

**Derbyshire Children’s Services Transitions and Leaving Care/Care Experienced Practice Guidance**

**Purpose of guidance document:**

This practice guidance outlines the expectations of social workers, leaving care workers and other relevant professionals supporting our children in care 16 and over as they begin to make their steps towards a successful adulthood, where they may be legally adults, but are still our young people.

**Introduction:**

As **corporate parents**, we have high aspirations for all of our children in care and care experienced young people and the culture underpinning our practice is systemic, social pedagogic and think family approaches. We take pride in ensuring we have meaningful, personable and trusting relationships with our young people, and we never give up on them. We actively support, encourage and appropriately challenge our young people to be participating in education, employment or training. We want to move away from the term supporting our young people to be independent to one of being interdependent, as any young person aged 18-25 will inherently have needs and a level of dependence on their parents/carers/friends and family.

Derbyshire County Council ensure that we exercise our responsibilities, towards children looked after and care experienced young people, by upholding the seven corporate parenting principles, as set out in Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017:

1. To act in the best interest and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing of those children and young people.
2. To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
3. To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
4. To help those children and young people gain access to, make the best use of services provided by the local authority and relevant partners.
5. To promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best possible outcomes for those children and young people.
6. For those children and young people to be safe and for stability in their home, relationships and education or work.
7. To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

**Eligibility:**

A young person is entitled to a leaving care service if:

They were in care for **more than 13 weeks since their 14th birthday**. This does not have to be consecutive.

**And**

They have been **in care at least one day since they turned 16**, which can include their birthday

There are a number of categories for care experienced young people, they are as follows:

**Eligible**

They meet the criteria above and they are still a child in care (under the age of 18 years). Financially supported by children’s social care.

**Relevant**

They meet the criteria above and they are under 18 years of age. They have been discharged from care into a family situation. They have not been discharged for more than 6 months before their 18th birthday.

**Former Relevant**

They meet the criteria above and they remained in care until they turn 18 and now they are an adult. They were discharged from care into a semi-independent home under the age of 18.

They have not been discharged from care for more than 6 months before their 18th birthday.

**Qualifying**

They meet the criteria above and they have been discharged from care more than 6 months before their 18th birthday. If they have been admitted into care on or after their 16th birthday but they will turn 18 before they have been in care for more than 13 weeks.

They have been in care previous to the making of an Special Guardianship Order and they are now 16 years old.

**The following websites are a handy guide for checking eligibility criteria:**

[Services for children leaving care - childlawadvice.org.uk](https://childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/services-for-children-leaving-care/)

[Am I a care leaver? - Coram Voice](https://coramvoice.org.uk/myrights/all-you-need-to-know-about-leaving-care/i-am-care-leaver/)

**Late admissions into care:**

If a young person is supported into care or has been moved into semi-independent provision because of a breakdown at home when they are 16 years plus, an early referral into Leaving Care will be permitted. Please alert the relevant Leaving Care Team when a young person is admitted in to care after 16.

**Young people with additional needs or disabilities:**

If they meet the criteria above as a child in care they are entitled to the same service as any other young person. The way this is managed may be different and will be discussed as part of the referral process.

(See Appendix 9 for Guide for those with additional needs.)

**Referrals to the Leaving Care Service**

Where a young person is eligible on their 16th birthday, the Leaving Care referral workflow step should be completed **at least one month in advance** of a young person’s 16th birthday, however if possible, **six months prior** to ensure a prompt allocation at 16. Once a Leaving care Worker is allocated the initial transition meeting should be organised by the locality social worker with leaving care worker to share long term plans and information about the young person.

A prompt initial visit should be facilitated with the Social Work team within 4 weeks of allocation. Whilst it is recognised that some young people can go through difficult periods, given the importance of the need to develop an early meaningful relationship, there should not be drift or delay with introductions, unless in exceptional circumstances. Where there is any delay with introductions, the reasons should be clearly recorded on Mosaic.

Following the young person’s 16th birthday, the Local Offer, Setting Up Home Allowance Guide (if eligible) and Transition Checklist should be shared with the young person by the social worker/leaving care worker (and their foster carer or home provider).

