

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

**FINAL REPORT OF THE
CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL
EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS – FROM CARE2WORK
PATHWAYS FOR CHILDREN IN CARE**

29 APRIL 2014

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To present the findings of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel's review of Employability Skills – From Care2Work Pathways for Children in Care.

BACKGROUND

2. From Care2Work was launched in July 2009 and is an initiative funded by the Department for Education (DfE).
3. Managed by the National Care Advisory Service (NCAS), the initiative is a national project aiming to improve employability outcomes for young people in the transition to adulthood.
4. The aim of the project is to find local solutions that narrow the gap between care leavers and their peers by creating opportunities and raising aspirations. The program is designed to encourage partnerships that enable young people to engage with their community to develop their employability skills.
5. The purpose of the scrutiny review was to investigate, through the national employability initiative From Care2Work, what local solutions the Local Authority has adopted in order to narrow the gap between care leavers and their peers by providing skills, creating opportunities and raising aspirations.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

6. The Scrutiny Panel concentrated its investigation on the following terms of reference:
 - a) To examine how the Local Authority develops employability opportunities for young people, for example – how current funding is utilised.
 - b) To determine how the Local Authority identifies the advice, skills, training, knowledge and expertise required by young people leaving care.
 - c) To establish how the Local Authority works with external partners and organisations to create awareness of the employability needs of care leavers.
 - d) To determine measures and strategies that could be implemented in order to improve the employability support currently offered, and develop the delivery of quality employability opportunities for care leavers, for example – shaping services and monitoring outcome.

- e) To examine relevant guidance.

METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

7. The Scrutiny Panel investigated this topic over the course of 7 meetings held on 3 September 2013, 2 October 2013, 23 October 2013, 13 November 2013, 11 December 2013, 23 January 2014 and 5 March 2014. A Scrutiny Support Officer from Legal and Democratic Services co-ordinated and arranged the submission of written and oral evidence and arranged witnesses for the investigation. Meetings administration, including preparation of agenda and minutes, was undertaken by a Governance Officer from Legal and Democratic Services.
8. A record of discussions at Scrutiny Panel meetings, including agenda, minutes and reports, is available from the Council's Egenda committee management system, which can be accessed via the Council's website at www.middlesbrough.gov.uk.
9. This report has been compiled on the basis of information submitted to the Scrutiny Panel by the Council's Department of Wellbeing Care and Learning, the Children in Care Council (CICC), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the National Care Advisory Service (NCAS).

MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANEL

10. The membership of the Panel was as detailed below:
 - Councillors J A Walker (Chair), G Purvis (Vice-Chair), M Hanif, H Pearson, P Sanderson, B E Taylor, M Thompson, M B Williams and Fr G Holland (Co-opted Member)

THE SCRUTINY PANEL'S FINDINGS

11. The Scrutiny Panel's findings in respect of Employability Skills – From Care2Work Pathways for Children in Care are set out in this report. Due to areas of overlap between the terms of reference, the Scrutiny Panel's findings are not set out against a specific term of reference but cover the issues highlighted by them under the following headings:

Defining Care Leavers

12. The level of support that young people receive from leaving care teams depends on their status as care leavers.
13. A breakdown of the entitlements and how young people qualify for them is detailed in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 Regulations and Guidance.
14. Below is a brief overview of the terminology regarding care leavers:
 - **Eligible Child** - A child aged 16 or 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who are still looked after.
 - **Relevant Child** - A child aged 16 or 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who has left care. This also includes young people who were detained (e.g. in a youth offending institution or hospital) when they turned 16 but immediately before that were looked after.

- **Former Relevant Child** - A young person over 18 who was previously 'eligible' or 'relevant'. Local authorities support this group at least until age 21 or longer if in education or training.
- **Qualifying Child** - Any young person under 21 (or 24 if in education or training) who ceases to be looked after or accommodated in a variety of other settings, or privately fostered, after the age of 16.¹

What is Employability?

15. The From Care2Work initiative conveys that employability is about being capable of obtaining and sustaining fulfilling work, in addition to developing a specific range of skills, knowledge and expertise required to perform well in the workplace.

Government Priority: To Maximise Employability Outcomes for Care Leavers

16. A good standard of education is a key driver towards achieving positive employment outcomes in adulthood. However, there remains a significant gap between the educational achievements of care leavers and their peers.
17. Care leavers are less likely to have achieved 5 A*-C GCSEs (37% of looked after children compared to 80% of non-looked after children in 2012). Only 6% of care leavers go into higher education compared to 23% of their peers at aged 18. ²
18. Too many care leavers are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or are long term unemployed. There are currently significant challenges for many young people taking their first steps into the world of work.
19. Young people leaving care have significantly poorer outcomes than their peers in relation to education, training and employment. There is evidence that many care leavers enter and stay in low-skilled work or are dependent on welfare benefits.³
20. A big priority of the government is, therefore, to ensure that children in care and care leavers get the support they require from schools, colleges, universities and local authorities to maximise their educational attainment and employment opportunities.
21. Government is determined to maximise employment opportunities for all care leavers by learning from good practice and being vigorous about building on responsibilities of corporate parents. Some local authorities and charitable organisations-working independently and with Jobcentre Plus have increased the number of care leavers they have supported into employment, education and training.

Support for Care Leavers up to Age 25: Change in the Law

22. From 1st April 2011, a change in the law requires that young people previously eligible for leaving care services, resuming programmes of education or training after the age of 21, are entitled to continuing support from a Personal Adviser allocated from their responsible authority.
23. In this context, the definition of a programme of education or training must be interpreted broadly. For example, this might include options such as: completion of a basic skills

¹ http://leavingcare.org/home/overview/who_is_a_care_leaver

² Care Leaver Strategy, A cross-departmental strategy for young people leaving care, October 2013

³ NCAS, From Care2Work Creating opportunities and raising aspirations, Interim Report, June 2010

course, so that the young person has the numeracy and literacy skills needed to compete in the jobs market; take up of a course of further education; take up of a university place; support to enable the young person to complete a recognised postgraduate qualification; or participation in vocational training and apprenticeships.

24. In every case where a care leaver requests this support, local authorities need to assess the appropriateness of the education or training course and how it will help them to achieve their ambitions.
25. It was conveyed to the Scrutiny Panel that it is unclear at the present time what the take-up will be, however, it was acknowledged that it would be extremely beneficial to care leavers if they receive the appropriate education and training advice aged fourteen or fifteen.

Care Leaver Strategy

26. Reference was made to the Care Leaver Strategy which was published by the Government in Autumn 2013. This is a cross-departmental strategy document that sets out the steps the government is taking to support care leavers to live independently once they have left their placement. The strategy includes a wide range of commitments from Government to improve the help and support available to young people leaving care across all areas of life. Two pages of the Strategy cover employment. The Government has identified care leavers as a group that required intensive support and advice.

From Care2Work

27. As previously stipulated, From Care2Work was launched in July 2009 and is an initiative funded by the Department for Education (DfE).
28. The project:
 - Supports each local authority to develop local solutions to meet the employability support needs of their young people and to capture objectives in a work plan.
 - Engages with national employers, increasing the profile of care leavers, and piloting models of delivery that could offer supportive opportunities for care leavers.
29. Key areas delivered to support this work have included:
 - Supporting managers to embed a corporate parenting approach to career planning which starts with children in care.
 - Investigating how to overcome the barriers that prevent care leavers from getting into training and work.
 - Advising local authorities on how they can create work experience opportunities and apprenticeships across the council.
 - Forming relationships with national and local employers in order to provide a range of employment and work experience opportunities.
30. Since 2011, outcomes so far include:
 - 105 local authorities creating 6169 employment, training and education opportunities; and,

- 109 national employers, creating 580 work experience opportunities.

Middlesbrough: Current Position

31. The Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS) Manager reported that the following key measures show a continuing, improving trend regarding young people leaving school and making a successful transition into the world of education, employment (with training) and training:

September Guarantee

32. The September Guarantee is an entitlement to all 16 and 17 year olds in England. The Guarantee's purpose is to ensure that all young people are given a suitable offer of education, employment (with training) or training to enable them to participate.
33. Middlesbrough's latest figures indicate that 93.3% of all eligible young people have been made a suitable offer of education, employment (with training) or training. It was conveyed to the Scrutiny Panel that this is a good outcome, as the national average for 2013 was 92.1%. This result means that Middlesbrough is in position 86 of 152 local authorities.

The Annual Activity Survey

34. Members noted that following the September Guarantee, a national survey is conducted of all school leavers to determine their actual first destination after leaving school. The survey takes place on 1 November each year and the IYSS reports at the end of January.
35. The 2013 survey showed 93.8% of all school leavers were in a recognised destination of education, employment (with training) and training. The survey itself involves data sharing with partner agencies and direct contact with young people and parents resident in the town. This figure indicates an accumulative year on year improvement of 6.3% since 2008, when Middlesbrough had 87.5% of the cohort in education, employment and training. The Scrutiny Panel was advised that there has been no national data published since 2011 to allow a comparison with other local authority areas in England.

Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

36. The NEET rate is measured against the cohort of year 12, 13 and 14 which roughly equates to 16 to 19 years of age.
37. With regard to the young people of Middlesbrough who are NEET, there has been a sustained reduction in the numbers from 2010/11 where 13.2% of the cohort was NEET to 2013/14 where this number reduced to 9.7%. During January 2014 the figure reduced to 8.7% which is Middlesbrough's lowest NEET figure since the concept was developed in 2003.
38. Although this is an improved outcome for the young people of Middlesbrough, it is important to note this is the second worst NEET figure in the country.

Young People Not Known to the Local Authority

39. As part of its monitoring of young people making the transition from school to further education, training and/or employment, the local authority reports on the proportion of

young people for whom it does not have up to date information. For the period November 2013 to January 2014, this was 4.1% compared with a national average of 9.2%. In contrast, the Pathways team maintains individual contact with all care leavers for whom it is responsible and, so, has up to date information on the current situation for all care leavers. A very small number of care leavers (5) over the age of 18 have opted not to engage with the support service provided by the Pathways but they continue to receive contact from the team, who monitor their progress and well-being.

