

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Corporate Parenting Board

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL LEAVING CARE SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2009

Executive Member for Children, Families & Learning: Cllr Mike Carr

Director of Children, Families & Learning: Gill Rollings

21st January 2010

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Corporate Parenting Board with the Annual Report for Middlesbrough Council's Leaving Care Service for the year 2009, attached as Appendix1.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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

IF THIS IS A KEY DECISION, WHICH KEY DECISION TEST APPLIES?

3. It is over the financial threshold (£75,000)
It has a significant impact on 2 or more wards
Non Key

DECISION IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE

4. For the purposes of the scrutiny call in procedure this report is

Non-urgent
Urgent report

If urgent, please give full reasons.

BACKGROUND AND EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

5. The Annual Report of Middlesbrough's Leaving Care Service gives information on the aims and objectives of the service, the staffing, achievements and areas for development in 2010.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6. All social care services are delivered within a framework of anti-discriminatory practice and there are no specific issues arising from the information presented within this report.

OPTION APPRAISAL

7. Not applicable to this piece of work.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

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

RECOMMENDATION

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

REASONS

10. 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

11. The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:
 - Care Matters – Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care 2006
 - Children and Young Persons Act 2008

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**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL
LEAVING CARE SERVICE
PATHWAYS TEAM**

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2009

Issued by:
PATHWAYS TEAM
The Leaving Care Service
3. Park Road North
Middlesbrough
TS1 3LF
January 2010

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, ensuring that the Pledge is embedded within the process.
- 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 the 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 Act 2008.
- To support and facilitate young people in undertaking an active role in the Children in Care Council and working with their corporate parents to improve their life chances and opportunities.

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
- Services to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).
- Ensuring appropriate support and priority to enable young people to access safe and suitable permanent housing.

4. Staffing of the Leaving Care Service during 2009

During 2009, the staff team within the Leaving Care Service experienced several changes, with the team carrying vacancies for a significant amount of time. However, the team is currently at full capacity.

Details of the staff in post on 31st December 2009 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.
Suzanne Brennan	Senior Practitioner	Dip SW 2000 PQ1 2003. Practice teachers award 2006. PQ BA (Hons) Specialist Social Work.	With the Department since 2000 and Pathways Team since October 2002.

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 and joined the Pathways Team in August 2006.
Ian Coates	Personal Adviser	Dip SW 2004 PQ Award in Specialist Social Work 2008.	With the Department since 1990 and with the Pathways Team since May 2005
Moirra Spencer	Personal Adviser	N.V.Q.3. Currently seconded on the BA (Hons) Social Work.	With the Department and the Pathways Team since 2003
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
Sue Holmes	Personal Adviser	NVQ 3 NVQ 4 Counselling Award	With the department since October 1993. With Pathways Team since April 2008
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.
Gemma McLaren	Social Worker	BA Hons SW 2009	Started with Pathways in July 2009
Claire Forster	Social Worker	BA Hons SW 2009	Started with Pathways in November 2009
Dawn Linton	Personal Adviser	NVQ 3 NVQ 4 Counselling Award	With the department since October 1993. With Pathways Team since April 2008
Louise Feenan	Personal Adviser	1st Class BSC (Hons) Psychology Degree 2006	Worked for Middlesbrough Council from September 2006 and for Pathways from October 2009.

5. Activities and Developments during 2009

Making A Positive Contribution

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

The team continues 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. One young person attended a National Young Peoples Benchmarking Event.

The vast majority of young people participate in reviewing and formulating their Pathway Plans 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 a recent OFSTED best practice visit.

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

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. One young person attended a National Leaving Care Young People's Benchmarking Event and it is anticipated this young person will be Middlesbrough's representative on this group. The group will work alongside the manager's forum to share good practice and develop services for care leavers.

The Pathways Team took a lead role in the development of the Pledge and many young people attended the development sessions. It is anticipated that this will continue as the Children in Care Council is developed, with Pathway's young people being able to mentor and support younger children and young people in care within this process.

