions across the Children, Families and Learning Department as a whole.

A group of young people met with inspectors during the Joint Area Review.

The Aftercare Group regularly offers opinions and ideas to a range of people and organisations.

In conjunction with the Children's Participation Officer and members of the Children Looked After and Fostering Teams we have facilitated the development of the Pledge. We had a very productive day working directly with young people. We received excellent support from members of the Corporate Parenting Board and senior management. Following on from that day a questionnaire has been sent to all Looked After young people and Care Leavers. We plan to pull the information together and facilitate a further "twilight" session to agree priorities for our pledge.

The Pathways Team is an active member of the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum and Northern Leaving Care Forum. Through this work, two young people have received individual support and training to assist in understanding Corporate Parenting and facilitation of the Pledge. The Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board accompanied the Team Manager and a young person on a day course focusing on "How to be a good Corporate Parent".

## **Staying Safe**

We continue to encourage and advocate for young people to remain within their placement until they are prepared and ready to leave. Our supported lodging scheme continues to be successful and with eight placements we are at full capacity. In the last year, we have recruited one new supported lodging provider and have completed the training and assessment for further two providers. These two providers will be presented to the Family Placement Panel for approval in January and February 2009.

'TS4', a partnership with Tees Valley Housing, Barnardos and the Pathways Team, continues to be positive. The scheme offers support to tenancies within two blocks of flats. Currently we have three young people placed in this location with a further flat due to be allocated within the next four weeks.

We have continued to work alongside Erimus Choice Based Letting Scheme to ensure our young people have appropriate access to housing and have an active Housing Support Plan.

Given the high demand for accommodation for young people through Erimus we have assisted young people to access private rented tenancies from appropriate landlords. We currently have 4 properties where people have opted to share a tenancy in order to ensure that they can access enough housing benefit, share living costs and assist in the difficulty that many young people face with loneliness. These tenancies are in their early days so we will continue to support and monitor progress with a view to expanding the option. This scheme has been particularly successful with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking young people.

The Pathways Team has worked closely alongside Community Campus Housing to ensure our young people are able to access their supported housing provision and many of our young people have benefited from this over the years.

In our attempts to eradicate the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation we have developed a "Crash Pad" with Community Campus. The "Crash Pad" is a rented room within one of the properties for the sole use of the Pathways Team. It will provide accommodation in emergency situations, thus allowing us time to find a suitable long-term placement.

West Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Trust has been working alongside the Pathways Team in order to offer employment and training opportunities to our young people in renovating homes within that neighbourhood. Through this relationship, and as a consequence of our discussions, West Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Trust has agreed to give priority consideration in allocating properties to participants of



the training scheme. One young person has been allocated a renovated property through this scheme.

A group of young people has undertaken an emergency first aid course.

Barnardos SECOS Project facilitated a discussion and training course with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking males to advise them about UK law regarding the age to be able to consent to sexual activity and practising safe sex.

### **Achieving Economic Wellbeing**

Employment, education and training remain a high priority for the Pathways Team.

We have continued to receive the services of Connexions Personal Advisers for three days per week. The Connexions P.A.'s have assumed Connexions casework 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 training. The workers are 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.

We are currently working with Connexions and Middlesbrough College to agree practice guidance and a support plan that will be implemented prior to a young person embarking on a course. It is envisaged that this will improve the support available and sustain a young person's attendance.

Our Connexions Personal Adviser worked alongside the team to facilitate the Preparation for Independence course.

The Employability Scheme continues to enjoy the full support of the Council. We have recently completed an application to the Big Lottery for funding to engage a full time employability worker and fund individual training allowances.

The team has continued to develop links with the University of Teesside. Our current activities are based around sport; however, this does include young people visiting the university facilities. We currently have two young people attending university.

The 'Preparation for Independence' training continues to be facilitated by the team and we continue to work with Open College Network accreditation. Young people have received a recognised certificate on completion of the course.

Four young people have worked with Community Campus Trading Limited, which is the maintenance arm of the Housing Provider. They redecorated one of the young people's rooms within the service's base at 3 Park Road North. In addition, they have had an opportunity to complete a basic 'First Aid in the Work Place' course and a basic 'Household Maintenance' course, both of which were accredited.

We have developed a Peer Support Programme, with additional input from the Princes Trust, and four young people have completed the training programme. The candidates will go through a selection process and the successful candidate will be paid on a sessional basis to provide support and mentoring to other young people.

Since November 2007, the Pathways Team has been exploring ways in which the Local Authority as a Corporate Parent can assist young people in or leaving care to access appropriate training opportunities. Through the support, enthusiasm and commitment of colleagues within Mouchel Employee Services department, young people have been offered a range of opportunities including the delivery, through Faulk Nutec, of emergency first aid training to young people.