40. The Scrutiny Panel was of the opinion that good progress is being made, however, more is required to increase participation of Middlesbrough's young people in learning.
41. In March 2014, the following statistical information on looked after children and care leavers was conveyed to the Scrutiny Panel:

| | |
|---|---|
| The number of looked after children | 366 |
| The number of care leavers over 18 | 95 |
| The number of looked after children and care leavers who make use of the service offered by the Pathways Team | 149 |
| The number of care leavers in education, training or employment | 73% of care leavers are in education, employment or training. (84% for 16-17 year olds; and, 67% for 18+ year olds) |
| The number and range of employment opportunities offered by the Council to young people | 41 |
| The number of care leavers who have made use of the opportunities provided by the Council | 1 |

42. The number of Middlesbrough's looked after children is usually between 360 and 370 at any point in time. The table above indicates that the number of care leavers over the age of eighteen is currently 95 and there are 149 looked after children and care leavers making use of the services provided by the Pathways Team at the present time. The table above indicates that 27% of Middlesbrough's care leavers are NEET compared with a figure of 40% for all care leavers living in Middlesbrough (the latter figure includes other local authority care leavers living in placements in Middlesbrough). However, it was also noted that some care leavers, for example, young mothers or those in the prison system, are not available for training or work but are counted in the cohort.
43. The table illustrates that Middlesbrough Council currently offers 41 apprenticeships and 1 care leaver is currently employed as an apprentice.

Evidence: The Pathways Team (Leaving Care Service)

The Role of Personal Advisers and the Pathways Team (Leaving Care Service)

44. The Pathways Team Manager and the Pathway's Housing and Development Co-ordinator addressed the Panel from an operational perspective and explained that the Pathways Team supports young people aged 16 to 21 (or up to age 25 if in higher education) that are in the care of the Local Authority. Middlesbrough's Pathways Team supports around 150 young people to achieve better outcomes in employment and further education during the transition from care to independence. Each Personal Adviser looks after approximately 20-25 young people at any one time.

45. The Scrutiny Panel was informed that the Pathways Team had been graded as Outstanding at the last OFSTED Inspection in 2011.

Referrals

46. The Scrutiny Panel was advised that any young person who has been in care for a period of thirteen weeks or more is eligible for the Council's Leaving Care Service. The Pathways Team is a specialist unit created to meet statutory responsibilities under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. Definitions of categories of children entitled to care leaving support are contained in paragraph 14.

Assessing Needs

47. It was conveyed to the Panel that on receipt of a case, a Needs Assessment is developed through discussions with the young person. The Needs Assessment focuses on every aspect of that young person's life including, for example; health, education, accommodation, finance, self-care skills, relationships, family, emotions and environmental factors. The Needs Assessment highlights a young person's current needs as well as their background and history.

Pathway Planning Process

48. Members were advised that from the Needs Assessment, a Pathway Plan is created which outlines current needs and actions and identifies how the needs will be met and by whom. The Plan focuses on education and employability, as well as future aspirations.
49. Personal Advisers, located in the Pathways Team, informed the Scrutiny Panel that all Pathways young people are prepared and supported to achieve their potential, in all areas of their life, by means of their Pathway Plan. Pathway Plans take some time to formulate and it is vital that the goals are realistic. The plan includes how the young person will be helped with their:
- Health and development
 - Education, training and employment
 - Emotional and behavioural development
 - Identity
 - Family and social relationships
 - Independent living skills
 - Financial arrangements
 - Accommodation

Allocation of a Personal Adviser

50. It was conveyed to the Scrutiny Panel that within the transition for a young person from the Looked After Team to the Pathways Team, at the age of 16 years, Managers and Personal Advisers have a number of meetings and discussions to match the young

person with a Personal Adviser. They take into account the young person's historical background, previous experiences and present needs.

51. Members were advised that upon allocation, the Personal Adviser gets to know the young person to help build a trusting and supportive relationship. By means of the Pathway Plan, the Personal Adviser:
 - Supports the young person in all aspects of their life.
 - Is required to keep in touch with the young person and provide advice, information and support, both emotionally and practically, in preparation for leaving care and independence.
 - Ensures that the young person is adequately supported and has access to the appropriate services, liaising with the other agencies or an employer if the young person agrees to the contact.
52. The Scrutiny Panel was informed that with this knowledge and relationship, the Personal Adviser supports the young person in their employment, education and training aims and aspirations. In partnership with Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS) specialist workers, College and Higher Education Advisers, and Pertemps Workers, who advise on the opportunities available, the most appropriate route and match for the young person, an Education, Employment and Training (EET) Plan is then put in place.
53. The Scrutiny Panel was advised that one-to-one sessions can be arranged in addition to joint meetings in order to ensure a co-ordinated approach is in place and continues throughout. Practical and financial aspects are also considered and implemented where needed.

Challenges

54. It was acknowledged that the transition from school to adulthood was a difficult time and sadly the Pathways Team do lose contact with some young people at this point. It was confirmed that many young people who have been in care are keen to return home to birth families, even though sometimes that is not in their best interests. Only a very small number of Looked After Children are orphans.
55. It was conveyed that the Pathways Team try hard to keep in contact with, and continue to support, all young people leaving care. Regular drop-in sessions are held at the Pathways Team office and young people know there is always support available. Such support can include advice or a cooked meal, a shower, or the use of the washing machine.
56. There has been a rapid growth in care leavers over the past few years and this puts pressure on the team to ensure that all young people have access to employability opportunities. It was highlighted that there is an increased number of Looked After Children coming into the system and the country and region's unemployment figures for under 25 year olds is at its highest. In addition, the Welfare Reforms are having a dramatic impact on everyone, particularly young people.
57. At the time of the last OFSTED Inspection, the Pathways Team had the support of two dedicated workers from the IYSS. The Pathways Team feel a key person is needed to drive employability forward and focus exclusively on this important area, especially within the current economic climate.

58. It was also highlighted by the Pathways Team that it would be useful to have a named person at the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) with responsibility for young people leaving care. It was noted that it was often difficult to get through to the DWP on the telephone. In addition, young people often have their benefits sanctioned for not signing on at the correct time. The Pathways Team encourage young people to understand that they have to take responsibility for keeping appointments.
59. It was conveyed to the Scrutiny Panel that previously, a young person could apply for job seeker's allowance two weeks prior to their eighteenth birthday but this has ceased with the recent introduction of a new online system. Again, the Pathways Team will provide financial support to a young person, so long as they have made a claim, until their allowance was paid. This can sometimes take a few weeks. Evidence received from the DWP is referenced later in the report.

From Care2Work and the Local Authority

60. It was highlighted to the Scrutiny Panel that one strand of the project aims to support local authorities. The project's objective is to improve support for children in care and children leaving care by providing young people with the necessary employability skills to be successful in the employment market.
61. The Scrutiny Panel was advised that From Care2Work works in partnership with local authorities, private sector employers and third sector organisations in England. Its aim is to identify and share good practice and enable relationships between corporate parents and employers in order to increase the breadth of opportunities available to young people leaving care.
62. The programme supports local authorities to:
 - Develop local solutions and partnerships to meet the needs of their young people.
 - Encourage and support all care leavers to remain engaged in education, take up training opportunities and undertake activities aimed at improving employability.
63. Through strong and effective corporate parenting, including proactive and creative planning, local authorities can engage, motivate and enable care experienced young people to achieve their goals.
64. It was highlighted that local authorities need to offer a range of employability opportunities if young people are able to build these skills and knowledge and demonstrate a positive attitude towards work.

Partnership Working

65. The Scrutiny Panel was informed that the Pathways Team works in partnership with the National Leaving Care Bench Marking Forum (NLCBMF) and the National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) to share and develop good practice to promote better outcomes for young people. The Pathways Team regularly attends NLCBMF meetings and works with NCAS and other authorities to raise the profile of care leavers on a national basis. The National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum (NLCBF) has a large and active membership of 70 local authorities and trusts from all over England and Northern Ireland. The ultimate aim of the forum is to achieve the best outcomes for young people making the transition from care to adulthood. Members of the forum support each other to

develop more compliant, efficient and cost effective services through sharing and developing policies and best practice.⁴

Funding

66. It was queried whether Middlesbrough receives funding towards the Care2Work programme as it is a national initiative. The Panel was advised that it does not receive funding, however, it is beneficial as valuable advice and guidance is provided.

From Care2Work Quality Mark

67. Members were advised that the Quality Mark Award acknowledges the work and commitment of:

- Local Authorities who engage young people in their journey to work, raise their aspirations and help to build a career.
- Employers who work with local services and offer opportunities to care leavers that develop their experience of the world of work.

68. It was highlighted to the Scrutiny Panel that Quality Marks are highly regarded as a non-legislative means of recognising best practice. In the report 'Education Matters in Care' the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers recommends the From Care2Work Quality Mark "should be a route by which local authorities can improve their offer to care leavers as well as their rating".

69. The National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) assesses what local authorities are doing to engage young people and develop local solutions to meet the employability support needs of their young people, and this is measured against four criteria: Commitment, Opportunities, Support and Monitoring.

70. The Scrutiny Panel was informed that Middlesbrough Council has been awarded a From Care2Work Quality Mark. The Local Authority demonstrates its commitment through the development of the employability support work plan.

From Care2Work: Employability Support Work Plan

71. It was highlighted to the Scrutiny Panel that NCAS developed an employability support work plan template, designed to support local authorities to identify what needs to happen locally to improve the employability of care leavers. NCAS works with Middlesbrough Council in terms of setting standards and sharing best practice.

72. It was conveyed that having a work plan helps to outline what steps the Local Authority is taking to improve employability; as well as medium and longer term goals, and also makes it easy to review the progress being made.

73. Members were advised that the developed plan fully details the objectives and the actions being taken by Middlesbrough at an operational and strategic level to achieve outcomes. It also provides details of the responsible lead officer, timescales and desired outcomes/progress. The over-arching aim is to ensure that Middlesbrough's looked after children are receiving the right support and opportunities.