In partnership with the Prince's Trust, we have facilitated training of three young people as Peer Mentors. Following this accredited training, the young people, with the support of Sean Kershaw and Sue Holmes, have facilitated a series of drop-in sessions throughout the summer to encourage young people to get involved with the service and promote healthy living and lifestyle.

Staying Safe

The team continues to encourage and advocate for young people to remain within their placement until they are prepared and ready to leave. The supported lodging scheme continues to be successful and with eight placements is at full capacity. In the last year, we have recruited one new supported lodging provider and have completed the training for a further 6 providers, with three assessments completed and to be considered at Family Placement Panel on 19th January 2010.

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

The team has 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. There is a named Housing Officer within Erimus who is responsible for all our referrals. There is also a named officer within the Housing Benefit section to ensure that all care leavers secure maximum benefit entitlements.

Given the high demand for accommodation for young people through Erimus, the team has assisted young people to access private rented tenancies from appropriate landlords. There are currently 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. 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 year.

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 provides accommodation in emergency situations, thus allowing time to find a suitable long-term placement. The Crash Pad facility has been very successful and has allowed young people time within a safe living environment to secure more permanent housing.

In partnership with Community Campus, we have recently submitted a joint bid to Supporting People funding to redevelop some of their provision to provide 24 hour supported accommodation. If this is successful, it is hoped that this will provide a valuable resource not only to the Pathways team but also to safeguarding services as a whole and will assist increasing the provision available to vulnerable young people.

The team continues to work with Barnardo's SECOS Project with individual young people where necessary.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

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

Young people have continued to receive the services of Connexions Personal Advisers (P.A.s) 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. There is evidence of the benefits of the posts in the development of career plans for our young people, pathway planning and joint working. The P.A.s specialist knowledge has been crucial to the development and implementation of the employability scheme.

The team continues to work 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.

The Connexions Personal Advisers worked alongside the team to facilitate the Preparation for Independence course, which is OCN accredited.

The Employability Scheme continues to enjoy the full support of the Council. We submitted an application to the Big Lottery for funding to engage a full time employability worker and fund individual training allowances. We were not successful but will resubmit a revised bid in the next few months.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has commissioned the National Care Advisory Service to develop a 'From Care 2 Work Scheme'. It is based around the principles of our employability scheme, with a national programme of work experience and career opportunities being provided to care leavers. Many government departments have agreed to provide placements and many national companies such as Tesco, Asda, Marriot Hotels etc. In addition, the DCSF invited all local authorities to become part of the scheme and develop work programmes. Middlesbrough was one of the first local authorities to express an interest and nationally it received a very positive response, which prompted the DCSF to request all local authorities sign up to the scheme. The team is currently developing a work plan within the council and with partner agencies.

The team has continued to develop links with the University of Teesside. The current activities are based around sport, this includes young people visiting and utilising the university facilities. We currently have two young people attending university full time. Two young people also had the opportunity to interview student social workers as part of the student's assessment of their 'Fitness to Practice'. The young people were very professional, supportive and appropriately challenging of the students and participated fully in the assessment of them. They were a credit to Middlesbrough Council.

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.

The Pathways Team continues to support and assist young people in or leaving care to enhance their employability 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 care leavers 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 care leavers in accessing Entry to Employment. The team has been working on a national level with colleagues from the National Care Advisory Service, DCSF, Department of Work and Pensions and the Cabinet Office to review benefit rules for young people accessing work experience opportunities without there being a detrimental effect on their benefit entitlement.

Being Healthy

The team continues 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.

Our young people assisted in the development of a health promotion room, which was funded through the Care Matters grant, the room is being used for health assessment and one to one counselling sessions.

All staff continue to be C-Card trained and distribute condoms. Park Road North is 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.

The team has developed a Self-Esteem group work programme for young people, which is aimed at supporting their positive mental health. The group was facilitated by the Looked After Children Nurse; a Personal Adviser who is a qualified CPN, and a Social Worker.