**The one-page profile of the leaving care worker** should also be shared with the young person.

**Leaving Care Worker and Social Worker Roles (under 18)**

Leaving care workers carry mixed ‘allocations’ where they work alongside the social work team for young people under 18 and usually are the lead professional, post 18.

Therefore under 18, all statutory tasks such as Care Plans, Pathway Plans, Statutory Visits are the responsibility of the social work team. The primary task of a leaving care worker working with young people under 18 is to build a meaningful relationship with the young person and prepare them for independence at 18. As the young person gets closer to 18, the role of the leaving care worker will inevitably increase.

Visits for young people by the Leaving Care Worker between 16 to their 18th birthday should aim to be at least every 8 weeks, with management oversight if this is less. Inevitably, for some young people, they will need more contact, particularly if there are pressing needs, as they near 18.

It is regarded good practice for social workers and leaving care workers to work together to support young people with their long term interdependence plans at 16. Therefore joint visits should be undertaken where possible to promote current and future plans. Social workers and leaving care workers should plan to see young people together to complete the pathway plan, every 6 months, more often where needed.

Pathway plans must be updated by the social worker 16-18 years to reflect significant changes in a young person’s life. Post 18, this is the leaving care workers responsibility.

Leaving care workers should prioritise attendance at all post 16 Looked After Child reviews. Social workers and IRO’s should ensure they are invited.

Where a Strategy Meeting is held for a child in care, sixteen plus, the leaving care worker or the team manager/senior practitioner should be invited.

**Leaving care management and supervision, under 19’s:**

Leaving Care Service Supervision for children in care and care experienced young people should be every two months from 16 up to 21 years.

However, in addition Joint supervision between the children in care and leaving care teams should take place at the following intervals:

**16 year olds: every 4 months**

**17 year olds: every three months**

**The Social Work team will record the joint supervision.**

This should be organised by the Social Work locality practice supervisor but can be requested by the Leaving Care Service.

**Personal, social and family relationships – ‘Think Family’**

A key focus of all Leaving Care work, both pre and post 18 should be on helping our young people develop lifelong relationship links to help secure positive attachments. As part of this, the Leaving Care worker should develop a sound understanding of the reasons for entry to, and journey through care. Whilst there will be times where family relationships are fractured or court directions may preclude contact, workers should ensure a Think Family approach underpins Leaving Care work.

The leaving care worker will inevitably ask about the young person’s life story and journey through care so they can understand what the young person understands about this and what additional information they may need support to access later in journey while being supported by the leaving care service.

**Pathway Planning:**

The Social Worker is responsible for the completion of the Pathway Plan under 18 but the Leaving Care Worker and the Young Person should have meaningful input into this and should be allocated tasks that relate to working on and supporting interdependence.

Pathway Plans under 18 must be robustly Quality Assured by Social Work managers to ensure they map out the journey to adulthood and interdependence to 25.

Pathway Plans should be completed in a style of being written to young people. Under 18, the social worker should evidence that the young person has been involved in their pathway plan and has a copy of it, so that it has been undertaken in a meaningful way with them.

Where the young person consents, these should be shared with other relevant professionals including foster carers. (See appendix 1 for pathway plan tips booklet)

**Accommodation (including staying put):**

Post 16, the Pathway Plan should begin to consider sustainable accommodation for young people post 18. Therefore, any young people in provision outside of Derbyshire, or in spot purchased accommodation will need particular focus to ensure there is a sustainable plan for them at 18.

The leaving care worker will lead on any post 18 housing applications to District Councils. However, for children under 18, all Child Home Finding Requests and home decisions are the responsibility of the Social Work Team in conjunction with the Leaving Care Service.

The Step Up semi-independent contract (Framework/Adullam) should be at the forefront of home decisions for young people where semi-independent accommodation is appropriate and the young person is assessed as being able to live semi-independently.

For young people living in foster care, the option of Staying Put should be identified within the young person's Care Planning/Pathway Planning process no less than 12 months before their 18th birthday. Both the carer and young person should be asked about this individually; **the foster carer must not be asked in front of the young person**. The leaving care worker should inform the Staying Put worker if a Staying Put arrangement has been identified as an option and is being considered by the young person and foster carer(s). Consideration should be given to whether the young person's needs would be better met via the Shared Lives/Adult Accommodation scheme if their level of need requires support from Adult Social Care.