⁴ http://leavingcare.org/?page_ID=49

74. It was highlighted that the 10 objectives within the work plan template have been aligned to the most recent statutory guidance for local authorities. Further information pertaining to the objectives is detailed below:

COMMITMENT - Strategic planning and partnership working across the local authority, incorporate a corporate parenting commitment to improve the employability of care leavers

Strategic and Corporate Parenting Commitment

75. From the evidence received, the Scrutiny Panel was of the view that there is a strategic commitment of the Local Authority to improve the employability of care leavers. A strategic champion has been identified within the Forum for Looked After Children (FLAC). The forum now combines the Corporate Parenting Board and the Multi Agency Looked After Partnership Team. The creation of this forum ensures a strategic commitment to the promotion of employability within the Council and the wider authority.
76. It was highlighted that Councillor J Walker has been identified as the strategic champion. The strategic champion's role involves:
- The promotion of employability through corporate parenting within the Council and wider partnerships; and
 - Ensuring a strategic commitment to providing a range of opportunities across the local authorities.
77. It was conveyed to the Scrutiny Panel that the strategic champion has started to attend the Care2Work Steering Group meetings, at Pathways, as part of the role.
78. The Scrutiny Panel was informed that the employability of Looked After Children and care leavers is referenced in six of the Local Authority's strategic plans:
- Pledge (see paragraph 196)
 - Corporate Parenting Strategy
 - 14 -19 Education Plan
 - Education Plan
 - Authority Business Plan
 - Economic Development Plan

Partnership Working

79. It was highlighted that a joint working protocol has been established between Pathways, Middlesbrough College and the Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS). The IYSS have a service level agreement with Job Centre Plus.

Employability Opportunities

80. The Scrutiny Panel was advised that a range of employability opportunities are provided, such as: work placements, taster sessions, individual tutoring, job seeking training, additional educational support, employment, vocational courses, apprenticeships etc.

81. Members were informed that the Partnership has widened the variety of employability opportunities for young people in and leaving care. Pathways also has its own Employability Scheme, which offers to seek placements within Middlesbrough Council Departments, to offer taster days and practical work experience and put a specific support plan in place to ensure both the young person and placement providers are supported during the placement. Unfortunately the take-up has been low, although placements have been offered when requested.
82. The Pathways Service accessed funding of £4,000 to create an apprenticeship for the Children in Care Council. This included studying for an NVQ Level 2 in Customer Services. This position was taken up in March 2013 and is for a 12 month period. Funding will end in March 2014. The apprentice is a care leaver and therefore brings the benefits of a young person who has been through the care system working with other looked after children and Council officers, and being a bridge between the two. This post has been extremely successful and there are negotiations taking place to explore extending the apprenticeship.
83. Pathways has also arranged a pre-apprenticeship programme to help young people to build confidence and self-esteem.
84. Members considered that, as corporate parents committed to improving the employability outcomes for care leavers, priority should be given to young people on the Pathways Care2Work programme where employment opportunities arose within the Council.
85. Members noted that a report has recently been submitted to the Chief Executive's Management Team (CEMT) in relation to the provision of work experience placements in Middlesbrough Council for young people. The Council is committed to providing meaningful experiences and enhancing opportunities for young people who are in care and who will be care leavers. Several placements have already been provided in the Council's Legal Department.

COMMITMENT – The social care workforce has an understanding of how to build employability and support career planning as part of ongoing support and pathway planning.

Personal Advisers and IYSS Advisers

86. Personal Advisers located in the Pathways Team and IYSS Advisers forge close links to ensure young people gain an understanding of building employability and career planning. The IYSS Advisers provide advice and expertise on key issues and opportunities at weekly team meetings.
87. Members were informed that the IYSS Advisers visit foster carers and other support providers on an individual basis to ensure they are aware of their roles, and to receive guidance, advice and information on supporting young people in Education, Training and Employment (ETE). ETE is included in supervision and Pathway Plan reviews. Further information in the support provided by the IYSS, to the Pathways Team, is referenced later in the report.

Career Planning

88. It was highlighted that when a young person initially transfers to Pathways they have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place. The plan is incorporated into the young person's Pathway Plan. The Pathways Plan is agreed with the young person and care

leavers are offered work experience and other opportunities to allow them to test their career aspirations and needs.

89. It was conveyed to the Scrutiny Panel that the Pathway Plan includes a section specific to education, training and employment. This section is young person led and regularly reviewed and supervised. The plan states the aims and aspirations of the young person and what is required to achieve these aims, practicalities, responsibilities of the young person and support required including support from relevant partners. Alongside these opportunities care leavers are provided with access to high quality information, advice and guidance to inform their plans in order to progress into continuing education, training or employment. The support may include 1-1 sessions to provide individual advice and information on options available, completion of CVs, completion of applications, financial advice and practical support.
90. Members were advised that young people are prepared and supported to help them achieve their potential in all areas of their life by means of their Pathway Plan. Incentives are also offered for them to go to College. The quality of the local authority's care and pathway planning, in addition to the support provided to young people from their carers, school, college and Personal Adviser is the key to their being able to go on to participate in further or higher education.
91. The Scrutiny Panel heard that a career planning tool is being developed to help young people plan their aspirations and career progression, put plans in place, note routes taken and barriers and achievements in working towards those aims. The career planning support should help young people recognise the relevance of their studies to their future career and life chances and should encourage young people to reflect regularly on their skills, strengths and aspirations.

Training

92. It was conveyed to the Scrutiny Panel that information is provided to relevant staff on building the employability of care leavers and career planning. Social Workers, Personal Advisers, Supported Lodging Providers and Foster Carers receive information and guidance as part of their induction training.
93. Recently a National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) Officer provided careers training to the Pathways Team to enhance their skills in motivating and promoting care leavers in education, training or employment.
94. It was highlighted that training and information sessions can also be provided to managers within Middlesbrough Council on an individual basis if/when apprenticeships become available.

OPPORTUNITIES - Operational processes support every care leaver to take up a range of employability opportunities

Employability Scheme

95. As previously mentioned, an Employability Scheme is in place within Pathways specifically for Looked After Children (LAC) and care leavers.
96. The Pathways Leaving Care Service Employability Scheme is an employment initiative for young people aged 16-21 in, or leaving, care in Middlesbrough. The aim of the scheme is to enable young people leaving care to gain the maximum life chance benefits from engaging in education, training and employment opportunities.

97. The key objectives of the Employability Scheme are:
- To ensure that care leavers, as a disadvantaged group, have access to the same education, training and employment opportunities as their peers.
 - To provide young people with a realistic view of the world of work.
 - To provide a range of work experience placements that reflect young people's individual interests, abilities and aspirations.
 - To work with young people in a creative way to increase their employability skills.
 - To develop young people's skills, confidence and motivation to enable them to take up opportunities which will help them to realise their potential.
 - To develop a whole authority approach to further education, training and employment of young people in the care of the local authority, by promoting the idea that young people can benefit from work experience placements.
 - To raise awareness amongst the various departments in the local authority of their potential as employers of young people. By participating in employability initiatives such as through work experience, local authorities can improve their performance indicators.
98. Placements are identified within the Council on an as needs basis and a worker from IYSS provides support in identifying relevant placements as necessary.

OPPORTUNITIES - Financial policies and procedures clearly identify how young people will be supported with education, training and employment.

Financial Policies and Procedures

99. It was acknowledged that there has recently been various changes to the benefits system and the Scrutiny Panel was advised that the From Care2Work project is working towards developing a young person friendly financial policy to raise awareness in relation to benefit entitlements to support them in employment, education and training.
100. Members were informed that Pathways Leaving Care Service has its own financial policy that includes information on additional financial support that is offered to care leavers. This includes support for extra tuition, travel costs, uniforms or equipment. Private short courses and incentive payments have also been paid to young people for positive engagement.
101. It was highlighted that a financial package is in place for young people who wish to attend University and this can continue up to the age of twenty-four years. The Authority provides all the things that parents would to enable the young person to lead a full student life.
102. It was noted by the Scrutiny Panel that once a young person reaches the age of eighteen, if they are not in full time education, they are no longer a Looked After Child. These young people suddenly have an allowance to manage, rent and bills to pay and have never been financially responsible for themselves, which can be very stressful. The current benefit paid is £56.40 per week. The Pathways Team can assist young people with any shortfall in rent for a short length of time and will provide food if necessary, as well as helping them to budget. The Pathways Team also approaches other agencies for help and support.

103. Members were advised that if a young person chooses to attend college, the Pathways Team supports them initially with bus fares, lunch money, or a clothing allowance, until their bursary is paid. The bursary payment is made based on attendance and cannot therefore be paid in advance. It was highlighted that weekly or termly payments would greatly assist young people starting college courses.

OPPORTUNITIES - The provision of and/or support with accommodation supports care leavers to take up or maintain education training and employment opportunities

104. It was highlighted that the Pathways Team has an Accommodation Worker with an allocated budget for supported lodgings and exclusive time to promote accommodation needs. 90% of young people are in suitable accommodation and 15% are 'staying put' in supported lodgings, which is three times better than the national average.

Accommodation Support

105. The Scrutiny Panel was advised that accommodation needs are assessed and agreed by the Pathways Team and the young person.

106. It was conveyed to Members that an Independent Reviewing Officer scrutinises Pathways Plans and placements to monitor and check whether the young person's accommodation meets ETE needs. The Scrutiny Panel noted that regular visits to accommodation are made.

107. Members were informed that the Pathways Team has its own housing worker who provides additional advice and support to young people. The housing worker ensures:

- Links and joint working with housing providers.
- Development of supported accommodation.
- The needs of young people are prioritised.

108. The Scrutiny Panel heard that accommodation options include:

- Supported lodgings/staying put placements.
- Supported accommodation providers/foyers.
- Accommodation with floating support.

109. The Scrutiny Panel was advised that accommodation with floating support also includes holiday accommodation for the young person to return to while at higher/further education establishments.

