

# Best Practice Guidance: Pathway Planning

GUIDANCE & CHECKLIST

NEWCASTLE CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE



## **The Purpose of Pathway Planning**

The Pathway Plan is pivotal to the process whereby we support young people to map out their future, articulating their aspirations and identifying interim goals along the way to realising their ambitions.

We need to ensure that wherever possible the Pathway Plan is owned by the young person and is able to respond to their changing needs and ambitions.

The Pathway Plan should look ahead at least as far as the young person's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and will be in place beyond that where the young person is in a programme of education or training, which takes them past that age.

In this guide you will find practice hints and tips as well as a checklist to support you in completing a Pathway Plan. From understanding when a Pathway Plan should be undertaken, to what you will need to consider when completing it, this guide will provide you with a useful and practice focused overview. The guide also contains links to relevant procedures which you can consult and consider to inform your practice.

## Who is eligible for a Pathway Plan?

The government sets out in legislation and guidance who we can help. They have grouped young people into different categories. We can give different help depending on the 'category' the young person falls into.

### 'Eligible' young people

Young People are eligible if they are:

- aged 16 or 17; and
- have been in our care for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14; and
- are still in our care (whether on a care order or accommodated).

### 'Relevant' young people

Young people are relevant if they

- are between 16 and 17; and
- have been in our care for at least 13 weeks after the age of 14; and
- have left care.

Young people cannot claim benefits if they are a relevant young person, even if they are not on a care order.

### 'Former relevant' young people

These are young people aged 18-21 and have been either eligible, relevant or both. If, at the age of 21, and the council is still helping with education or training, they are still classed as a former relevant child until the end of their education or training, even if this takes them past the age of 21.

Former relevant young people can claim benefits at the age of 18.

### 'Qualifying' young people aged over 16

Young people are considered a 'qualifying young person' and we have some duties and responsibilities towards them if they are:

- aged under 21 (under 24 if in higher education or training); and
- have been in our care or accommodated after the age of 16; and
- there is no one to offer support and advice.

Qualifying Young people can claim benefits from 16 years onwards if they are in this category, but only if they are not at home.

## **What Service should we provide?**

### Eligible (16 or 17 years old)

- A social worker while the young person is in local authority care
- A pathway plan (when 16)
- A Child & Family assessment to consider the young person's needs (before reaching 16)
- All the provisions within the looked after system.

### Relevant (16 or 17 years old)

- A pathway plan
- A Child & Family needs assessment
- Accommodation costs, a personal allowance (if the young person is not living at home)- if the young person is at home an allowance may be paid to carers.

### Former relevant (18-25 years old)

- Help with the young person's education, employment and/or training.
- Holiday accommodation for higher education or residential further education if needed
- A pathway plan
- A needs assessment.
- A Leaving Care Support Officer (or Social Worker)

### Qualifying (16-25 years old)

- A duty to assist in a crisis (subject to an assessment of need).
- A duty to advise and assist the young person.
- Assistance with education and training up to the age of 25.
- Holiday accommodation for higher education courses or residential further education courses if necessary.

## Pathway Plans and Good Practice

The Pathway Plan should reflect best practice in that:

- Young people must have the option to remain looked after until they are prepared and ready to leave care. In Newcastle, children will not be *expected* to leave care until they are 18 years of age.
- Pathway planning should run parallel to a young person's Care Plan and Children in Care processes (formerly LAC Planning/ Process). At the age of 15.5 of the initial Pathway Plan will be started by the young person's social worker. The Initial Needs Assessment and Pathway Plan must be completed when the young person is aged 16 and 3 months.
- Pathway planning should take place early, recognising the need for structure and stability. The social worker will retain case responsibility until the young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday unless the young person formally leaves care before this date. From the age of 18 years of age, young people will be supported by a Leaving Care Support Officer (LCSO).
- Young people will not leave care without an updated Pathway Plan and, where necessary, a risk assessment to consider Sexual Exploitation, Missing and Self Harm. Where unregulated provision is being considered before the age of 18, a Schedule 6 assessment must be completed and presented to the Resource & Care Panel.
- Pathway plans are to be reviewed and updated in conjunction with a young person's Care Plan. This is every 6 months, whilst eligible, by the IRO - or otherwise and thereafter by the Team Manager. For unregulated provision – the review must take place within 28 days of the young person moving to this setting and then at intervals not exceeding 3 months
- All people with an interest in or involved in supporting the young person should be fully involved in the process and should be supported and encouraged to attend the Review.
- Pathway planning should be at the young person's pace and ensure that young people are fully involved and informed about options available.
- Real choice is vital, as a young person's assessment of need will have identified which options will be the most suitable and agreeable to the young person.