Any accommodation necessitating a financial commitment post 18 requires agreement from the Leaving Care Service HOS and Locality HOS, not the locality social work team alone. However, for young people with relevant adult social care needs, there should be a joint focus from Adult Social Care and Children’s Services on agreeing funding for post 18 accommodation as early as possible. For those young people eligible for Adult Social Care accommodation, this is not the Leaving Care Service financial responsibility.

**Education, Employment and training:**

As corporate parents, we have high aspirations for our children in care and care experienced young people and want to ensure our young people are positively engaged in a wide range of opportunities for education, employment and/or training. There are three specific EET workers within the service available to support young people with their chosen pathways.

The Leaving Care Worker and EET worker can together help signpost and support into an appropriate intervention, although children in care teams should also develop knowledge of EET provision in their areas, and we should collectively robustly address any barriers to EET early **within the 16+ PEPs** to support transitions towards 18 and reduce any young people falling out of education or employment. The Virtual School workers are a vital support here.

The Virtual School should be notified by the Social Worker/Leaving Care worker as early as possible regarding any young people with university aspirations. The Leaving Care Service can fund apprentice and internship opportunities and for over 18’s we work to ensure there are opportunities with local business and partners such as District Councils. There is also a bespoke EET fund for care experienced young people which can be applied for to gain and support EET.

There are EET Youth Hub’s in Derbyshire that are available for young people to access advice and guidance from Derbyshire’s Careers Service/The Apprenticeship Team and the Leaving care EET workers to support EET planning, decision making and accessing pathways into EET.

**Health and Wellbeing:**

All children in care receive annual health assessments, social workers should read the assessments and health care plans and promote attendance at the assessment itself. All care experienced young people will have access to their health care plans from 18 years and have access to a health history summary provided by the children looked after (CLA) nurse at the final health review, this contains their NHS number, GP and Dentist details and date of last dental check. It also details their past health information from birth and any identified hereditary health information within their birth family (if known).

Children who were Looked After post 1st April 2022, and aged 5 years onwards will receive a Health Passport. As well as mainstream health services, children in care and care experienced young people can be referred to Action for Children if the relevant criteria are met. Derbyshire’s emotional wellbeing service provided by Action for Children’ known as ‘The DECC’ provides a range of different services for young people.

**Adult Social Care referrals**

This is made following a review or pathway planning decision that the young person will have a need for adult services post 18 years. The social worker will initiate the Preparing for Adulthood Workflow at the appropriate stage and age for that young person, good practice would be to do this as early as possible. If they have profound or complex needs, this could take place from the age of 14 years and no later than 16. The episode remains open until the transition to adult services is finalised. There should be regular dialogue between respective social workers during the lead up to 18 years.

For young people who may be entitled to adult social care accommodation funding, it is vital that discussions are held before the age of 17.5 years regarding funding decisions, to inform post 18 planning. Transitions Panels are held in every locality to focus on those young people who may be entitled to adult social care packages and funding for post 18 accommodation. The social worker will need to refer to the transition panel for a young person to be heard and for input from Adults Social Care post 18.

**Section 20 Discharges from care**

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| In some circumstances young people that are aged 16 years and over who are subject to Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 may make known their intention to no longer be “cared for”. This may seem an obvious choice for some young people and their decision may be based on justifiable reasons and choice. The guidance for discharging children from care ([The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1000549/The_Children_Act_1989_guidance_and_regulations_Volume_2_care_planning__placement_and_case_review.pdf#page=125) should be followed. Where the young person, becomes a Child In Need, this needs to be case managed by a qualified social worker, from the locality.  Where the young people are not ‘children in need’, the Leaving care worker will assume responsibility whilst the young person is eligible, and subsequently if they are ‘former relevant’ at 18. If the young person subsequently becomes ‘qualifying’, they may become subject to a pathway plan assessment, they may not require the full support of a Leaving Care Worker. Any questions regarding Leaving Care eligibility criteria can be directed to a Leaving Care Manager or Senior Practitioner. |

**Health History Summaries/ Health Passport**

Care experienced should have a Health History Summary when they leave care. This is completed by the Children in Care Health Team at a young person’s final Review Health Assessment except in exceptional circumstances or if they decline the Health History Summary. Not all UASC or children with Disabilities with receive a Health History Summary unless requested by their social worker or leaving care worker as this should be of benefit to the young person, however from April 2021 both UASC and children in care will receive the Health Passport as they enter care under 16 years. See Appendix 2 for flowchart.