110. Members noted that the Pathways Team also has its own crashpad facility for emergency accommodation purposes.

Placements and Independent Living

111. In relation to a query regarding accommodation and independent living, the Panel was advised that young people are encouraged to remain in placement for as long as possible. The Staying Put Service and Supported Lodgings help young people to do this. Middlesbrough has a strong 'staying put' ethos as it recognises that young people can become very isolated when moving to independent accommodation. Middlesbrough

actively promotes foster carers to encourage young people to remain in placement and the majority of carers go on to the Staying Put programme.

112. A Panel Member asked whether there was any pressure on young people to leave foster care placements as there is a shortage of foster carers in Middlesbrough. The Panel was informed that no pressure is placed on young people to move to independence and that foster carers are able to provide placements through supported lodgings, alongside regular foster placements. It was acknowledged that carers will receive a lower level of financial support, however, the young person will have some form of income themselves at this point, either through employment or benefit entitlements whilst attending further education.

Financial Implications

113. The Scrutiny Panel was informed that one of the main issues for the Pathways Team is finding suitable accommodation for young people. Housing benefit is currently £80 per week and trying to find decent accommodation for that amount is very difficult.
114. It was conveyed to Members that the Supported Housing Department assists in finding supported lodgings and a bond is not required. However, some young people are keen to take up their own tenancy and often this is through private rentals where a deposit is needed. The Scrutiny Panel was advised that it is extremely difficult to find one-bedroom accommodation and therefore there are often additional charges from the bedroom tax. Young people are not always able to cope with living in shared accommodation. Sometimes placements with foster parents can continue after age eighteen, on a supported lodgings basis, and this is generally very successful.

SUPPORT - The local authority ensures all looked after children and care leavers get career planning support through pathway planning and/or partnership work with careers advisers to raise their aspirations and access opportunities throughout their transition to adulthood.

Pathway Plans and Career Support

115. Paragraphs 88 – 91 provide information on the career planning support that care leavers receive.

Middlesbrough College

116. The Scrutiny Panel heard that Student Engagement Officers at Middlesbrough College provide emotional and practical support to young people.
117. Members were advised that two named workers from Middlesbrough College attend the From Care2Work Steering Group meetings and all parties are aware of needs of young people. The group meets on a quarterly basis, ensuring multi-agency commitment and working.
118. Middlesbrough College have offered an Open Day that purely focuses on care leavers. The day encourages care leavers to consider educational opportunities and to get involved in further education.
119. The Scrutiny Panel noted that there is good joint working between the Pathways Team and college.

Diverse Groups

120. Members heard that the needs of diverse groups are met on an individual basis. Middlesbrough Adult Services Forwards Team provides work placements and employment opportunities for young people with learning difficulties/disabilities.

Monitoring

121. The Scrutiny Panel was advised that a Virtual Head monitors the support received by all care leavers.

SUPPORT - Information is available to young people so that they are fully aware of the choices and options available to them and how they will be supported to access these

122. The Scrutiny Panel heard how Personal Advisers and IYSS Advisers ensure that:

- A copy of the Pathway Plan is provided to the young person. The plan contains clear goals and future planning.
- Leaflets and posters are displayed in the Pathways Office, local colleges and at Pathway events.
- Information and advice about opportunities is also provided in booklet format.

123. It was conveyed that information, guidance, advice and support are provided by IYSS Advisers and a Personal Adviser. Young people are informed of the opportunities and options available and the support provided from other agencies, such as supported accommodation providers, education and training establishments.

SUPPORT - Processes are in place to support young people between 21 and 25 who ask for assistance with education or training from the local authority under the provisions of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008.

124. The Scrutiny Panel noted that in order to ensure support of young people, aged between 21 and 25, the Local Authority has:

- An assessment process in the Local Authority's Business Plan.
- An agreement in place which ensures the IYSS offers ongoing 1:1 support to care leavers up to the age of 25.
- A process in place which ensures information about support is included in Pathway Plans, exit reviews, displays in the office and via closing letters to young people.

125. The NCAS Guide entitled - support for care leavers aged 21 to 25 with education and training, is included in the young person's induction pack. All workers have access to the booklet and it is discussed in supervision.

MONITORING - Clear information, referral and monitoring systems are in place to manage employability opportunities for care leavers.

126. Members heard that the IYSS undertakes:

- The monitoring process
- Data sharing

- Management information sharing
- The production of statistics – including identifying the number of NEET young people
- The recording of outcomes

127. In addition to the above:

- There is a From Care2Work Steering Group link into FLAC for monitoring and developing opportunities and this information is incorporated into future plans and the Local Authority work plan. There is a 6 monthly update provided to FLAC.
- There is a referral process and support to monitor the Employability Scheme.
- Placements are sourced on an individual basis to meet young people's needs.

MONITORING - Feedback from young people is included in monitoring and evaluation.

128. The Scrutiny Panel was informed that young people's views and feedback are included in Pathway Plans/reviews. An extra page has been developed for the review document which contains additional feedback provided to the Children in Care Council (CICC) for monitoring purposes. The Vice-Chair of the CICC attends and contributes to FLAC meetings. The CICC consists of young people who represent Looked After Children and care leavers. Evidence received from the CICC is referenced later in the report.

129. In addition to the above, Members were informed that an annual "Have Your Say" document is circulated to young people, which includes a section for ETE and requests feedback as to the improvements that could be made to enhance current working practices. There is also a clear compliment/complaint process. Young people also have the opportunity to give feedback on employability placements and convey views/opinions to management for evaluation during supervision.

130. The Scrutiny Panel was advised that the IYSS and Pathways Team ensure information sharing takes place and that any feedback, received from young people, is passed to relevant worker and management.

Overview of Funding

131. The Deputy Director for Safeguarding and Specialist Services provided the Panel with an overview of the current and future funding available to provide employability opportunities and/or develop employability skills.

Budget

132. The Scrutiny Panel was advised that within the Pathways Team there is not a dedicated budget in respect of employability for care leavers; the manager has an allocated budget of £200,000 for young people. The budget covers all funding and expenditure related to looked after children and care leavers aged 16+. It is this budget that is used creatively to support employability opportunities. The manager ensures this covers education, training and employment entitlements for care leavers.

133. The budget is also used to pay for assessed individual need in relation to personal allowances, accommodation, a setting up home allowance of £2000 to each care leaver, travel, clothing, incentives and equipment. This budget has also paid for courses that

cannot be funded by any other avenue and it also supports young people in higher education. It is accessed by a worker who has identified an individual need within the young person's Pathway Plan. The team has developed skills and expertise in applying for grants for equipment from a variety of sources.

Funding for Higher Education

134. The Pathways Team's financial policy also includes the legal requirements for students in higher education, as set out in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. This is in the form of a £2,000 leaving care grant, which is usually spread over the three years of study. The young person's accommodation costs are also covered, as is their vacation (summer) accommodation. The policy recognises that if Pathways fund the young person's accommodation they are unlikely to be at risk of homelessness or missing their rent, thereby affecting their studies.
135. Courses that could not be funded through any other avenue were also paid for from this budget as well as higher education. During 2012-2013 nine young people had been supported in higher education at a cost of approximately £38,754. Another five young people have applied for higher education for the academic year 2014-2015 and due to the increase in care leavers accessing higher education, the Pathways Team needs to review its current funding to ensure the budget can cover all the needs of care leavers.

Funding Work Experience Opportunities

136. The Pathways Team funds work experience opportunities; this has included participating in an interview panel, painting and decorating, gardening, assessed conversations at Teesside University, animal care work and legal experience. Young people are paid at £7 per hour.

Evidence: Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS)

137. The Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS) Manager provided the Panel with a detailed outline of the support that the IYSS currently offered to the Pathways Team and how the service assists in supporting care leavers.

The Changing Role of the Local Authority re. Career Advice

138. The Scrutiny Panel was advised that there is currently a three-year plan which sees the role of the Council reducing with less funding, therefore, the IYSS is ensuring that schools are trained to assume the role and continue work with vulnerable young people. It was highlighted that schools are now responsible for ensuring that all students, currently up to the age of 17 years, receive career advice. This will, as a consequence of 'raising the participation age', increase to age 18 by 2015 as all young people will have the right to additional education or employment with training up to the age of 18.
139. Members were informed that the role of the local authority will change from being the provider to the overseeing body and ensuring every young person in Middlesbrough has employment with training up to the age of 18. Non-statutory providers will now deliver this for young people who do not gain one GCSE at grade C or above.

Reconfiguration of Services

140. The IYSS has reconfigured its services to meet the Early Help Framework and from 1 April 2014, the IYSS and Sure Start will merge to form the new 0-19 Service.

IYSS Support

141. The IYSS offers support to looked after children and care leavers in their progression into adult life to improve outcomes including engagement in education, employment or training opportunities.
142. Members heard that the support that the IYSS currently offers to the Pathways Team is a reflection of the service's commitment to looked after children and care leavers, whilst meeting the needs of children, young people and families in Middlesbrough to ensure Early Help is provided and reducing the number of referrals into children's social care.
143. Currently there is a lead Senior Practitioner within IYSS and a Senior Practitioner within each IYSS Locality Team that the Pathways Team can contact to request support for a young person. Young people are able to access one-to-one appointments as well as drop-in sessions held in localities, hubs or at Myplace.
144. The Early Help Practitioners work face-to-face with families and the Senior Practitioner also offer individualised support and impartial information, advice and guidance to young people, working in partnership with the Pathways Team. The teams are pioneering new ways of working to make the best use of the resources available. The individual work includes exploring career options, identifying learning pathways, completing applications and action planning.
145. In line with the 2007 Care Matters, Time For Change White Paper, IYSS extend support to all care leavers up to the age of 24 years. If a young person becomes NEET (not in Education, Employment or Training), or leaves a course or training, or changes provision, the Social Worker in the Pathways Team or Personal Adviser would inform the IYSS. This is to ensure records are kept up-to-date and additional support to the young person can be given as soon as possible.

