



**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL
LEAVING CARE SERVICE
PATHWAYS TEAM**

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2010

Issued by
PATHWAYS TEAM
The Leaving Care Service
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 that ensures 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.
- To provide young people with adequate financial support.
- Support to access financial support through, for example, employment / training or the Department of Work and Pensions.
- 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 Act 2008 and the updated guidance and regulations of the Children Act 1989 which need to be implemented by April 2011.
- 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

- An accessible building with kitchen, shower room, laundry and meeting rooms.
- 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 - This is currently on hold
- 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
- Access to an Emotional Wellbeing and health program
- Opportunity to apply to become a Peer Support Volunteer
- Provide 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 2010

During 2010 the Pathways team have experienced some changes. Until recently, the team has been without a permanent manager for 6 months. A permanent appointment has now been made.

Pathways have not had the benefit of the Youth Development Post during 2010. The YDW is now a qualified social worker and now works in the LAC team. When his post became vacant, the vacancy was taken as a saving for the Council. The team no longer has a dedicated Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children post due to the low numbers of UAAS within the team since September 2010. This post has previously been grant funded, which was based on the number of UASC.

Details of the staff in post on 30th November 2010 are as follows:

| Name | Job Title | Qualifications | Experience |
|--------------------|---|--|---|
| Karen Douglas-Weir | Team Manager | Dip SW in 2000 Policy and Practice 2002 Dip in Connexions 2003 PQ1 2003 Practice Teacher award 2003 BA (hons) in Advance Social Work Practice2006 Safeguarding Adults 2010 | With the Department since 2001. With the Pathways Team since January 2005-2009 Transitions Team May 2009-July 2010 Pathways Team July 2010 |
| Suzanne Brennan | Assistant Team Manager | Dip SW 2000 PQ1 2003. Practice teachers award 2006. PQ BA (Hons) Specialist Social Work. ABE 2010 | With the Department since 2000 and joined the Pathways Team in 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. 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 Joined the Pathways Team in May 2005 |
| Moira Spencer | Personal Adviser | N.V.Q.3. Currently seconded on the BA (Hons) Social Work. | With the Department and joined the Pathways Team in 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, joined the Pathways Team in 2005 |
| Sue Holmes | Personal Adviser | NVQ 3 NVQ 4 Counselling Award | With the department since October 1993. Joined the Pathways Team in April 2008 |
| Gemma McLaren | Social Worker | BA (hons) SW 2009 | With the department and joined Pathways in July2009 |

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|----------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Claire Forster | Social Worker | BA (hons) SW 2009 | With the department and joined Pathways in November 2009 |
| Dawn Linton | Personal Adviser | NVQ 3 NVQ 4 Counselling Award | With Stockton Local Authority since October 1993. Joined the Pathways Team in April 2008 |

5. Activities and Developments during 2010

Making A Positive Contribution

Three young people have supported Teesside University by taking part in assessing conversations with student social worker applicants, which involves an interview style environment that is recorded and marked. This is part of the student's assessment of their 'Fitness to Practice'. Our young people were very professional, supportive and appropriately challenging of the students and participated fully in the assessment of them. After this process the young people developed a presentation to inform the students of their overall views to support their development.

As part of the Care Matters proposals, several pilot initiatives took place during 2009, namely the Right2BCared4. The Right2BCared4 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. Middlesbrough was asked to participate as a comparator authority for the independent evaluation of the pilots undertaken by Loughborough University and the National Leaving Care Advisory Service. One of our young people was trained as a peer researcher and they interviewed other young people in the pilot authorities. The interim evaluation is available via leavingcare.org.

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

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 Plan on a six monthly basis.

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

The Pathways Team is an active member of the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum and Northern Leaving Care Forum.

The Children and Young People In Care Council has met. The group is still being established. Our young people will be able to mentor and support younger children and young people in this meeting.

Young people have been involved in the evaluation of the Pathway service.

Staying Safe

The Pathways 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, with ten placements. There are currently 3 vacancies and 1 provider on hold due to the recent birth of her son. We have 2 new possible providers who have expressed an interest.

'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 two young people placed.

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. 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 entitlement

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 2 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 years.

We continue to use the "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 us 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.

We continue to work with Barnardos SECOS Project with individual young people where necessary.

The accommodation worker is an active member on the new Youth Coordinator Panel. This involves representation from all housing providers in Middlesbrough and workers send in referrals, which are dealt with in one meeting. The idea is to match up the young person's needs with the most suitable accommodation available. This provides a network and a monitoring system.

The Pathways Team is involved with future housing developments with our partners.

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 continue 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.

Connexions have been proactive in supporting UASC young people to access ESOL/independent living course at St Mary's College.

Pathways has facilitated the Preparation for Independence course, which is OCN accredited inviting our partners to run sessions that are relevant to them i.e. Connexions ETE.

The 'From Care2Work' Employability Scheme is ready to run within Pathways. We have presented the Care2Work action plan at the Economic Wellbeing group for a strategic oversight and support. That needs to be launched.

The Pathways Team has attended and provided information to the Economic Wellbeing group regarding young people's who are not in education training and employment and also Pathways accommodation information and developments.

The team has continued to have a working relationship with the University of Teesside. Our current activities are based around sport.

This includes young people visiting and utilising the university facilities. The main sport accessed for 2010 has been football.

There are currently three young people attending university full time. Pathways have a duty to financial support them during their studies.

