

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Corporate Parenting Board

PATHWAYS, LEAVING CARE SERVICE

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

Director of Children, Families & Learning: Gill Rollings

2 February 2012

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To present the Corporate Parenting Board with the Annual Report of Middlesbrough Council's Leaving Care Service for the year 2011, attached as Appendix 1.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the contents of this report.

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 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 2011.
6. External consultation is not applicable to this piece of work.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7. The Leaving Care Service is for children and young people in and leaving care aged 16-21, irrespective of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religious belief, having dependant/caring responsibilities, an offending past, being transgender or transsexual, or due to issues of poverty.

OPTION APPRAISAL

8. Not applicable.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

9. 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

RECOMMENDATION

10. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the contents of this report as it informs members of Middlesbrough's Looked After Children aged 16+ and care leaver Service.

REASONS

11. 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, care leavers and those receiving Leaving Care Services.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

12. 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 2011

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.
- Continue with 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 work 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 from 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).
- Ensure appropriate support and priority to enable young people to access safe and suitable permanent housing.

4. Staffing of the Leaving Care Service during 2011

During 2011 the Pathways Team has been a reasonably settled team up until December 2011. Ian Coates, social worker for over 20 years decided to leave the Council to return to work in Industry and Paul Cooke , Social Worker, has been successful in gaining a secondment opportunity as an Independent Reviewing Officer in Middlesbrough. Moira Spencer, personal adviser, is currently on her full time student social worker placement with Families Forward and her work is currently being covered by the team. The two social work posts have been advertised and we have recruited, however there is going to be significant delay in the new staff members starting the team. Due to this we have had to employ an agency worker for the first time due to the level of work within the team and the fact we are 3 staff down.

Details of the staff in post on 1st January 2012 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 Practice 2006 Safeguarding Adults 2010	With the Department since 2001. With the Pathways Team since January 2005-2009 Transitions Team May 2009-July 2010 Pathways Team since 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.
Moira Spencer	Personal Adviser	N.V.Q.3. Currently seconded on the BA (Hons) Social Work.	Since 2003 – currently on her student placement
Denise Poskett	Young Person's Accommodation coordinator	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	Pathways team since July 2009
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 2011

Making A Positive Contribution

It is Pathways young people's 3rd year of being involved with the Social Work Degree program at Teesside University. Four young people have given their time to support 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'. In preparation our young people attend a lecture as a 'meet and greet' session and then later carry out the interviews. All four young people were an absolute credit to this style of learning. They all 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. The University and the young people's work has recently gained national recognition and one young person with Mike Wren, Teesside University lecturer, and Karen Douglas-Weir from Pathways attended an all day conference at the University of Lancashire to share good practice and the paper devised regarding 'Critical Perspectives on Service User Involvement in The Assessment of Social Work Student' 22 June 2011.

Interestingly, two out of the four young people involved in the University work are applying to attend University. One young person has recently been successfully assessed as a foster carer for their own brother, he is also considering further education.

Three young people and one staff member were part of a National Consultation event with Roger Morgan, Children's Rights Director for England. Young people completed a questionnaire about volunteer Visitors and participated in a forum with Roger. Young people's views will contribute to a report which will be submitted to Government and other decision makers.

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. The take up of these has reduced therefore Pathways needs to work with the CICC to look at improving participation.

The 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. We have adopted the assessed conversation as part of Pathways and LAC recruitment.

The Pathways Team is an active member of the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum and Northern Leaving Care Forum. Two young people have been our champions. Middlesbrough Pathways benefits from this and it acts as a bench mark to see how well we are doing compared to other areas across

the country. Two young people received motivational training from Richard Mcann a well-known motivational speaker.

Pathways have been proactive in supporting Middlesbrough's Children In Care Council. Two members of staff from Pathways provide their support around the CICC. The CICC have been part of the Corporate Parenting Board meetings and have been able to share their views. It is hoped over time and with development this will become a robust way for young people looked after to share their views, challenge members and have their voices heard. Four of our Children In Care Council members have attended two regional meetings to represent Middlesbrough.

In August 2011, 20 young people attended the annual Pathways event and provided their views on Pathways. This will support the evaluation of the Pathways service.

Six young people have been part of the garden project. This has involved learning about photography and gardening. Four young people took pictures of Middlesbrough and photo shopped these images to create a relaxing space. Two young people developed their gardening skills by cleaning and painting the decking area, and adding plants to create a colourful and modern garden. One young person comes monthly to attend to this area to keep it at a high standard. This is helping him to promote his job skills and CV.

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 scheme presently has 10 young people in placement with 10 providers. Out of the 10 placements in 2011, 4 were foster care conversions. Seven of the placements are foster care conversions/staying put. Two further foster care placements are in the process of converting to supported lodgings/staying put. One young person is in the initial introduction stage for the possible commencement of a supported lodgings placement.

Between January 2011 and December 2011 there has been 7 placements ended; each successfully. The move-on outcome was, 1 young person moved into their own independent flat, 3 young people moved into their own tenancy with support attached, 1 young person moved in with their long term partner, two young people gained private rented arrangements with their supported lodging provider to remain in the home.

Pathways and Erimus Housing have recently updated our Joint Working Protocol. 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.

We have developed a fantastic working relationship with several private landlords. This supports our young people who are at university. We also currently have 2 properties where young people who are claiming asylum (UAAS) 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.

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 have recently had a young mother with her baby move on successfully to her own tenancy because of this scheme.

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. Over the past year 5 young people have used this facility. We also used the Crash Pad creatively for one young person who used this as a trainer flat to help him prepare to leave residential care.