- The Team Manager is responsible for quality assuring the Pathway Plan and will offer case consultation, supervision and advice to the allocated social worker or Leaving Care Support Officer.
- The Team Manager is responsible for consulting with the relevant IRO for the young person where Pathway Plans are not in place.
- The IRO's will check, through the Children in Care Review process, that Pathway Plans are in place and reflect the needs of the young person in their preparation for leaving care.

## **Content of the Pathway Plan**

The Pathway Planning process will be where arrangements for continuing support, how the young person will safely enjoy and to spend time with their family as well as what arrangements are in place to stay in touch and involved with professionals and services will be agreed. The Plan should include the following areas:

- The plan for the young person's continuing education or training when he/she is no longer in our care – where the young person is no longer of statutory school age, the Pathway Plan may need to incorporate the goals and actions that were previously included in the Personal Education Plan (PEP).
- How we as the Responsible Local Authority, will assist the young person in obtaining employment or other purposeful activity or occupation, taking into account his/her aspirations, skills and educational potential.
- The financial support to be provided to enable the young person to meet accommodation and maintenance costs, taking into account his/her financial capabilities and money-management capacity, along with strategies to develop skills in this area.
- The nature and level of contact and personal support to be provided, and by whom, to the young person.
- Details of the accommodation the young person will live in (including an assessment of its suitability in the light of the young person's needs, and details of the considerations taken into account in assessing that suitability).
- Details of the arrangements made by the Local Authority to meet the young person's needs in relation to his or her identity, with particular regard to their religious persuasion, sexual orientation, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background.

- Details of any involvement with Youth Justice Services (YJS) and where appropriate, how we can work together to co-ordinate with YJS assessment and planning for the young person.
- Above all, Pathway planning must be completed with young people and reflect their voice within them.

The essentials of the pathway plan are specified in Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations, 2010 (for Eligible Young People), Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 (for Relevant and Former Relevant Young People) and the Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers Guidance (all of which became effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011).

## **Review of the Pathway Plan and Contingency Arrangements**

Much like with Child Protection or Child in Need Plans, Pathway Plans need to be reviewed regularly and consistently. This practice ensures that young people's plans benefit from an appropriate level of scrutiny – bringing the young person together with the professionals involved to support them to make sure that the plan is robust, responds to the needs of the young person and respects and treats the young person as an individual with their own views, wishes and feelings.

In Newcastle, Reviews must be arranged if the young person asks for one, or at least every 6 months and arrangements must be made to enable the young person to attend meetings. The purpose is to ensure that the goals and milestones are still right and that they are being met. Analysis of all levels of support will be reviewed to ensure they are adequate and delivered according to the plan.

In the case of Eligible Young People who will still have a Social Worker and are subject to the Children in Care Review process (formerly Looked After Child, LAC), the Review should be chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). Both the Care Plan and Pathway Plan should be reviewed by the IRO.

In the case of Relevant and Former Relevant Young People, the Review should be chaired by a Team Manager. The Pathway Plan and any risk or needs assessment completed in compliment to the Pathway Plan must be reviewed.

Contingency plans should be in place that recognise potential difficulties young people may face and arrange for appropriate support mechanisms. Planning should be flexible and sensitive to any problems and acknowledge the right of young people to return for support.



# Pathway Planning Checklist



## **Pathway Planning Checklist**

In this section you will find the Pathway Planning Checklist. This has been prepared to support you, in collaboration with the young person you are working with, complete the sections of the Pathway Plan.

It is a critical but often complex task, which requires the practitioner to explore and understand the current situation, agree and devise the plan in place for the young person in relation to the different facets of their life; and consider how this will be achieved and what contingencies are in place should the plan not be successful or circumstances change.

This checklist seeks to provide a framework around which questions and issues are raised that practitioners should seek to address / be aware of when undertaking a needs assessment and completing a Pathway Plan. The emphasis is on undertaking this through a professional interest and dialogue approach with the young person, rather than as a bureaucratic 'tick box style' method. You should seek to understand the young person's background and its impact upon their behaviour and thinking - seeking to encourage the achievements that have been made.

## **Overall Aim of the Plan - What Outcomes do you want for this Young Person?**

The plan should set out how identified needs will be addressed over time so that the young person can make the best possible transition to adulthood. Once you and the young person have identified the needs you can decide together which needs to address first, agree on the outcomes you want to achieve for those needs, and a realistic timescale for achieving each outcome.