From April 2021, all children in care will have an open Health Passport which will be completed on an ongoing basis by the Health Team and will be shared with Derbyshire Children’s Services (with young people’s consent). The relevant section of the Pathway Plan should be completed to evidence a young person has their health passport/summary by locality and leaving care co-ordinators.

**Local Offer and Financial Support**

All children in care and care experienced should be made aware of the local offer and financial support available and how they access this. The Local Offer and Setting Up Home Allowance Guide for 16/17 year old children in care and care experienced young people can be found below.

We have also created a Local Offer guide for workers to go alongside the Local Offer to support with it’s use and for financial access given the complexity of what is available.

**Local Offer:**

[**https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/site-elements/documents/pdf/social-health/children-and-families/children-we-look-after/derbyshire-leaving-care-local-offer.pdf**](https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/site-elements/documents/pdf/social-health/children-and-families/children-we-look-after/derbyshire-leaving-care-local-offer.pdf)

**Local Offer Guide:** 

**Participation**

Young people’s wishes and feelings should be evidenced throughout our recordings, visits, care plans and Pathway Plans. Young people should be asked if they wish to participate in the children in care council or at 18, the care leaver’s council “Next Generation”. Please contact the Leaving Care Service or the Participation Team if you have any further queries about how to get involved.

In addition young people should be encouraged and supported to participate in Looked After Child reviews – we should be creative in how we do this. Young people can access support from Derbyshire’s advocacy services –referrals can be made by the Social Worker, Leaving Care Worker or Independent Reviewing Officer.

**£500.00 Personal Living Allowance and Cultural Needs for 16/17 year old children in care who live semi independently**

**16 – 17: £500.00 for the year valid from young person’s 16th birthday**

**17 - 17 and 364 days: £500.00 for the year up until their 18th Birthday**

**18 – 21: up to £100 per year up to their 21 Birthday**

The locality social work teams process the cultural allowance for under 18’s and are responsible for the maintenance of the budget and spend. This allowance is to help bridge the gap between young people in semi-independent and other types of homes.

This budget needs to be ‘pro-rata’ for the amount of time spent in semi-independent living in a rolling 12 month period and for those young people who pay a service charge for their accommodation. For example, if a young person lives in semi-independent accommodation (**with a service charge**) for 6 months out of 12 months, they would be entitled to a spend of £250.00.

It may be a sensible option for the young person to spend these funds on a monthly basis. This equates to £41.66 per month. However, there may be times when a young person wishes to save this for a particular activity or event. This fund is not to be used to supplement general day-to-day living costs or to be an additional saving pot for the young person. Unspent money will not roll over to the next year.

The young person should first be assessed as to whether they have the capacity to manage this £500.00 personal allowance and spend this independently. If so, the young person should receive this money either through instalments or intervals throughout the year. Receipts or evidence of spend should be produced by the Social Worker/Leaving Care Worker to the Team Co-ordinator following spend. The Team Co-ordinator will monitor £500.00 spend and keep a running total of this.

The £500.00 can be spent on additional clothing, extracurricular activities such as swimming lessons, evening classes and courses, family time and special occasions such as bowling, cinema etc, cultural or religious festivals, celebrations such as Chinese New Year, Diwali etc. and hobbies such as attending football practice and watching football games.

For care experienced young people over 18, the same applies but up to £100 per year.

**Setting up Home Allowance**

All Former Relevant care experienced from the 1st April 2023 are entitled to access a Setting Up Home Allowance of £3000,care experienced. For some young people**,** it may make sense for them to start to access this before they reach 18, for a specific reason, such as a television. However, this should be in exceptional circumstances as this needs to be utilised up until the young person is 25. The Social Work team must gain agreement from the Leaving Care Service for any spend used from the Setting Up Home Allowance pre 18.