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 Housing 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. Last year 17 referrals were sent in for care leavers and 3 received floating support and 4 young people were offered supported housing of the 10 other referrals 4 required a higher level of support and 6 young people's circumstances changed and they no longer wanted supported housing.

Middlesbrough Council has developed a Risk Management group. This is to assess the level of a young person's vulnerability and ensure that there is a coordinated multi agency plan in place to meet their identified needs. We currently have 3 young people being monitored by this meeting.

Pathways has completed 7 age assessments throughout the year of 2011. 1 young person was assessed as being under 18 and was therefore made Looked After. This work continues to be shared amongst the team. We continue to provide housing and financial support to 2 young people over the age of 18 who have exhausted their rights to appeal.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

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

Pathways staff and young people are very proud of their achievement of Outstanding from Ofsted in this area of our work.

The Connexions Service has changed to the Integrated Youth Support Service. We previously had two dedicated workers over three days per week who would cover all young people aged 16+ within the Pathways Service. This has been changed to four workers who cover ½ a day each. The reason for the change is that each worker is area based. The IYSS worker's will only cover the Middlesbrough area. This restricts the coordination of this service and as from October 2011 IYSS were working with 72 young people out of 135 resulting in 63 young people not receiving a service direct from IYSS. IYSS are considering covering the Tees Valley area, which would benefit our young people greatly considering there is a high number living in the surrounding areas. Despite this IYSS and Pathways continue their partnership and in some instances IYSS have been able to offer a flexible approach in providing advice and a great deal of input regarding outcomes for young people. Their work has concentrated on undertaking individual work with young people aimed at assisting them to access education, employment and training. The two previous and two new workers are firmly established within the team. We have evidence of the benefits of the posts through the achieving of an Outstanding from Ofsted because of the pathway planning and joint working and outcomes achieved.

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

Once again Pathways has facilitated the Preparation for Independence course, which is Open College Network accredited inviting our partners to run sessions that are relevant to them i.e. Connexions ETE. Four young people successfully completed all the units and will receive certificates for their work.

The 'From Care2Work' Employability Scheme is up and running. One young person completed a legal placement within Middlesbrough Council. He views this as an invaluable experience and this has supported his decision to apply to study a law degree at University. Pathways intend on presenting the Care2Work action plan at MALAP as the previous strategic oversight was at the Economic Wellbeing group. It is hoped that the Pathways services will hold motivational days for young people to attend and gain inspiration.

One young person has successfully gained her BA (hons) in Child Care in 2011. There are currently two young people attending university full time. Pathways has a duty to financially support and provide advice to 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

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 have a health promotion room, which is updated with health information. The room is being used for health assessment appointments and one to one counselling sessions. Young people aged 16 -17 years old are offered a health assessment and 53 out of 65 have participated and been completed, 8 have refused and there are 4 to still complete. For our 18 year olds 13 have been offered and 9 have accepted and been completed.

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 the Platform Substance Misuse Team. 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.

5 young people alongside 3 members of staff completed Middlesbrough 10K run. This promotes fitness and team work.

Pathways Football Team has participated in the Kelly Cup football tournament in 2011. Middlesbrough came so close and were second.

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 one year's 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.

A member of staff has been trained as a mental health first aider. This role will involve delivering training three times per year and will be very supportive with the emotional well being of our young people.

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 raffle prizes and henna tattoos.

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

Pathways took a group of 4 young mums to South Shields during the summer. This supported young mums to socialise, promote positive parenting and play. All who attended said they greatly benefited from meeting other young mums, sharing experiences and watching their children play.

Young people have continued to enjoy activities facilitated by the Pathways team including a Christmas meal at one of their favourite restaurants, Central Park.

Over 50 young people were part of a national balloon release and 5 young people released the balloons on the day. It was a successful event that generated press interest through the national Bench Marking Forum and coverage supported young people's clear expression to promote positive images of care leavers during national care leavers week.

A young person created a Pathways newsletter using publisher software. This was sent out to over 100 Pathways young people. This was to up date care leavers on events that had taken place and remind them of up and coming events.

6. Developments and Issues for 2011

Main Issues

As always the Pathways team endeavours to continue its development work. The progress and success of this has slowed due to the staff shortages although it is anticipated that this will pick up when our new staff members join us March – May time.

The Service aims to:

- Maintain stability and continuity of the Leaving Care Service.
- To continue to ensure we implement the Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations volume 2 related to LAC children and volume 3 transitions to adulthood in relation to care leavers.
- The team will have two early professional development (EPD) social workers and 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 cover all Looked After and Care Leavers in Middlesbrough.

- 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 working with the independent reviewing officers to ensure young people have one plan to meet their needs.
- 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 Platform, the Substance Misuse Team, and to work together to improve the service we currently provide regarding substance misuse.
- 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.
- Continue supporting the CICC
- To support our champion care leaver to attend the young people's bench marking forum to allow 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 build up the staff team to full capacity
- To propose a CICC apprenticeship post
- 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 set up and facilitate a support group for young people who have left care and are living independently in the community.
- 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 run their Children 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 motivational day to raise aspirations and to encourage further / higher education and sign up to work experience.
- To organise another run of the "Truth is.....Roadshow".
- To encourage a group of young people to run in the Middlesbrough 10K.
- For our football team to be part of the Kelly Cup
- To provide social outings for our young people living independently
- Facilitate a training programme for foster carers and residential workers on 'Preparation for Adulthood'.
- To increase the supported lodgings scheme and also look to a mother and baby provider.
- To continue with our supportive role of training and assessing student social workers with the University of Teesside.
- To update our young peoples information about their entitlements

Completed by Karen Douglas-Weir, Team Manager