The Pathways Team was invited to be part of a trans-national project aimed at developing a resource pack to support the emotional well-being of care leavers and ultimately improving their employability. Pathways' self-esteem group work programme for young people is being piloted by our European partners in Romania,

Hungary, Poland and the Republic of Ireland who, in turn, have and will continue to share their resources with us. As part of the project, Jane Young, Team Manager, had the opportunity to visit Poland to meet with all partners and in addition visit one of their children homes, which has 42 children, aged from 0 to 18 years.

Again in 2009, the team supported the Middlesbrough 10K Road Race, with Ian Coates, Helen Dean and 2 young people completing the run. The team participated in the Kelly Cup football tournament again this year and again the winners were Hartlepool their team appears to be the Chelsea of the leaving care world!

As mentioned above, Pathways' Peer Support Advisers facilitated a series of drop ins for young people with a theme of a healthy lifestyle which included healthy cooking, eating and getting fit, with funding from the Prince's Trust the peer support advisers purchased a Wii Fit for young people to use within the building which proved very popular.

The Pathways Team purchased a number of discounted X4 cards from Middlesbrough Leisure Services for our young people, the cards are provided on an individual basis for those young people living independently and are linked with an incentive to actively engage in education, training or employment.

Enjoy and Achieve

The Aftercare group continues to meet 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.

As mentioned above, two staff member and two young people participated in the Middlesbrough 10K race again in 2009.

Several young people worked alongside Personal Advisers and Teesside University, SUNEE (Sports Universities North East England) Project, to receive football coaching before entering the Kelly Cup. In addition, the SUNEE Project offered the young people a fun day that included sporting activities and access to University of Teesside activities.

Young people have continue to enjoy activities facilitated by the Pathways Team including the drop-ins, a visit to the Sage in Gateshead to take part in a music and DJ event and 22 young people enjoyed a Christmas meal at Fellini's.

6. Developments and Issues for 2010

During 2010, the service aims to:

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

continue to implement the housing protocol with Erimus and other registered social landlords.

- Develop a 24 hour supported housing project.
- Further develop the Peer Support role within the team and with young people.
- Continue to develop links with partner agencies and service providers.
- Implement 'From Care 2 Work' Programme.
- 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.
- 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 Social Work 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'.
- Reconfigure the ISC system to ensure that the Needs Assessment and Pathway Plans developed with young people are user friendly and fit for purpose.
- Continue to engage and consult with young people with regards to service developments within the Leaving Care Service.
- Continue to increase young people's access to health promotion, with the valuable support of the Health Co-ordinator for looked after children and young people.
- Work in partnership with the DISC/Platform substance misuse team to improve the service currently provided regarding substance misuse.
- Strengthen relationships with the designated Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service worker to ensure our young people have timely, appropriate access to mental health provision.
- Continue to provide a group work programme aimed at promoting positive mental health for young people; and to work alongside our European partners and evaluate the outcomes.
- Continue 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.
- 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.
- Continue to provide services to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). 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
- Ensure implementation of the Children and Young Peoples Act 2008.

- Participate, as a comparator authority, in the independent evaluation of the Right 2B Cared 4 pilots, which is being undertaken by Loughborough University and the National Leaving Care Advisory Service. Several pilot initiatives have been funded by the DCSF, as part of the Care Matters proposals, with the Right 2B Cared 4 pilot being one of them. This initiative seeks to delay discharge from care until young people are prepared and ready to leave and to ensure young people have the right to veto any plans for them to leave care if this is not what they want.

Two of our young people have been trained as peer researchers and they will interview other young people in the pilot authorities. Middlesbrough was approached to be part of this evaluation because we are deemed to have very good practice in this area.

- Continue to provide training and development for staff and to provide student social work placements, which support staff recruitment and retention. The team has several new members so this coming year there will be increased emphasis on training and development of the staff team, which will include participation by young people.

Jane Young
Team Manager Leaving Care Service

January 2010