Joint Working

146. The IYSS works closely with the Pathways Team to advise them of different opportunities for young people. This could include college courses, apprenticeships, study programmes, employment opportunities or Government funded programmes such as the 'Youth Contract' delivered by Pertemps, or the ESF (European Social Fund) 'YES' (Youth Enhanced Support) project aimed at young people who are NEET. The Youth Contract and YES project offer intensive support to young people to access education, employment and training opportunities and remove barriers to learning and progression. The current Youth Contract is with Pertemps and is performing well in Middlesbrough and the Council will continue to work with Pertemps and the individual schools on the Youth Contract to ensure successful outcomes. Pertemps have agreed to provide a half a day 'drop in' per week for six months; this is to provide support to young people with interview skills, CVs and application forms.
147. Multi-agency working between agencies such as colleges, training companies, IYSS and Pathways staff has been an important development. The vast majority of providers are aware of the role the IYSS plays with care leavers, making it easier to gain access and achieve the necessary support for looked after children. The IYSS Manager has regular meetings with the Looked After Children Team Manager and Pathways Team Manager to monitor progress on the joint working arrangements.
148. The first week of March 2014 was National Apprenticeship Week and IYSS and National Apprenticeship staff held an event in Middlesbrough.

149. As the new 0-19 service develops, there will be new methods of delivery, including the potential to support leaving care young people who become new parents.
150. Members heard how the IYSS staff have also developed close links with Teesside University to develop support for care leavers. Staff will be attending a Conference in May 2014 which will consider how to raise the aspirations of care leavers and increase the number of looked after children and care leavers going on to Higher Education.
151. The Scrutiny Panel was advised that the lead Senior Practitioner has also been part of the Care2Work that recently achieved the Charter Mark and also helped implement the Educational Protocol for Care Leavers with Middlesbrough College. This will be rolled out to all colleges and training providers in the Tees Valley.
152. It was highlighted to the Scrutiny Panel that the IYSS are also working with colleagues in Community Learning to support a care leaver through their NVQ Level 3 in Youth Work.

Monitoring

153. The Senior Practitioners also have the responsibility to ensure that the IYSS CORE database is kept up-to-date with current 'destinations', whilst also having read-only access to ICS (Integrated Children's System). This data exchange is crucial to ensure support is in place for care leavers. It also starts the process of transition from Year 11 to post 16 options.
154. In response to a query, the IYSS Manager confirmed that the Council can request information from colleges and training providers in relation to how many young people are attending courses. It was highlighted that there are several other initiatives planned by the Government that are unlikely to be delivered by local authorities, however, the local authority will still be responsible for ensuring that the initiatives are being delivered correctly. The Council will need to ensure that external agencies are performing effectively.

Apprenticeships

155. The IYSS is doubling the number of apprentices in the new 0-19 service from three to six and these opportunities are available to care leavers. Two young men who had previously been apprentices have now been employed as Support Workers. At the end of the two year apprenticeships, if a job is not available, the IYSS will offer work experience.
156. It was noted that the take-up of apprenticeships is fairly low and that there is an issue in terms of young people leaving school at age sixteen being ready for employment. It was suggested that schools need to prepare young people better for employability. Specifically in relation to looked after children, it was highlighted that they are often immature in terms of relationships and attachments and have emotional issues that are different from other young people of their own age. A major factor is ensuring that a young person has a good placement, if they do not have a good placement it would undoubtedly impact on their education.
157. The IYSS Manager explained that care leavers are often behind their peers in terms of both educational attainment and maturity. It is vital for apprenticeships to be offered at different levels of attainment and for levels of maturity to be recognised also.
158. The Panel agreed that a recommendation should be included in this report and that steps should be taken to reduce the barriers that prevent young people taking up

apprenticeships with the Council. In addition, Panel Members agreed that further efforts should be made to reduce the number of NEETs.

Funding

159. Members noted that the five Tees Valley authorities have successfully gained funding from the National Apprenticeship Service to help care leavers to access apprentices. This has now been awarded and an agreed programme is in place. £6000 has been awarded to Middlesbrough.
160. The Panel was advised that £2.1 million has also been awarded from the European Social Fund to the five Tees Valley authorities (Middlesbrough's allocation is £440,000). The money is to help young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET, between the ages of 14-19. In September 2013, the Scrutiny Panel was advised that the project was expected to commence in January 2014 and run for two years.

Evidence: Middlesbrough College

161. The Welfare and Support Co-ordinator and Student Engagement Officer from Middlesbrough College advised the Scrutiny Panel that having a joint working protocol in place provides a seamless service to care leavers.

Help and Support

162. Members were informed that Middlesbrough College has provided small group tours of the college and its facilities for care leavers. It was conveyed that Middlesbrough College representatives visit the Pathways office to help engage and build relationships with Middlesbrough's young people.
163. The Scrutiny Panel heard how the Pathways Team recently held an Emotional Health and Wellbeing Course and Middlesbrough College provided an activity based session as part of this. The group of young people were asked what kind of courses they were interested in, what they thought college would be like and whether they had any anxieties or concerns about going to college. Members were advised that the response from the young people was good and they were enthusiastic about getting involved in education. They were taken on a tour of the whole college which included where to go for help and support.
164. Members noted that the group was also given information regarding Middlesbrough College Extra, an enrichment programme working with local youth clubs to get young people involved in positive activity. The group also took part in a practical brick-laying session. It is hoped that by encouraging young people to undertake this type of activity, they will realise that college is not like school at all and it is a community environment.
165. It was highlighted to the Scrutiny Panel that the idea of the activities is to convey to young people what courses, apprenticeships and training is available. The Scrutiny Panel noted that several sessions have now been held.
166. Members were advised that recently, two young people who were NEET for a period of two years, have now started college courses.

Financial Support

167. The Welfare and Support Co-ordinator explained that some students are eligible for a vulnerable young person's bursary of £35 per week. As soon as notification is received

that a young person is eligible, the college will contact the Pathways Team and liaise with them to ensure that the relevant forms are processed immediately.

168. Members heard that the students are aware that if they need assistance, for example, if they do not have lunch money, they can ask for help and the Welfare and Support Team will provide them with vouchers. The Scrutiny Panel noted that with the college working in liaison with the Pathways Team, any problems are resolved quickly.

Engagement

169. It was conveyed to the Scrutiny Panel that the college employs six Student Engagement Officers who cover different courses across the college. Students who come from the Pathways Team might have a weekly appointment with their Engagement Officer but generally they work on a drop-in basis.
170. Members heard that Middlesbrough College also has a member of staff who liaises with students and seeks their views on college life.

Evidence: Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

171. The Senior Operations and Partnerships Manager from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) provided the Panel with an overview of how the DWP effectively supports care leavers.

Mainstream Services for Young People

172. It was highlighted by the Senior Operations and Partnerships Manager that a lot of the access to services for young care leavers in Middlesbrough is about the mainstream services that are offered to young people. Significant changes have been made to the welfare-to-work programmes available to all Jobcentre Plus claimants and these changes include: Universal Jobmatch, Youth Contract, Work Programme and Work Choice. Care leavers will be affected by the reforms.
173. Members heard that once a young person gains employment and is no longer a claimant, the DWP is not resourced to provide any further support. However, if a person signs on again, they will be assigned to their original Adviser. Job Centre Plus only supports current claimants and there is no system to monitor those who gain employment.

Universal Jobmatch

174. The Scrutiny Panel was informed that Universal Jobmatch is an online job posting and matching service available to all jobseekers, not just those claiming benefits. Many services are now delivered online and through digital means. This provides more opportunity to support people locally.

The Youth Contract

175. It was highlighted that through the Youth Contract, the DWP provides 18-24 year olds, including care leavers with access to additional adviser support, work experience, apprenticeships and wage incentives for employers.
176. It was conveyed to the Scrutiny Panel that the Youth Contract, including the Wage Incentive, is a £1 billion programme designed to get more young people into meaningful employment, training or work experience. Under the Wage Incentive the DWP can pay

up to £2,500 to local employers to support them to take on young people, who might include care leavers. This also includes work experience and Sector-based Work Academies - a package to design a route for education, training and work experience for young people that offer guaranteed job interviews. There have been some good successes already locally, particularly with the Local Health Authority.

177. Members were advised that Youth Contract work includes care leavers and different amounts of support are available to young people as opposed to people over the age of 25. Whilst there is nothing specific for care leavers, all Advisers are trained to provide flexible support to any individual.

The Work Programme

178. It was highlighted that care leavers are able to access the Work Programme from the third month of their claim to benefit so they can gain tailored, locally-appropriate employment support as early as possible in their benefit claim.
179. Members were informed that the Work Programme offers greater freedom to tailor support to the needs of individual Job Centre Plus claimants. The number of Employment and Support Allowance claimants benefitting from this support is being increased by allowing additional Employment and Support Allowance claimants to access to the Work Programme. Young people aged 18-24 claiming Jobseekers Allowance can join the Work Programme after nine months.
180. The Scrutiny Panel was advised that the Work Programme provides support with issues of independence and employability to all young people and not specifically care leavers. It was acknowledged that care leavers did need extra support to help them make their own way in the world.

Work Choice

181. It was conveyed that Work Choice is a specialist disability employment programme which was launched in October 2010. The programme provides tailored support to help disabled people who face the most complex barriers into employment, to find and stay in work. Work Choice helps those people to then progress into unsupported employment where this is appropriate for the individual.

Care Leaver Marker

182. Members noted that in Autumn 2013, the DWP introduced a 'marker' to routinely identify care leavers on their information database. This is a very significant step forward to recognise care leavers within Jobcentre Plus which will enable DWP to track both the support care leavers are receiving and how effective this is in delivering employment outcomes. The communications activity for the marker has encouraged local authority teams supporting care leavers to forge closer links with the local Jobcentre Plus.

Adviser Training

183. The Scrutiny Panel heard that linked to the launch of the marker, the DWP is also raising awareness of Jobcentre Plus Advisers by educating them on the issues that care leavers face in their transition to independent living/adulthood and work.
184. Jobcentre Plus advisers have been given more flexibility to provide direct personalised employment support to those care leavers who face greater difficulties in finding work, including support to help them volunteer, train or undertake work experience.

