

Care Leavers Conference

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Creating New Opportunities for Care Leavers in the North East

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Care Matters

“The aspiration the State has for children in care should be no less than each parent would have for their own child”

Also reflected in Secretary of State’s letter to Directors of Children’s Services on 30th April 2009:

**“Children in care should be a litmus test of how we are delivering the ambitions set out in the Children’s Plan
... it is crucial that we work together to improve the outcomes of children in care further and faster
... services seen as a continuum of effective family support services”**

The costs of abrupt exit

“Within a few weeks I can feel that I’m going to be on the streets and another number”

- 24% of care leavers were 16 when they left, (24 is the average for Pop) NCAS

- Only 6% of care leavers were staying with foster families 9 months after 18th birthday

- Leaving care at an older age is associated with better career outcomes
Dixon et al 2006

Savings and better outcomes achieved by diverting care leavers from

- Dependence on benefits
- Dead end employment
- Homelessness
- Offending and custody



Care Leavers - 3 Key Priorities

“ being a care leaver has to be the most pressure I’ve been under in my life, one minute I was 12 and living at home then I’m 21 and find myself being homeless”

- Making sure children do not have to leave care before they are ready;
- Making sure all care leavers have access to an appropriate range of accommodation options; and
- Providing the right support for care leavers so they can make a successful transition to independent living.



Young People's Views on Progress

“ I think my leaving care workers are doing a brilliant job. Keep up the good work”

- Extract from Children's Rights Director's Report 2009
- How care leavers rate the support they are getting.

Very Good 33%

Good 37%

Just about OK 20%

Bad 6%

Very Bad 4%

More Views from Young People

“ It is safe and I get my own space and time to do things”

Statistics from Children's Rights Director Monitor Report 2009

- 46% said they did not have a leaving care plan yet.
- 54% of those aged over 14 were getting general help to prepare to leave care (60% in residential care / 34% in foster care)
- Of care leavers:
 - 67% had a pathway plan
 - 64% had a social worker
 - 23% in wrong accommodation
 - 17% getting no help

National Progress on Indicators

- The percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation has risen:
from **75% in 2003** to **90% in 2009**
- The percentage of care leavers in employment, education or training has risen:
from **46 % in 2003** to **63% in 2008**

North East Examples of Practice

“I always get to have my say in everything that goes on in my life”

- Durham. Staying On policy encourages older young people to stay in care longer, leading to improved outcomes.
- Middlesbrough. Dedicated pathway team and supported lodgings scheme to assist young people into independent living.
- North Tyneside. Staying Put Pilot having positive results, more young people staying in education, going to university.
- Northumberland. Working with Barnardo's so that more young people staying with foster carers to aged 21.
- South Tyneside. Established training flats for young people with South Tyneside homes (ALMO).



How Government will help

“I think the support within social services and leaving care varies”

- **4 Key Priorities**

- Revised Statutory Framework
- From Care2Work programme
- Education strategy
- Mainstream programmes on Needs
- Pilots

Revised Statutory Framework

“I wish more people were given more support in the transition of semi-independent to independent living”

- **Care Planning Regulations & Guidance**

- Care Plans based on sound good quality of assessment.
- Children voice at hear of care plans.
- Regular review and when there are significant changes.
- Care leaving only takes place when young people are prepared and ready, agreed through the review process, chaired by IROs

- **Transition to adulthood Regulations and Guidance**

- Transition to adulthood more closely related to need not age.
- Specified visiting intervals for PA with pathway plans kept under regular review - with reviews taking place to divert young person from crises.
- Criteria for suitable accommodation specified.
- Support from Pas up to age 25 for those in education or training.
- Need your views - closing date 25 March



Care and Pathway Planning

The pathway plan for a child who remains looked after (eligible) is incorporated into their care plan.

The Pathway Plan

- Health & Development
- Education, Training & Employment
- Emotional & Behavioural development
- Identity
- Family & Social Relationships
- Practical and other skills necessary for independent living
- Financial Arrangements - assessment of care leaver's financial needs and their financial capability
- (Suitability of) Accommodation

• In drawing up the pathway plan for a relevant child, it will be necessary for their social worker or personal adviser to work with the young person to define priorities and the focus of the plan.

“I have made the decision to be here and I enjoy and I have made a home for myself.”



From Care2Work programme

“I am aiming to get a good job and earn lots of money.”

- **From Care2Work Programme**

- 140 Las involved (all in NE)
- 26 employers actively engaged
- Over 50 care leavers taken up opportunities
- Quality Mark being developed
- Career planning tool by summer 2010

Education Strategy

“I believe I am doing well because I am well motivated and committed to achieving and I also have the support and advice from my teachers and foster carer.”

- Steady Progress on outcome indicators
 - 7% to 21% 5 GCSEs
 - 7% care leavers now go to University
- Virtual School Head in every LA
- Designated teacher in every school
- 1:1 Tuition for all LAC
- £500 Personal Education Allowance
 - = Increasing numbers staying in further/higher education or with qualifications to find employment



Mainstream programmes on Neets

“My foster carer really helped me.... I passed my GCSEs and I’m now in college doing a youth work and photography two year course.”

- **September Guarantee supports all 16 & 17 year olds with a place to continue learning**
- **National Apprenticeship Service will provide 5.000 employer subsidies for 16 & 17 year olds**
- **Entry to Learning Pilots to support vulnerable young people**
- **Young Person’s Guarantee - Access for 18-24 year olds to job, training or work experience (after 6 mths of unemployment)**

Pilots - Right2bCared4 and Staying Put @ 18+

“I feel like I’m part of the family and not just a foster child. I think it is important to feel like this.”

- Las in both pilots have developed seamless systems with multi-agency funding and support (esp. housing)
- Consider outcomes and then structure should follow - importance of seeing fostering and leaving care as part of the same service sharing common values.
- Giving children a right to return to care may represent an investment not a cost.
- Strong emphasis on voice of the child in both R2BC4 and Staying Put.
- Responding to challenges, rather than be turned back by barriers

What Works

“it allows me to grow as an independent person with lots of support, with budgeting, social skills, cooking etc.”

- **DCS and LMCS have high aspirations**
- **There is a general philosophy that “leaving care” will involve a gradual transition from their care placement for each child.**
- **Local commissioning strategies involve housing agencies and housing related support commissioners.**
- **Strategies and plans take account of the DCSF and CLG guidance on Joint Working between housing and children’s services.**
- **Pathway plans based on young people’s aspirations and career ambitions and actions and support to achieve this. Care leavers prepared for independence not welfare dependence.**
- **Local authority actively takes part in the From Care2Work programme.**

What Works (2)

“it’s getting used 2 being independent, but with support so it’s not just dumpin you on your own.”

- **Strong pathway planning processes build on care planning, put the needs of the young person at the centre so that their views are listened to and acted on.**
- **Particular priority is given to supporting excluded groups such as disabled young people, young people known to youth justice services, young parents and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.**
- **Processes and services are routinely assessed against the NCAS national leaving care standards.**

Young Person Sums it Up!

“my leaving care worker allows me to grow as an independent person with lots of support, with budgeting, social skills, cooking and help to find a job that’s right for me”