Some obvious outcomes in the transition to adulthood for any young person would be:

- Having a home;
- Achieving full potential in education;
- Career success;
- Being healthy;
- Having positive relationships;
- Involvement in meaningful, enjoyable activities.

However, these outcomes are universal and outcomes in Pathway Plans will be more specific because they will be based on the very specific needs of the individual young person. So rather than thinking about the young person's need to have a home, the need might be broken down outlining the needs to be addressed on the way to living independently:

- Young person needs to understand how to budget;
- Young person needs to improve their cooking skills;
- Young person needs to understand how to set up a tenancy agreement.

Outcomes relating to these needs might be:

- Young person has worked out projected weekly outgoings (expenditure) and set it against weekly income;
- Young person has cooked supper twice a week for three weeks in his foster home;
- Young person has explained how tenancy agreements are set up and how they work to me which gives me confidence that he understands the process and terminology.

These outcomes are then steps on the way to getting a home rather than trying to get there in one fell swoop – and risking failure.

Think about what the young person cares about MOST and start with the need that relates to this – this is much more likely to engage the young person and result in a plan that makes a real difference.

Plans which focus on the development of social and emotional capabilities, which can be harder to measure, are likely to have a greater long-term impact on positive life outcomes than those focusing on more practical goals – for example the number of exam results or reduction in criminal convictions. The best plans contain a mixture of both.

Thinking about emotional needs it might be that the young person needs:

- To understand why his mother does not want him to return to live with her;
- To know that this is not his fault.

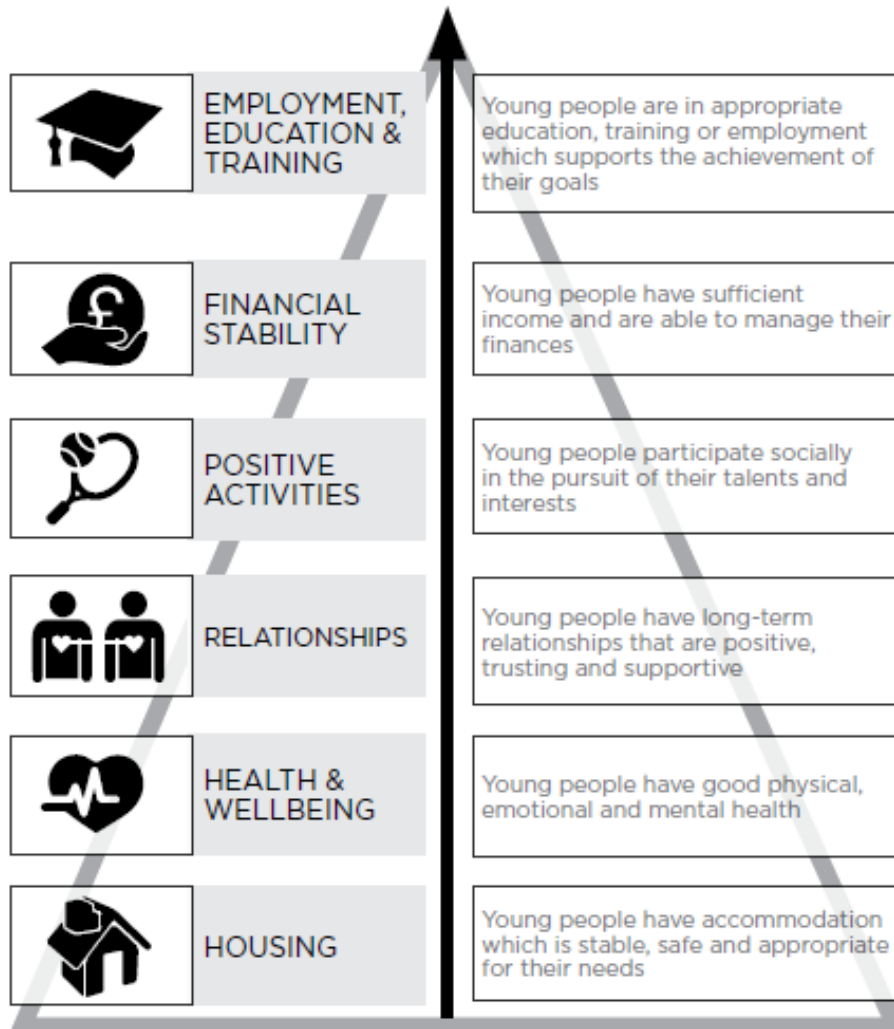
The outcomes linked to these needs might be:

- Young person has described the things that happened to his mother that make it hard for her to care for him;
- Young person can describe his success in avoiding difficulties his mother found it hard to avoid;
- Young person has agreed with his mother the times they will see each other.