Freedoms and Flexibilities

185. Members were advised that the DWP is driving through major cultural change in which districts now have far greater Freedoms and Flexibilities to deliver according to their local labour markets to help more people into work. A flexible operating model was first tested by the Local Autonomies pilot between 2009 and 2011, the outcomes of which proved the concept and scoped the benefits achievable. The Directorate implemented the Freedoms and Flexibilities offer in April 2012. This ensures all districts have been given more local autonomy to tailor their back-to-work services to meet the needs of individual claimants and local labour markets.
186. The Scrutiny Panel noted that Freedoms and Flexibilities is about districts doing the right thing to get claimants into work quickly, rather than simply ticking boxes and delivering one size fits all back to work services. This allows local working to enhance the offer to care leavers. Identification can take place at the first stage of the claim. Almost all claims are taken through the national network of contact centres and at that point questions are asked about the individual's background and circumstances.

Engagement with Employers

187. Members were advised that in Middlesbrough there is a team who work specifically with local employers to persuade them to take on young people from more vulnerable groups. Rather than identify young people as care leavers it is preferable to encourage employers to have a mixture of young people in their work place. It was conveyed that larger employers are much more prepared to take on groups of young people through work experience, one example being the Prospect Programme with South Tees Health Authority. Approximately sixty young people completed the training and many went on to gain employment with the Health Authority.
188. It was highlighted that Middlesbrough has the largest proportion of small and medium employers in the north east and it is recognised that it is harder and more resource intensive to persuade these employers to provide work experience and job opportunities. The DWP tries to tackle this issue by sending out marketing material and flyers and hosting Employer Engagement Forums. The DWP has had some success supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by assisting them with some of the training, health and safety, and human resource elements of taking on staff.
189. It was emphasised that it would be useful for employers to be made aware that a young person is a care leaver. However, it was clarified that such information cannot be shared without the individual's consent.

Information Sharing

190. It was agreed that individual information sharing is useful, once the correct protocols have been followed and consent given. It was suggested that getting the young persons' Advisers together to share information could make a difference.

Feedback from DWP Advisers

191. The Senior Operations and Partnerships Manager shared some anecdotal evidence obtained from feedback from DWP Advisers. Generally, care leavers have very few different barriers to any other young person attempting to secure a job in today's economic climate. Care leavers' attitudes are often more mature and they are much more prepared to take advice. Whilst care leavers tend to have more problems with life

experiences, employers are usually keener to employ those who show they are willing to learn, even if they have little work experience.

Assistance for Care Leavers

192. It was conveyed to the Scrutiny Panel that two Single Point of Contact (SPOCs) Advisers based in James Cook House and Thorntree House, are available to assist care leavers. It was of concern to the DWP representative that the Local Authority Social Workers did not appear to be aware of these Advisers. Their job is to ensure the correct process is completed for applications for Jobseekers Allowance. All care leavers' applications are fast-tracked and treated as a priority. Under the new guidance, the Local Authority can once again register care leavers for benefit two weeks before the young person's 18th birthday.

Partnership Working

193. The Scrutiny Panel was advised that under the DWP's discretion to do local work it was suggested that a small working group could be established with representatives from the Local Authority, Social Workers, Work Programme providers and local voluntary organisations. The DWP could act as a gateway to support or training offered by such organisations. Links could be established with DWP Advisers and Pathways Advisers and a regular information exchange could take place with regard to both individuals and care leavers as a group. Panel Members endorsed this proposal and it was suggested that perhaps the Local Authority could assist in facilitating meetings.

Volunteering Opportunities

194. Members were advised that the DWP recommends that young people gain work experience and this could be through volunteering. However, volunteering opportunities have to meet the Jobseekers Allowance regulations. Claimants have to be available and actively seeking work, in addition to undertaking volunteering. Generally volunteering tends to be for around twenty hours per week. If this starts to become a full-time job, ie forty plus hours per week, the DWP would question whether the claimant is still looking for paid employment.

Evidence: Children in Care Council (CICC)

The Role of the CICC

195. The Chair and Vice-Chair of Middlesbrough's CICC conveyed that CICCs give children in care a forum to express their views and influence the services and support they receive. CICCs ensure the meaningful involvement of children and young people in decision-making, evaluation, planning and delivery, which leads to services that are effective in meeting their long-term needs.

196. It was highlighted that the CICC aims to improve experiences for children and young people in care by:

- Being the voice for all children in care.
- Putting their experiences of the care system directly to those responsible for corporate parenting.
- Ensuring that the corporate parents, and other professionals in Middlesbrough Council, adhere to the Middlesbrough Pledge - a document that contains the services and support that children in care should expect to receive.

- Researching what actions and improvements the corporate parents, and other professionals in Middlesbrough Council, are doing to help maintain and improve the lives of children in care.
- Helping others and making a difference.

Support Required by Care Leavers

197. Members were advised that in order to achieve their potential, care leavers need support to find out what is available and what qualifications and skills they need in terms of education, training and employment.
198. In consultation with the Virtual Head, leaflets have been produced detailing ten specific things that care leavers are entitled to, to assist them in their future career paths.
199. The Scrutiny Panel heard that, in terms of support in the workplace, good communication is vital. A young person starting work needs appropriate guidance from supervisors, team members and managers. In addition, having a specific person at work that knows a little about the care leaver's background will give that young person confidence that there is someone who understands their home life and any possible problems.
200. It was highlighted that care leavers are often accelerated into the transition to adulthood, some becoming independent at the age of eighteen. Care leavers might not have a family or partner they can talk to about work. It was suggested that the care leaver's Personal Adviser or Mentor could also be available for support, perhaps phoning or texting them to ask how their day at work went.
201. The Vice Chair of the CICC stated that positive feedback and encouragement is very important to young people. Young people will generally get the job done better if they receive praise rather than criticism. Negative criticism might deter a young person from continuing in the workplace.
202. Members heard that most young people in care just want to be the same as everyone else but the CICC promotes the fact that if additional support and funding is available then it should be accessed. The CICC wants young people to be aware of what they are entitled to and support them to apply for it. The Vice-Chair of the CICC stated that she had received additional tuition to support her at university and this experience will help her support someone else because she has been in that position herself.

Raising the Profile of Care Leavers and Rewards

203. It was highlighted that in order to help the profile of care leavers there needs to be more positive publicity regarding their outcomes. Many young people attend college and go on to University and employment. It is the minority that are often referred to in the press as not doing very well at school or work. The CICC is trying to promote the profile of care leavers and has recently worked with Bright Star Productions to produce an advertisement for foster carers and a rap for the website.
204. The Forum for Looked After Children (FLAC), acting as corporate parents, is keen to find ways of celebrating the achievements of care leavers and is in discussion with the CICC as to the best way to do this. The importance of any celebrations being age appropriate was highlighted.
205. The Pathways Team keeps records of whether care leavers are in proper accommodation, education, training or employment and all young people have a Health Passport. In addition, the Virtual Head has responsibility for the education of all looked

after children. Records are kept of all educational achievements as well as other awards such as Student of the Year.

206. The Council has a Financial Policy whereby a young person can be rewarded with a voucher, meal, top-up for their phone or perhaps some extra tuition. In terms of the type of rewards, they are tailored to what a young person needs at that particular time. The Council acts like any parent would in terms of rewarding looked after children as appropriate.
207. With regard to celebrations such as Christmas and birthdays, funds can also be accessed through the Financial Policy. Depending on individual circumstances, food hampers can be provided as Christmas presents, or vouchers for birthdays. The Pathways Team also arranges meals where all care leavers can get together. For Christmas Day, the Pathways Team try to ensure that no young person is on their own. The possibilities of care leavers spending the day with previous foster carers, or other young people in the same situation, are explored. It was also noted that the more care leavers get involved with society, the more likely they are to receive invitations to celebrate special occasions with others.

Are the Voices of Young People Heard?

208. In response to a query as to whether the voices of young people are being heard, the Chair and Vice Chair of the CICC agreed that this is the case. The CICC has produced a new consultation document to gather the views of Middlesbrough looked after children. The leaflet will be circulated to all Middlesbrough looked after children and contains a reply slip to allow young people to identify three issues they would like the Council to address. The replies will be anonymous and will be collated by the CICC and presented to the FLAC. The CICC is fully committed to obtaining young people's views. Issues raised might include the provision of pocket money or different activities. A previous success had been the provision of free leisure passes.
209. The Chair of the CICC commented that she had recently attended a national meeting where she had heard about other local authorities and what they were doing for looked after children. It appears that Middlesbrough has been much more pro-active in terms of the CICC and supporting young people.

Membership of the CICC

210. It was clarified that the CICC meets fortnightly at Myplace and its members range in age from twelve to twenty-three. The CICC held a recruitment event earlier in the year and gave a presentation about the work of the CICC and the things young people could get involved in. There is an application form for those wishing to become a member and everyone who has previously applied has been accepted. Whilst the age-range is quite large, members are fairly mature and there is often a different perspective from the younger and older members. A free tea is provided at the CICC meetings.

Importance of Communication

211. Communication was highlighted as one of the most important things for care leavers. It is easier to talk to someone who has been there, rather than someone who has not. An example was given of the training for foster carers. Rather than learning everything from a book, potential carers should have the opportunity to meet with looked after children and talk about the realities of foster caring.

212. In order to assist in communication, the CICC has set up a Facebook account to allow young people to keep in touch. It was clarified that the site is secure and can only be seen by the young people and not their friends. The FLAC is also in discussion with the CICC to try and set up an email account to improve communication between the young people and Councillors.

Evidence Received from the National Care Advisory Service (NCAS)

213. The Senior Employability Worker for the From Care2Work initiative provided an outline of the strategies and measures which could be adopted to further develop and enhance current working practices.

214. The Senior Employability Worker explained to the Scrutiny Panel that his role is to identify best practice, research what is working at a local level and share it for use by other local authorities. The role is both strategic and slightly operational in terms of offering advice.