Where children live in supported accommodation (Framework/Addullam), locality social work teams should be creative in ensuring the home is personalised and homely, without the necessity for using Setting Up Home allowance.

**Independence Preparation and Budget Management**

All young people should be prepared for adulthood when they leave care. Social Workers, alongside other professionals should facilitate and support young people with practical advice and guidance prior to 16. This will give the young person a good foundation and knowledge base when the Leaving Care worker comes on board to support their interdependence at 16. Dependent on the wishes and preference of the young person, this may include completion of the Independent Living Skills Workbook and Tenancy Skills Workbook from AIMS. Social Workers and Leaving Care Workers will share these books with young people and support them and their carers through these. This will give young people the knowledge and skills to understand some of the reality of semi-independent living and what to expect prior to moving into their accommodation if they have chosen this route.

**Life story work/later in life letter**

In addition to ongoing life story work, prior to closure, the social worker should complete a later life in letter/closing statement, so the young person fully understands their journey through care.

**ISA guidance**

The Share Foundation runs the Junior ISA scheme for children and young people in care (known as 'Looked After') on behalf of the Department for Education. The Share Foundation, or 'Sharefound' for short, has been running the Department for Education's Junior ISA scheme for looked after children and young people since 2012. An account is opened for every child and young person under 18 throughout the United Kingdom who has been in care continuously for at least one year and who doesn't already have a Child Trust Fund. Local authorities are required by Government to provide the Share Foundation with the necessary details, so an account is opened, drawing down £200/£250 from the Department for Education.

The money in a Junior ISA belongs to the young person, but they can't take the money out until they are 18. They can then decide what they want to do with it. If the young person chooses not to take the money out, the Junior ISA will automatically become a regular ISA.

Derbyshire's Management information team provides regular updates of children in care to Sharefound. Administration of ISAs such as holding a list of current recipients, uploading information to Mosaic and contacting relevant staff on receipt of information from Sharefound is undertaken by the CS BS HQ team. It can take up to 3 months from a young person turning 18 until they receive their money.

**Final Transitions Meeting**

In addition to joint supervisions and the final LAC review, in the three months prior to a young person turning 18, a meeting should be held between the child in care social worker and both line managers to agree on remaining tasks required and what else needs to be completed to ensure a successful post 18 transition.

**End of Child in Care checklist**

The Social Worker is responsible for completing the end of child in care checklist, (see appendix 3) which is a word document. As part of joint Supervisions and the Final Transitions meeting, some tasks can be undertaken by the Leaving Care Worker. The Social Worker remains allocated until this checklist is completed. The Leaving Care Worker should lead on ensuring the young person has received their birthday money and outing, as per the Local Offer.

**Chronologies**

An up-to-date chronology is essential for all children in care and this will be required prior to social work closure.

**Practice for Care Experienced young people over 18**

**Universal Credit transition (if required)**

Where possible all young people reaching 18 should have a pathway plan mapping out their plans towards work, college, university, apprenticeship/internship or some form of training. We should be proactive in trying to support young people not to require universal credit. However, in the unfortunate event that this is not possible due to identified barriers for the young person and there is no identified education, employment or training, they will need to apply for universal credit.

Derbyshire will support young people by funding a short-term Universal Credit equivalent (£67.20 July 23), per week until the young person is in receipt of the financial income from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to ensure no young person starts out in debt. This is dependent on the young person working with us and the DWP to facilitate their benefit claim. This offer can be applied to other young people in certain circumstances such as losing employment or leaving custody. As per the current DWP, Leaving Care protocol, no young person should be sanctioned without Leaving Care Serve agreement. (See appendix 4)

**Engagement in Education and Employment:**

The local offer sets out how we can support our young people in to EET including an EET fund to gain and maintain their chosen activity. Referrals can be made to our EET workers, where additional support and EET signposting can take place. Internships and apprenticeships can be funded and we have close relationships with employers, the DWP, National Careers service and partner agencies such as district councils. We have high aspirations for our young people and an EET fund to help creatively gain and maintain EET.