We continue to work on a national level with colleagues from the National Care Advisory Service, DSCF, 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

Ten young people took part in the "Truth is..... Roadshow". This attempted to address social norms regarding sexual health, relationships, alcohol and substance misuse. We are currently awaiting overall feedback. The young people appeared to benefit from this, enjoying the day. The idea is that pathways will have a follow up session to evaluate if this roadshow has had a positive impact.

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.

Our young people assisted in the development of our 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. The Pathways Office 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.

Six young people have taken part in the Self-Esteem Group Work Programme for young people. This is aimed at supporting their positive mental health. The group was facilitated by the Looked After Children Nurse, and a pathways team member. We received European funding, as we have been part of a Transnational Project aimed at developing a resource pack to support the emotional well-being of care leavers and ultimately improve their employability. We have visited Romania with our findings and a presentation and evaluation is available.

Pathways Football Team has participated in the Kelly Cup football tournament again this year and again the winners were Hartlepool; their team appears to be the Spain of the Leaving Care world, although we did come a respectable third this year.

The Pathways team purchased a number of discounted X4 gym cards from Middlesbrough Leisure for our young people. The card entitles the young person to one-month free gym membership. If they use it regularly they will be issued with a one years free membership. 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

Pathways had a summer BBQ event. Around 20 young people attended. This event had stalls by Platforms, sexual health, and health promotion. The young people also have the opportunity to evaluate the pathways service. The young people also had fun with the Wii games.

Pathways took a group of 10 young to Flamingoland. This is aimed at young people living independently who could not afford an activity of this nature. It supports to provide enjoyment, increases their socialisation and prevents isolation. The group said they had an excellent time.

Several young people worked alongside Personal Advisers, Teesside University and 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.

The young people who supported Teesside University were a credit to Middlesbrough and were presented by Paul Keane, Dean, School of Health and Social Care, with a certificate. This provides our young people with the opportunity to have insight into university life and raise their aspirations. Due to the success one young person has been asked to assess social work student presentations.

Young people have continued to enjoy activities facilitated by the Pathways team including a Christmas meal at their favourite restaurant, Fellini's.

6. Developments and Issues for 2010

Main Issues

As always the Pathways team endeavours to continue its development work. Some of the progress and success of the following is dependent on the Youth Development post being released and appointed to.

As from September 2010 Pathways will not be appointing an UAAS post due to the depleting numbers of under 18 year olds. We currently have two young people under 18, one of these turns 18 in January 2011 and the other in May 2011. There appears to be two reasons relating to this, Pathways are robust in carrying out Merton complaint assessments therefore young people claiming to be children who are adults are ruled out and secondly due to the reduction in numbers being identified by the Immigration Service.

The Service aims to:

- Maintain stability and continuity of the Leaving Care Service.
- The team has two Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW); there will be an emphasis on training and development of the staff team, which will include participation from young people. The Pathways team regularly provides student social work placements and is committed to staff and student development and retention.
- 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.
- Continue to develop links with partner agencies and service providers.
- To increase the support provided to the team from the Connexions Service to a full-time post.
- Continue to strengthen links with the 'Looked After Team' to ensure a smooth transition for all young persons from the Looked After Service to the Leaving Care Service.
- To strengthen links with the Locality Teams to ensure a smooth transition for all young persons who are Looked After to the Leaving Care Service.
- To continue our development work regarding the ICS system. In particular looking at combining the Care and Pathway plan to ensure our young people have one robust plan.
- 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 the service development and the Leaving Care Service.
- To work alongside the looked After Children's nurse and aim to increase young people's access to health promotion.

- To work in partnership with DISC/Platform, the Substance Misuse Team, and to work together to improve the service we currently provide regarding substance misuse.
- 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.
- 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.
- Continue to support and promote the North East Regional Leaving Care Forum.
- Ensure the robust use of the Transitions Forum to ensure that young people needing adult services are identified in a timely fashion to enable a smooth transition of services.
- Continue to provide services to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). We continue 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.

Planned Developments

- To identify a young person who will be our Middlesbrough champion to attend the young people's bench marking forum.
- 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.
- To run an emotional wellbeing group. To continue to work alongside our European partners until this end in march 2011.
- To set up and facilitate a support group for young people who have left care and are living independently in the community.
- To provide training to support the implementation of the Children and Young People's Act 2008.
- To provide training to support the April 2011 implementation of the Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations volume 2 related to LAC children and volume 3 transitions to adulthood in relation to care leavers.

- To re-establish the Peer Support mentoring role within the team. They have previously facilitated a series of drop ins for young people with a theme evening relating to healthy cooking and eating.
- To mentor and encourage young people to be part of the developing Children/young people in Care Council.
- To continue to improve and develop the 'From Care2Work' employability scheme by supporting and sustaining placements and exploring ways to secure follow-on employment and training opportunities. Also to implement the Care2work action plan.
- To invite young people to a 'From Care2Work' event to raise aspirations and to encourage sign up onto the scheme.
- To support CC1989 to develop a 24-hour supported housing project.
- To organise another run of the "Truth is.....Roadshow".
- To encourage a group of young people to run in the Middlesbrough 10K.
- To visit each Locality Team and raise the profile of the Pathways Team.
- Facilitate a training programme for foster carers and residential workers on 'Preparation for Adulthood'.
- To invite young people to take part in the Art'n'That project which will involve 'love Middlesbrough' artwork to be painted on the boards in the Pathways garden.