215. At the Senior Employability Worker's initial meeting with the Pathways Team, a diagnostic tool in the form of a checklist was used to identify which areas the team could develop and best practice that could be shared.

216. The Senior Employability Worker was of the view that Middlesbrough's Pathways Team is very proactive.

The Importance of Corporate Parenting

217. It was conveyed to the Panel that it is important that a strategic champion is identified who is able to drive and champion the employability of care leavers within the Council and keep this on the executive agenda. An example of where this was achieved effectively is in Doncaster.

Example of Good Practice - Doncaster

218. In Doncaster, a working group was established to produce a work plan to help develop a coordinated approach to offering work experience and other opportunities. The group consisted of representatives from various services supporting young people including; the virtual school head, the looked after children education support team, the 14-19 strategic lead, 16+ service manager, the 16+ dedicated ETE worker, a provider network representative. Input was also provided by the Senior Employability Worker.

219. Members heard how the group identified a range of opportunities that they felt young people in care and care leavers should have access to and developed a work plan to capture the steps needed to ensure these were developed and coordinated. A lead person was nominated to implement each of the actions. In Middlesbrough a strategic panel already exists with the Forum for Looked After Children that promotes the employability of this group.

220. It was highlighted that in Doncaster there is a drive to develop an apprenticeship programme for care leavers. The group took on board key learning from examples of good practice, which show that apprenticeships are most successful where young people feel prepared, supported and ready. The strategic group made a recommendation that 4 work streams be developed at an operational level that feed into the overall strategy. The 4 work streams included work experience, a pre-apprenticeship model, access to apprenticeships, and mentoring. The work plan was then presented to the Directors' group of the council who agreed to support this

221. The Scrutiny Panel noted that this work plan has now become the strategic plan for developing the employability for children in care and care leavers and the 4 operational work streams (each with their own work plan) now sit under and 'feed' into this. In Doncaster, there is a clear expectation that services within each directorate will provide opportunities to support this strategy while the strategic lead oversees progress and reports back to the Directors' group.
222. It was conveyed to Members that to support the 4 work streams, a menu of opportunities is currently being developed by the operational groups, which young people will access at the point at which they are ready. Opportunities include: worksite visits, pre-employment training, work tasters (1 or 2 days), work experience placements (1 week to 6 weeks), traineeships, and apprenticeships. These opportunities also include access to help with building competencies, such as writing CV's, interview skills, and talks from employers.
223. It was conveyed to the Panel that, the From Care2Work project recognises that not all employers and all council departments are able to offer employment or work based placements. However, the key message is that all these opportunities provide a valuable experience and possibly set young people on their journey to employment
224. It was highlighted that in order to raise awareness about corporate responsibility, and the range of opportunities needed, a short presentation was made to the Heads of Services which has since been cascaded down through the tiers of management. The Panel was advised that the message surrounding opportunities is a quite a simple one: the more opportunities young people have access to, the more choices they have to support their career aspirations. It was highlighted that this is how, as a corporate parent, authorities can turn commitment into action and the opportunities they offer help to build the employability skills of care leavers.
225. The Scrutiny Panel was informed that the next step saw an event organised for employers and providers which was held to raise their awareness and ask for their support.

Apprenticeship Schemes

226. The Senior Employability Worker referred to other local authorities where a designated Apprenticeship Scheme was in place and the council gave a commitment to provide every looked after child with a work placement, if not with an external provider, within the council. In some local authorities, the Human Resources Department offered mock interviews, informed their leaving care team when suitable jobs were being advertised and arranged interviews for care leavers where they met the criteria. Members were advised that whilst a young person might not get a job, having an interview and receiving feedback is extremely beneficial. Other local authorities have agreed that ten percent of all their apprenticeship places will be ring-fenced for care leavers, so long as they meet the selection criteria.

Good Practice Example – Hampshire County Council's Apprenticeship Scheme for Care Leavers

227. Hampshire County Council have partnered with Catch22 and the University of Winchester to create a specially supported apprenticeship scheme for care leavers. The scheme, called Internships Plus, offers a 12 to 18 month paid work placement within a range of the teams across Hampshire County Council with significant support being provided to the intern and the manager hosting the placement.

228. All interns work towards a level two apprenticeship qualification in customer service (or an alternative NVQ). The internship includes a 4-day preparatory programme taught by the Lifelong Learning Team at Winchester University prior to the work placement. Successful completion of Internship Plus leaves participants far more competitive in the job market by giving them:

- A nationally recognised qualification
- Valuable and substantial workplace experience and skills
- Access to role models
- The kudos of a university name and the label 'intern' on their CV's.

Good Practice Example – Lincolnshire County Council's Care Leavers Apprenticeship Scheme (CLAS)

229. The CLAS is an initiative whereby the council in its role as a corporate parent, with partner agencies, provides care leavers with access to an apprenticeship within the Council's Directorate, District Councils and other suitable companies, thereby improving their employability and self-esteem. CLAS improves employability and self-esteem.

Employer Workshops

230. Members were informed that the Care2Work project has delivered workshops to employers involved with From Care2Work. The session, which is fairly short, looks at the outcomes for care leavers and highlights some of the additional responsibilities they face at a young age when compared to their peers. By being aware, employers have been able to tailor the opportunities they offer to ensure they take account of both the support and learning needs of this group. Appointing a mentor for a young person during a work experience programme, allowing them to learn at their own pace and increasing the complexity of the work tasks as their skills develop, or taking some time out to allow them to reflect upon their day, are examples of how employers have achieved this.

The Importance of Having a Dedicated Worker for Education, Employment and Training (EET) in the 16+ team

231. It was highlighted that, as a national project, From Care2Work advocates that services providing post 16 support to care leavers should have a dedicated specialist worker, either from within the leaving care team or seconded to it from a service commissioned to provide Careers Information, Advice, Guidance and Support (previously through Connexions). This model can bring benefits to the team, and the service as a whole, as this person becomes the 'expert' in the team who is able to help with communication between the various services supporting education, training and employment while retaining an understanding of the issues and barriers that are specific to this group. Managers have conveyed to the Senior Employability Worker how this is lost when support is offered through locality based provision and those who previously had a Connexions worker attached to their team, have noticed a big difference when this has been lost.

232. The Senior Employability Worker agreed that having a dedicated worker is a positive step for local authorities. One of the main reasons is to provide stability, so that care leavers can build a positive relationship with them and the Adviser will know the particular issues affecting that young person.

233. Members heard that an added benefit of having a dedicated worker is that they also provide a central point of contact and support for employers, managers and learning providers with whom they are able to build relationships. Employers have told us how they much prefer to deal with a named person who understands their needs as an employer, and do not like being approached by a number of workers from a local authority team each wanting to refer or talk about opportunities for their individual young person. The dedicated worker can also ensure that young people are put forward for the opportunities they are ready for, and in an area that supports their aspirations. From Care2Work sees a high number of young people consistently dropping out and this is usually because they are not ready, or it is not what they wanted to do.

Career Planning and Sharing Data

234. The Senior Employability Worker conveyed to the Panel that as an authority, Middlesbrough would benefit from looking at how Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) is currently being offered to children in care pre-16, being monitored and being shared with post-16 services. This would ensure destinations are tracked, aspirations supported and career plans built upon within the young person's post-16 plan. While the duty to ensure CIAG delivery is now the responsibility of schools and colleges, the Senior Employability Worker acknowledges that the arrangements for this vary across the region and that in some cases data is not always shared to allow for adequate monitoring and tracking. This could result in career aspirations not being supported or work being duplicated. Concern was particularly expressed with regards to a recent report from Ofsted (Sept 2013) which found that of the 60 schools visited, three-quarters were not implementing their statutory duties effectively.⁵

235. It was highlighted to the Panel that building stronger partnership working with Jobcentre Plus and looking at how young people leaving care be effectively supported is crucial.

Career Planning

Example of Good Practice – St Helens Employment Awareness Programme

236. A 5-day programme has been offered by St Helens in partnership with members from the local chamber of commerce in order to raise young people's awareness about the skills that employers are looking for.

237. The programme was designed to inform young people of the opportunities available within the area and also outline what training and skills employers were looking for from potential candidates. The programme was aimed at young people over the age of 16 years from the looked after children cohort within the borough.

Example of Good Practice – Lincolnshire Work Preparation Programme

238. In Lincolnshire a work preparation programme is delivered over a 2-day period, 3 times a year. The course encourages young people leaving care, who have little or no work experience, to look at why people go to work. Those who participate in the 2-day course are eligible to progress to an extended work experience programme with 1-2-1 support.

239. The work experience opportunities are tailor made to areas of interest and are suitable in terms of travel. The placements are negotiated for up to 13 weeks, and from 7 hours to 37 hours each week.

⁵ <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/news/careers-guidance-schools-not-working-well-enough-0>

240. The programme is delivered jointly with Barnardo's. Each young person has a named person within the workplace and weekly monitoring visits from Barnardo's staff to support them in placement.

Example of Good Practice – Bradford City Council's Education, Training and Employment (ETE) Programme

241. Bradford City offers a 12 week ETE programme for long term NEET care leavers, with a view to preparing them for employment, and increasing their employability prospects. The core elements of the programme are: vocational preparation; functional skills and personal and social development. The majority of care leavers who engage with the programme have progressed onto further ETE options and/or gained accreditation.

Employer Engagement

242. The Panel heard that, as part of his role, the Senior Employability Worker wishes to explore the possibility of engaging with large employers or businesses within the region that could offer employability opportunities for young people. It is hoped that employers in the area will support this agenda and work with the 16+ services to develop a model that they can each benefit from.

243. As an employer, From Care2Work illustrates that there are five key standards that employers are recommended to consider when supporting a care leaver through an employability placement:

- Commitment and opportunities
- Recruitment
- Induction
- Support and training
- Monitoring and evaluation.

244. The Panel was advised that young people have a range of aspirations, interests and levels of understanding. Therefore, employers should consider how opportunities could cater for differing needs; for example work experience, apprenticeships and work tasters. These opportunities should be offered in conjunction with guidance and support tailored to individual need. Having close links with other professionals and agencies that are supporting the young person can provide a holistic package of support and guidance.