So, the challenge in developing an effective pathway plan with a particular young person is to avoid universal needs and universal outcomes and to ensure that needs, outcomes and action plans to achieve outcomes specified relate directly to the unique circumstances of the young person in question.

A test of a good plan is to ask yourself – if I read this plan not knowing the young person concerned would I have a fairly good idea of their story? If your answer is 'yes' – you can be fairly confident that your plan relates directly to the young person in question.

## 'Leaving Well' – Outcomes Framework Tool



Leaving Well produced a comprehensive Outcomes Framework. This evidence-based framework enables users to get a more complete understanding of outcomes for each young person. It sets out a hierarchy of needs required for healthy, happy lives, beginning with housing, mental health and wellbeing and relationships, and finishing with employment, education and training. The framework is based on an extensive review of the evidence of the most prevalent issues experienced by care leavers and follows the logic of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The indicators in the framework have been aligned with statutory guidance, including the new requirements in the Children and Social Work Act 2017. In addition, the framework's strengths-based approach supports a focus on young people's progress and achievements rather than on identifying problems. The complete 'Leaving Well Outcomes Framework' can be found here: [Leaving Well](#)

## **Accommodation – having somewhere safe and comfortable to call home**

Consideration should be given to the young person's:

- Life experience (including pre-care and care experiences)
- The location of friends and family important to the young person
- How well prepared a young person is to leave care
- Support available in the current arrangements and what level of support is proposed
- Access to information and support related to any upcoming changes in where they will live
- Sense of safety within their accommodation – are the doors and windows secure? Smoke alarms fitted? Communal areas clean and safe? What needs to be done to improve this where necessary?

The Needs Assessment which is completed by the social worker will have identified what specific assistance a young person will need in relation to accommodation and what types of accommodation are suitable to meet the young person's needs.

The Local Authority should:

- Avoid moving young people who are settled unless it is unavoidable or offers clear advantage.
- Assess young people's needs and prepare them for any move.
- Where practicable, offer a choice in the type and location of accommodation.
- Set up a package of support to the accommodation.
- Establish a clear and sufficient financial plan for the accommodation.
- Develop a contingency plan in case the proposed accommodation breaks down.

## **Education and Training**

Pathway planning for eligible and relevant young people must build on the educational progress while the young person was in care. It must take into account the young person's Personal Education Plan (PEP). It should include continuous assessment of the young person's progress.

The Pathway Plan should:

- Reflect the needs and potential of the young person.
- Enable young people to make the most of educational opportunities.
- Provide for the young person's LCPA or Youth Employment Service (YES) Adviser to intervene as necessary to solve any problems.
- Demonstrate contact with school/college and include attendance at parents' events (as appropriate).
- Cover any remedial education required.

Any financial needs in relation to future education/training must be included within the Pathway Plan.

## **Employment**

The Pathway Plan should set out how the responsible authority will assist the young person in, or seeking, employment (Schedule 1, paragraph 4).

Specific attention should be given to:

- Gathering information about the young person's achievements and potential.
- Carrying out an assessment of a young person's capabilities with regard to employment.
- Identify what work needs to be done to increase a young person's employability.
- Exploring employment opportunities.
- Developing links with local employers.
- Identify a range of support for the young person.

Any financial needs in relation to assisting a young person to find and maintain employment must be included within the Pathway Plan.

## **Emotional & Physical Health Needs**

The Pathway Plan must deal with the young person's health needs, including any mental health needs, and detail how they are to be met.

The Pathway Plan should:

- Involve a holistic assessment and maintain detailed records of the young person's health.
- Promote a healthy lifestyle.
- Ensure appropriate use of primary healthcare services by young people.
- Provide access to specialist help and therapeutic services.
- Promote leisure interests.
- Ensure appropriate discounts for prescribed medication, dental treatment and vision care (Form HC1).

Pay attention to healthy living including physical, mental and sexual health.

## **Family and Social Relationships**

The Local Authority must enable and support young people to maintain and create links with families and friends whilst looked after. This should always include members of the extended family.

The Pathway Plan should explore sources of informal support and a young person's ability to make and sustain such relationships. All suitable adults who have been a part of the young person's life should be considered as a means of future support, eg, foster carers/residential workers/teachers.

Consideration should be given to means of assisting the young person of accessing that support.

