

Preparation for Leaving Care Policy

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Regulations and Standards:

The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015:

- Regulation 14 - The care planning standard.

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1. Introduction:

Arrangements for young people leaving care are the responsibility of the placing authority; therefore, Platinum services for Children managers and staff should obtain copies of procedures from relevant authorities and assist social workers in implementing them.

This Platinum services for Children policy summarises the key terms and responsibilities in relation to leaving care and what steps should be taken by homes in relation to them.

Children who have been 'looked after' by local authorities are one of the most disadvantaged groups in society. It is recognised that they often have experienced disrupted family lives, many changes of placement whilst 'looked after' and have a poor quality of life after leaving public care. Care leavers have suffered disproportionately higher rates of low educational attainment, unemployment and homelessness.

The Guidance to the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 describes its purpose as to improve the life opportunities of young people living in and leaving local authority care. Its main aims are:



- To delay children's discharge from care until they are prepared and ready to leave.
- To improve the assessment, preparation and planning for leaving care.
- To provide better personal support for children after leaving care.
- To improve the financial arrangements for care leavers.

The legislation also has to be seen within the broader Government agenda of tackling 'social exclusion'. There have been a number of policy initiatives in relation to youth homelessness, young people excluded from education, training and employment and teenage parenthood, all of which have implications for children and young people in and leaving care.

2. Definitions:

1.1 Eligible Young People:

They are aged 16 or 17, have been 'looked after' for a period or periods totalling at least 13 weeks starting after their 14th birthday and are still 'looked after'. (This total does not include a series of short-term placements of up to four weeks where the child has returned to the parent.) There is a duty to support these young people up to the age of 18.

1.2 Relevant Young People:

They are aged 16 or 17 and are no longer 'looked after', having previously been in the category of 'Eligible Young People' when 'looked after'. However, if after leaving the looked after service, a child returns home for a period of 6 months or more to be cared for by a parent, he or she will no longer be a "relevant young person". A child is also "relevant" if, having been looked after for three months or more, he or she is then detained after their 16th birthday either in hospital, remand centre, young offenders' institution or secure training centre. There is a duty to support relevant young people up to the age of 18.

1.3 Former Relevant Young People:

They are aged 18 to 21 (or up to 24 if in full-time further or higher education) and have left the looked after service having been previously either "eligible", "relevant" or both. There is a duty to consider the need to support these young people.

1.4 Qualifying Young People:

They are over the age of 16 and under the age of 21, and have been looked after or, if disabled, privately fostered after reaching 16, but do not qualify as eligible, relevant or former relevant. They may receive support, advice and assistance.

1.5 Leaving Care worker:

A personal adviser is the person appointed to work with every looked after child, usually at the first review after the young person's 15th birthday and will occupy a key role in preparing the young person for independence and providing support after they cease to be



looked after. He or she will hold a pivotal role in the assessment, planning and review of services as set out in the pathway plan.

1.6 Pathway Plan:

The Pathway Plan sets out the route to the future for children leaving the Looked After service and will state how their needs will be met in their path to independence. The plan will continue to be implemented and reviewed after they leave the looked after service at least until they are 21; and up to 24 if in education.

3. Key Responsibilities:

Each local authority should have its own procedures for young people leaving care, which should be consulted in relation to relevant young person. In the absence of such procedures, the following may be applied:

- A leaving care worker should be appointed for every looked after young person before their 16th birthday. The personal adviser's appointment will continue while the young person remains an eligible, relevant or former relevant young person.
- All eligible, relevant and former relevant young people must have received a multi-agency assessment of their needs and abilities to live independently. This will be informed by the ongoing assessment, planning and review which takes place throughout the period they are looked after.
- They must also have a pathway plan, which will be drawn up having regard to the above assessment. The pathway plan must be owned by the young person who must have a copy of the plan for their own reference and safekeeping.
- The pathway plan should complement the care plan and be regularly reviewed.
- Where the young person continues to be looked after, there should additionally be a care plan, which should describe what arrangements have been made within the home to support the pathway plan. The placement plan will continue to be the responsibility of the home where the young person is placed and must outline the arrangements in place for supporting the pathway plan.

End.