245. The Pathways Team manager jointly approached the National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) with Hartlepool and Redcar & Cleveland to look at engaging with some of the large employers in the area. NCAS is currently negotiating with Tesco and Morrisons to establish whether they would consider offering ring-fenced opportunities for care leavers. This is likely to bring approximately two to four work based opportunities per Local Authority. Stockton and Darlington has also been invited to participate.

246. It was noted that the majority of young people leaving care in Middlesbrough have a clear idea of what they want to do and have realistic plans. The aim of the Project is to support those young people who are not sure what they want to do and give them a range of experiences to help them find a career path that they want to follow.

247. The Deputy Director for Safeguarding and Specialist Services considered that the Council's partners such as Teesside University, Health Trusts and Erimus Housing should be approached.
248. In response to a query, information was provided in relation to employer subsidy schemes and it was explained that a subsidy is usually provided from public funding and an extended subsidy from the employer which reduces as the young person gains confidence.

Other Positive Action taken by Local Authorities

East Riding of Yorkshire Council

249. East Riding of Yorkshire Council offer a guaranteed interview to all care leavers who meet the essential criteria for a job. Where there are a high number of applicants the process would normally mean that desirable criteria would also be taken into account so care leavers are exempt from this.

Hull City Council

250. In Hull, seven traineeships linked to NVQ training have been created within the council for care leavers, commencing April 2012, 4 Park Rangers, and 3 in Catering. This was a change from the apprenticeships originally envisaged by the council leader, which was made in response to need.

Islington Council

251. Islington Council's procurement team work to ensure that any contracts issued include a Section 106 agreement that supports employability in Islington. This includes opportunities that are offered to care leavers.
252. In addition, the Senior Employability Worker conveyed that there are a number of authorities who pay a top-up to their care leaver apprentices who are living independently and whose housing benefit payments are effected, to make sure they have a minimum income to live on.

Additional Information

253. In the course of the Scrutiny Panel's investigations, information came to light which, while not directly covered by the terms of reference, is relevant to the work of the panel on this topic. This related to:

Access to Computers

254. It was also noted that computers are provided in every foster home and all care homes. Care leavers can also access a £500 bursary to purchase a laptop and printer.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

255. It was noted by the Scrutiny Panel that there were very few young people with SEN who were leaving care at age sixteen. Generally they will stay until age nineteen and then transfer to adult services. From Care2Work has mostly been focussing on care leavers who are difficult to engage, however, this learning and practice could be adapted for other groups.

CONCLUSIONS

256. Based on the evidence given throughout the investigation, the panel concluded that:

Young People

- a) In Middlesbrough, key measures indicate a continuing, improving trend regarding young people leaving school and making a successful transition into the world of education, employment and training. Middlesbrough's not in education, employment or training (NEET) rates have shown a sustained reduction but it is important to note that Middlesbrough has one of the highest NEET figures in the country. Although good progress is being made, further improvement is required.

Care Leavers

- b) The Government reports that young people leaving care are less likely to achieve 5 A*-C GCSEs and have significantly poorer outcomes than their peers in relation to education, training and employment. 27% of Middlesbrough's care leavers are NEET.

From Care2Work and Employability Support

- c) The From Care2Work project has provided the Local Authority with support to develop local solutions to meet the employability support needs of Middlesbrough's young people and capture objectives in a work plan. In Middlesbrough a substantial amount of work has been undertaken to maximise employment opportunities for care leavers, including the development of an Employability Scheme. However, there is the opportunity to further develop and increase the opportunities available. Further targeted provision is required. With this in mind it is vital that education, training and employment prospects are further developed and co-ordinated to ensure a wide spectrum of opportunities and apprenticeships are available which cater for those with differing levels of maturity, ability and attainment.

Corporate Responsibility and Awareness

- d) There is a strategic commitment of the Local Authority to the employability of care leavers. Employability is promoted through corporate parenting and wider partnerships. Further work is required to raise awareness about corporate responsibility, and the range of opportunities required. Heads of Service need to be provided with detailed information/advice and this needs to be cascaded down the tiers of management. There is a need to promote ongoing awareness of the need to create opportunities for this group and key people need to maintain a clear focus and drive to keep the spotlight on employability. The need for the Council to tailor the opportunities offered and ensure that both the support and learning needs of the group are taken into account, is of vital importance. It is essential that education, training and employment remains a priority, resource and focus and continues to be maintained and developed for present and future needs of the group.

Pathways Team

- e) The Pathways Team ensure that the transition to adulthood is effectively and sensitively planned. Young people are positive about the support that they receive. In 2011, the Pathways Team was commended and judged by OFSTED to be "outstanding" at the last Safeguarding and Looked After Children Inspection. At the time, the team also had the support of two dedicated workers from IYSS; however, they have not been part of the

team for over a year. The allocation of an IYSS Adviser to the Pathways Team would provide a greater focus on education, employment and training. This key person would drive employability forward, source placements for care leavers within the borough and focus exclusively on this important area. In addition, the IYSS Adviser would provide a central point of contact and support for employers, managers and learning providers. The Pathways Team should receive this support.

Joint Working

- f) There is an effective joint working protocol in place with the Pathways Team, Middlesbrough College and the IYSS. However, further work should be undertaken to develop a multi-agency approach also involving Teesside University and other colleges in the area.

Links with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

- g) Information sharing and joint working between the Pathways Team and the DWP needs to be developed/improved. A regular information exchange would increase the breadth of opportunities available, through mainstream and specialist services, to young people leaving care. Joint working is required to drive care leaver employment outcomes and identify areas for further developments in service delivery.

Career Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG)

- h) It was highlighted that when a young person is initially transferred to the Pathways Team they have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place, which is incorporated in the person's Pathway Plan. The Scrutiny Panel endorses the approach taken to develop a career planning tool but with the Council's role in Career Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) reducing and CIAG becoming the responsibility of schools, information sharing has never been so fundamental.

Engagement with Employers

- i) Although, the possibility of Tesco and Morrisons offering ring-fenced opportunities to care leavers is currently being explored, further work to engage with employers is required. The Pathways Team and From Care2Work need to engage with additional employers to raise the profile of care leavers and identify packages of employability support and opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

257. The Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel recommends to the Executive:

- a) That the Pathways Team and the IYSS create an apprenticeship programme that builds on and develops the existing Employability Scheme. A menu of high quality opportunities must be developed, including: worksite visits, employment awareness sessions, pre-employment training, job shadowing, work tasters (1 or 2 days), work experience placements (1 to 6 weeks), traineeships and apprenticeships. Completion of NVQs levels 1-3, alongside apprenticeships, should be offered to cater for all academic abilities. Opportunities need to take into account both the support and learning needs of the group and differing levels of maturity, ability and attainment.
- b) That From Care2Work and the Pathways Team provide training and information sessions to Heads of Service and tiers of management to promote ongoing awareness of

corporate responsibility and the need to create a wide range of employability opportunities for care leavers. Heads of Service and managers need to develop opportunities which inspire, raise aspirations and take into account the support and learning needs of the group.

- c) That a dedicated IYSS Adviser be permanently located in the Pathways Team.
- d) That the Pathways Team further develop and enhance joint working protocols/agreements with nearby colleges and Teesside University.
- e) That the DWP and the Pathways Team establish a small working group with Social Workers, Work Programme providers and local voluntary organisations. The DWP to act as a gateway to support and training offered by such organisations.
- f) That links be established between DWP Advisers and Pathways Advisers and a regular information exchange takes place with regard to both individuals and care leavers as a group. The Pathways Team to forge closer links with the two DWP's Single Point of Contact (SPOCs) Advisers based at James Cook House and Thorntree House.
- g) That the IYSS conduct an investigation to review how Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) is currently being offered to children in care pre-16 and is monitored and shared with post-16 services. Adequate monitoring and tracking is required to ensure aspirations are supported and career plans built upon. The investigation must highlight priorities and areas for development.
- h) That the Council offer guaranteed interviews to all care leavers who meet the essential criteria for a job. When there are a high number of applicants the process would normally mean that desirable criteria would be taken into account – care leavers will be exempt from this.
- i) That the Pathways Team work alongside From Care2Work to engage with employers in the area. That an event be organised, whereby all large employers within the area are invited, to raise awareness of care leavers as a group and ask for their support in providing packages of employability support and opportunities for young people leaving care.
- j) That the impact of these recommendations, on reducing the number of NEETs, be reported to the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel. With the implementation of these recommendations, the Scrutiny Panel expects a substantial reduction in the number of care leavers not in education, employment or training. For example, the Scrutiny Panel would expect to see a reduction of NEETs by 10%.

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- J Keely, Integrated Youth Support Services Manager.
- J Wilson, Service Manager for Specialist Services.
- K Douglas-Weir, Pathways Team Manager
- D Poskett, Housing and Development Co-ordinator, Pathways Leaving Care Team.
- D Parks, Welfare and Support Co-ordinator, Middlesbrough College
- S Holland, Student Engagement Officer, Middlesbrough College
- K Sheppard, Personal Adviser, Pathways Team
- G McLaren, Personal Adviser, Pathways Team

- D Allen, Chair of the Children in Care Council
- L Bailey, Vice-Chair of the Children in Care Council
- C Livingstone, Senior Operations and Partnerships Manager from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- A Pickering, Senior Employability Officer, From Care2Work, National Care Advisory Service (NCAS)

ACRONYMS

259. A-Z listing of common acronyms used in the report:

- CICC – Children in Care Council
- DWP – Department for Work and Pensions
- EET – Education, Employment and Training
- ETE – Education, Training and Employment
- FLAC – Forum for Looked After Children
- IYSS – Integrated Youth Support Service
- NCAS – National Care Advisory Service
- NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Training
- NVQ – National Vocational Qualification

BACKGROUND PAPERS

260. The following evidence was referred to in preparing this report:

- Agenda papers and minutes of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel meetings held on 3 September 2013, 2 October 2013, 23 October 2013, 13 November 2013, 11 December 2013, 23 January 2014 and 5 March 2014.

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