Every effort should be made to combat social isolation and to enable young people to strengthen their resistance to exploitation by others. The Pathway Plan should include reference to interventions by the LCPA/Leaving Care Services to support the young person in this area.



## **Practical and Other Skills**

The Pathway Plan must demonstrate a holistic approach attaching equal importance to practical, emotional and interpersonal skills. It must develop strategies to address assessed need for life skills development to ensure that the young person achieves, at appropriate pace, the ability to live as a confident and independent adult.

Assessment and agreed action in respect of the following should be included in the Pathway Plan:

- *Self-Care Skills*

Personal Hygiene, Diet, Health, Emotional and mental health, Sexual Health

- *Practical Skills*

Budgeting, Shopping ,Cooking, Cleaning, Laundry

- *Interpersonal Skills*

Formal and informal relationship building, Sexual Health

- *Identity*

Knowledge of any links with family and community, Sexuality, Cultural knowledge for young people from ethnic minority communities

It is important that the particular needs of young people with learning or physical disabilities are addressed.

## Financial Support

The financial support plan within the Pathway Plan is critical. It sets out not only what financial support is in place for the young person and how this is managed and reviewed, but also considers the financial independence and abilities of the young person.

The financial support of the plan should allow for and encourage activities that stretch the potential of the young person, e.g. part time employment, opening an ISA

The Local Authority acts as a good parent and should offer support that is realistic and similar in nature to that provided similarly to young people who are not in care in the area.

The financial support assessment within the Pathway Plan must include consideration of:

- The amount of pocket money/income the young person receives/earns
- Their understanding of the costs of living independently, the different bills/expenses there are, how much these cost, and how often they are paid (TV license, water rates, utilities)
- Access to a bank account and understanding of how to make deposits and withdrawals, how to open an account, who would support with this and offer advice
- Their access to and responsibility for, grants, loans or bursaries
- How well the young person understands the principles of budgeting i.e. income and expenditure and the relationship
- The extent to which they have had the opportunity to discuss key schemes, allowances and taxes etc. and what support they may need to understand these (e.g. Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support, Employment & Support Allowance, Housing Benefit/Local Housing Allowance, Universal Credit, Disability Living Allowance, Working Tax Credits and Child Tax Credits Allowances and Benefits for Mothers & Babies, Income Tax, Council Tax and possible exemptions and benefits National Insurance, Salaries & Wages, Leaving Care Allowances etc.)

## **Personal Support**

The support of the social worker or LSCO is crucial for the success of the plan. Strategies for support must reflect assessed need and the young person's ability and willingness to accept support.

The Pathway Plan should give detailed information about what support he/she can expect. It should also include a mechanism for the young person to seek additional support in the short term should this be necessary.

## **Contingency Planning**

What will happen if all or part of the Plan is not met? E.g., if exam results unexpectedly preclude acceptance at University, if a Staying Put arrangement is no longer viable.

It is important that the Pathway Plan explores alternatives for the young person if things have to change.

All material or substantial changes should be brought to a review of the Pathway Plan and the review may need to be brought forward. This is so that life changes can be developed and mapped out in a timely way which ensures the young person has all the support that they need, and the plan is fit for purpose.

## **Transitions Planning**

For care leavers who have disabilities and / or a Health and Social Care Plan / Educational Statement of Needs the social worker needs to make a referral to Adult Services. This will mean that colleagues in adult services will assess the young person for eligibility for an Adult Social Care Service in a timely manner.

If the young person meets the eligibility criteria to receive a service from Adult Social Care this needs to be clearly documented in the Pathway Plan and transitional arrangements agreed for the case holding responsibility to transfer to Adult Care post age 18.

## **Consultations on Pathway Plans – Getting it Right**

The Senior Practitioners and Team Managers within our 16+ Team provide consultations with social workers and managers on the completion of Pathway Plans. This facilitates the knowledge exchange on resources to use in Pathway Planning, access to preparation for leaving care group work such as our Job Club and sign posting to specialist services provided by partner agencies for care leavers.

If you would like to arrange a consultation for you and your manager, you can contact the 16+ Team on 0191 277 7377

## **Links to Useful Policies and Procedures**

[Child's Journey through the Care System](#)

[Care Planning](#)

[Leaving Care and Transitions](#)

[Leaving Care Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers \(separated children & young people\)](#)

[Staying Put Policy](#)

[Staying Put - A Good Practice Guide](#)

[Education of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children](#)

[Care Planning for Young People on Remand](#)

[Working Together - Assessing need and providing help \(2018\)](#)

[Leaving Well Outcomes Framework \(2017\)](#)