**Accommodation post 18 (see section on Accommodation above)**

We are committed to ensuring our young people are in safe, sustainable accommodation and should utilise our agreements with our district and borough councils and be proactive in building positive relationships with providers, when our young people live outside of Derbyshire. Support will be offered to make a social housing or a private landlord application, when the young person is ready and they can evidence that they are well equipped to move on from their home to their new shared/individual space with support. We fund a 100% council tax discount for all care experienced young people up to 25 who live outside of Derbyshire, and our District Councils do likewise up to age 25 for our young people who live in Derbyshire. No care experienced young person should be in bed and breakfast accommodation.

**Unsuitable Accommodation:**

Where young people are found to be in unsuitable accommodation, there needs to be clear management oversight with a plan of focused and timely work with our partner agencies to ensure that their safety and homelessness situation is resolved.

Referral to the monthly leaving care Safety Panel should also be made if risk of homelessness is identified. As outlined, no care experienced young person should be in bed and breakfast. If this does happen, a referral to the Safety Panel should be made immediately with a concerted effort from all partners to move a young person out as soon as possible. Derbyshire County Council does not place care experienced young people in bed and breakfast.

**Visits**

Care experienced young people up to the age of 21 should be visited every 8 weeks as a minimum, visits may be more frequent due to plans being made, support identified and work taking place between young person and leaving care worker. These may be the only times care experienced young people are seen by a professional, therefore it is invaluable these visits are recorded timely on the statutory visit workflow step.

It is important to recognise and record all work and progress undertaken with young people. Therefore, information needs capturing in these visits so these records and visits should be reflective of support and work taking place with a relational focus and importantly including the child’s voice.

Where young people request some virtual visits, this can be agreed with a managers agreement on file, balancing the length of time since last seen face-to-face and considering individual circumstances. There may be some other circumstances where less frequent visits are required. Management oversight is required to evidence multi-agency decision making and agreement to reduce visiting.

There is a separate ‘Different Needs Policy’ for care experienced young people where adult social care are the lead.

**Pathway Plans**

The Leaving Care Service should be fully involved in the final Pathway Plan before a young person turns 18.

After 18, Pathway Plans should be completed every 6 months or before if there is a significant incident or event for the young person. Pathway Plans must be done with a young person and evidenced that they have been shared with them.

Actions set in the five areas of the pathway plan should be set with or by the young person so they can take ownership of the actions set. Where support is needed this should also be recorded clearly, by who and when aim is to be achieved. Young people should have a copy of these so that they can see what has been set.

Pathway plans after a young person’s 18 birthday are recorded by the leaving care worker and written to the young person. Pathway Plans can be written by the young person and then uploaded or typed by the leaving care worker. Plans should be creative, inspiring and aspirational, as they are the key focus for our young people’s futures and what lay ahead of them.

Where there is a significant event or change to a care experienced young persons circumstances, a review of the Pathway Plan should take place.

**Care Experienced Parents to be and their children (our corporate grandparent role):**

Where a care experienced young person identifies they are starting a family, this needs to be an additional focus within their pathway plan and visits. Where a mother or father to be is identified, resources, support services available (including financial) should be discussed at the earliest opportunity. Support from the Leaving care Service should be clearly recorded and a referrals to services made if needed; including health, housing, community resources, groups in Leaving care and early Help or even referral to social care if concerns are highlighted.

Interdependence planning and support continues for the young person from the Leaving Care Service with an additional level of support and oversight for the mother, father and child.

For Early Help and Safeguarding locality teams who work with the child/ren of a care experienced young person, this should be reflected in the approach taken with very close working with the Leaving Care Service and a commitment to be both good corporate parents for the care experienced young person but good corporate grandparents to their child.

**Vulnerable Adults Risk Management (VARM) Meetings**

Where we are worried about a young person’s vulnerability, we can arrange and lead a VARM meeting (Adult Social Care to lead where they are the lead agency) When the below criteria is met:

• A person must have capacity to make decisions and choices regarding their life;

• There is a risk of serious harm or death by self-neglect, fire, deteriorating health

condition, non-engagement with services or where an Adult is targeted by local

community, is the victim of Hate Crime or Anti-Social Behaviour or the victim of sexual violence - and they do not meet the criteria for Safeguarding;

• There is a public safety interest;

• There is a high level of concern from partner agencies.