To afford young careleavers better opportunities to achieve their full potential in Entry to Employment, a partnership agreement was developed with New Deal (Department of Work and Pensions) and the T.N.G (T.N.G are one of the main providers of new deal placements in the region). The partnership agreement aims to remove the barriers faced by young careleavers in accessing Entry to Employment opportunities.

### **Being 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 Looked After Children health assessments and health support and promotion.

Recently a room has become available within the building and through funding from the Care Matter Grant we are developing this room into a Health Promotion Room. We have consulted young people for their advice on decor and equipment for this room.

All staff continue to be C-Card trained and distribute condoms. We are a designated site for Chlamydia Screening and Pregnancy Testing.

The service has received support from a named worker within the Platform Substance misuse team; the worker has attended the Pathways team meetings and attends 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 developed a Self-Esteem Group programme for our young people with the first group starting in February 2009. The group is facilitated by the Looked After Children Nurse; a Personal Adviser who is a qualified CPN, and a Social Worker.

One staff member and two young people participated in the Middlesbrough 10K race again in 2008.

Six young people have completed the Emergency First Aid Course that was facilitated by Faulk Nutec, and is accredited.

### **Enjoy and Achieve**

Young People have successfully bid for monies from the Youth Opportunity Fund to provide outings and to install a shower in the building at 3 Park Road North.

Four young people worked alongside Community Campus to redecorate one of the rooms within 3 Park Road North gaining valuable experience in basic DIY and decorating.

The Aftercare group did meet monthly but, at the request of the young people, it now meets on a fortnightly basis. The young people completed an application to the Youth Opportunity Fund to provide funding for the group. The Aftercare group uses one session per month to invite guest speakers to share information with them.

The Young Mums group has met on a regular basis. The group was developed following discussion with one young person who felt it was not always practical or appropriate for her to engage in the Aftercare group or activities with her young son. The meetings have been held at a Sure Start venue and we have enjoyed trips to Scarborough Sea Life Centre and Beamish Museum in the last year. The group is fairly new so needs a lot of time and nurturing to facilitate meetings.

As mentioned above, one staff member and two young people participated in the Middlesbrough 10K race again in 2008.

Several young people worked alongside Personal Advisers and Teesside University, SUNEE (Sports Universities North East England) Project, and Middlesbrough Council Leisure Services to receive football coaching and enter the Kelly Cup in which our team came second, which was a considerable achievement. In addition, the SUNEE Project offered the young people a festive fun day that included sporting activities and access to University of Teesside activities.

As part of the peer support training young people have completed a residential weekend at Stainsacre Hall.

With the support of the Youth Opportunity Fund, Leisure Services and Teesside University we have facilitated numerous activities for young people over the last 12 months. These activities include Horse Riding, a day trip to Flamingo Land, Swimming and Aerial Extreme. Young people chose the activities and planned the itinerary and over 40 young people took part.

## **6. Developments and Issues for 2009**

The Service aims to:

- 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 continue the implemented housing protocol with Erimus and other registered social landlords.
- To evaluate 'Crash Pad' to ensure the scheme is successful in providing safe, appropriate emergency accommodation for young people.
- To develop the Peer Support 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.
- 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 Open College Network North East to enable young people to gain a recognised qualification.
- Continue to strengthen links with the 'Looked After Team' to ensure a smooth transition for the young person from the Looked After Service to the Leaving Care Service.

- Facilitate a training programme for 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 service development and the Leaving Care Service.
- 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's access to health promotion.
- To work in partnership with DISC/Platform, substance misuse team, and to work together to improve the service we currently provide regarding substance misuse.
- We hope to strengthen our relationship with our designated Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service worker to ensure our young people have timely, appropriate access to mental health provision.
- In collaboration with Designated Nurse for Children Looked After 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.
- We continue to support and promote the North East Regional Leaving Care Forum.
- 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 services are identified in a timely fashion to enable smooth transition of services.
- From January 2008, the Pathways Team assumed responsibility for the service to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). Through the dedicated post holder we aim to implement the policy and procedure relating to services to UASC to ensure that we provide a good quality service and undertake robust age assessments to ensure appropriate access to services.
- Support the development of Council's Pledge to young people
- Support the development of a Children in Care Council

- Facilitate Self-Esteem Group
- Jobcentre (Department of Work and Pensions) – From January 2009, the Pathways Team will be looking to work in partnership with the local Jobcentre Plus Service to develop better support mechanisms for care leavers. Some of the areas we will be focussing on include issues relating to Rapid Claim, the development of efficient information sharing protocols and the development of a Service Level Agreement in relation to Employability and Social mobility.

**Jane Young**  
**Team Manager Leaving Care Service**

January 2009