[VARM practice guidance](https://www.derbyshiresab.org.uk/site-elements/documents/pdf/vulnerable-adult-risk-management-practice-guidance.pdf)

**Care experienced young people at risk of exploitation**

Where we are concerned that one of our young people is at risk of exploitation, the care experienced exploitation indicator toolkit should be undertaken to ensure a robust approach, and the procedures in the guidance attached followed. *See appendix 5*

Where the toolkit has been completed and highlights low/medium or high risk to the young person, this must be raised with a manager in the leaving care service so that escalation processes can be considered and safety planning can commence to reduce risks.

The leaving care manager will give clear advice and direction to the leaving care worker given the safety concerns and a safety plan will be created in the first instance. There will be consideration given whether the level of concern fits within the following processes; multi agency meeting to address concerns, Adults Safeguarding referral if risks are high and there is risk of serious harm or risk to life, a VARM referral to be considered also if there are high levels of risk taking resulting in harm. At this stage consideration will be given to a referral to the Leaving Care Safety Panel – clear rational should be put on file by the manager as to the need, what has been attempted to reduce risks and outstanding concerns.

**Leaving Care Safety Panel**

Where there are significant concerns about a young person’s safety and vulnerability and where strategic oversight is required, a referral to the monthly, multi-agency Leaving Care Safety Panel should be considered where there are representatives from Health, Housing, Probation, Police, Commissioning, Children’s Safeguarding and Adult Social care. *See appendix 6*

The leaving Care Worker may refer their young person to the safety panel if they have concern for a young person over the age of 18 years where they are either potentially or are evidentially experiencing the following –

* Homelessness – potential street homelessness, frequent tenancy breakdowns, poor contingency options
* Exploitation – A separate Exploitation Indicator Form is required where there is a risk of exploitation.
* Significant mental health concerns – risky self-harm and any suicide risks.
* Self-neglect – poor hygiene, hoarding, dangerous living conditions due to poor maintenance.
* Risk of exploitation – including modern day slavery, trafficking, sexual and criminal exploitation, such as cuckooing, sex work.
* Risk of facing custodial time or due to be released from prison with potential risks.
* Risk of violence or abuse from others.
* Missing or refused communication with leaving care for more than 6 months.
* Significant risky substance misuse.
* Significant financial difficulties that have not been resolved through signposting or support.
* Young parents at risk of losing care of their child, i.e. through care proceedings.

The intention is that there is a strategic multiagency approach to disrupting risky situations faced by care experienced young people so that the risk is reduced to a satisfactory level. This will provide a holistic consideration to all of the needs of the young person and a collective responsibility to work towards a reduction of risk. There will be actions identified, which will be monitored and reviewed at the following Safety Panel until it is agreed that the panel discussion is no longer required for that specific young person.

**Reviewing the care leaver exploitation risk assessment workflow:**

For those young people assessed as **low risk** of exploitation, the exploitation indicator form can be closed with no further action:

For those young people assessed as **medium risk** of exploitation, the exploitation indicator form will need to be reviewed in a further 8 weeks and then subsequently at each 8 weeks thereafter until the risk is assessed as low.

For those young people as **high risk**, the exploitation indicator form will need to be reviewed in a further 6 weeks and then subsequently at each 6 weeks thereafter until the risk is assessed as medium/low.

**Care experienced young people in custody**

Particular attention should be given to care experienced young people in custody and especially to their pre-release planning. Effective relationships with the young person’s Probation Officer will be key and pre-release planning meetings must be held. The Leaving Care Service/Probation Protocol gives further details of the role of the leaving care worker in this situation.

The Leaving Care Worker must be involved in the plan for release. A sentence planning meeting with all agencies involved should take place 4 weeks in advance of a young person being released. Where housing is a consideration, this should include the housing department.

Whilst protection of the public clearly needs to be at the forefront of plans, there needs to a common understanding of the challenges faced in sourcing housing post release. This will need meaningful engagement and consideration about what can be offered and the support that the Leaving Care Worker along with other partners can provide to help manage and mitigate the risk as part of the risk management plan.

As soon as possible and before release, the young person must know the following:

* How they will travel on release.
* Where they will be living.
* The reporting arrangements.
* Sources of support - including out of hours.
* The arrangements for education, training or employment.
* Arrangements for meeting continuing health needs.
* How and when they will receive financial support.
* The roles and responsibilities of the respective practitioners.
* That the personal advisor/leaving care worker and the Probation Officer will share information regarding their progress and compliance.

It is vital there is clarity about who is responsible for each element of the plan and arrangements for communication and action.

The Leaving care worker should record the above information in the Pathway Plan and make copies available to the young person and with consent, the supervising probation officer. In addition to visits, we offer our young people in custody:

* We will support visits from family and friends
* £20 per month will be given to support phone contact with family and friends
* Setting Up Home Allowance may be agreed to fund clothes by a manager depending on young person’s situation.
* In Nottingham prison, we run a monthly drop in session
* Work with DWP to ensure benefits are in place.

**21 up to 25 years old:**

When approaching a young persons 21st Birthday and considering deallocation you will be guided by the 21-24 and 25 plus policy. Our approach even if the young person does not have an allocated worker is that they are never ‘closed to the service’, we are always there if needed.

**Deallocation:** At 21 and one month after working closely and consistently together through visits and pathway planning, the young person feels ready for deallocation and at 21 and one month we forward them their completed transitions work, certificates they have achieved, letter from leaving care with important information included. We will then help them understand that we will be available if needed but that this will reduce down to be less formal and will gradually reduce to annual keeping in touch or alternatively them calling us.

The leaving care letter will help explain how leaving care will continue to support them over the next four years. Dependent on need and the young person returning for any reason this support will come to an end around their 25 Birthday. A final supporting letter with information and a card and gift sent. This also needs to be shared verbally with the young person.

At 21, no young person **CLOSEs** to the service. We have a duty to maintain contact at least annually until 25 but even after that, we encourage our young people to keep in touch with us. All contact with our 21-24 year olds should be recorded in over 21 contact workflow. Where a young person over 21 does need a Leaving Care Worker for a period of time, and not just short-term help, a Pathway Plan will be needed with the young person’s agreement, and contact should be at least every 8 weeks with the same for management supervision.

**Remain allocated** – **Short Term:** The above will be considered. However there remain some areas of intervention that are outstanding, identified in the needs assessment/pathway plan. Therefor continued allocation under the 21+ Keeping in touch commences and a final Pathway Plan completed and sent out when final deallocation decision made.

**Remain allocated – Medium Term** – Where there are specific identified needs captured in the pathway plan, this may require a low level intervention over a longer period of time. This is very dependent on need and could be to sustain a relationship with a child, support with housing stability, learning needs, mental health or to maintain abstinence from drug use or transition support from custody. The above processes will be followed support being offered will be tracked using the 21+ Keeping in Touch Workflow, Pathway Plan and Visits recorded. Supervision and management oversight will be needed here.

**Remain allocated – Longer Term – up to 25** – Where a young person has identified risks including housing instability, Mental health needs, Custodial involvement; there may be a need for a Leaving care worker to remain involved long term, in a bespoke 21+ arrangement as part of the multi-agency approach. This can at times be up to 25 years. It will of course be the aim of the service to support the young person to create stability for themselves to become independent, this will have been set out in the pathway planning and 21+ workflow. However in supervision and with management oversight the plans will be set out. Additional support from services will obviously be the route to promote independence for the young person and to sustain stability.

**Visits and supervisions of over 21 year olds:**

Where a 21- 25 year old has an allocated Leaving Care Worker, statutory visits should take place and supervision undertaken in the usual timescales of every 8 weeks.

**Keep In Touch 25+**

At any age, our young people are encouraged to keep in touch with us. Many of our older care leavers keep in touch with their previous workers and enjoy updating them on the changes in their life as they move further into adulthood. We never give up on our young people and that doesn’t change just because you turn 25.

**Appendices**

1 Pathway Plan Booklet



2 Health History Summary and pathway



3 Children in Care transition checklist



4. DWP/Leaving Care Protocol



5.Exploitation Indicator form guidance



6. Safety panel terms of reference and referral form (now a workflow on Mosaic)



7.Probation protocol



8.Keep in Touch 21 and 25+



9 Young People with Different needs

