

Practice Guidance for Leaving Care Service

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Procedures Guidance and Standards

West Sussex Children's Services Procedures are available on TriX through the Point or here <https://www.proceduresonline.com/westsussex/cs/> This sets out how all staff must work with children, young people and families. The key elements staff need to be aware of are:

- Procedures - this contains the main policies and procedures that ensure we comply with the law and statutory guidance when safeguarding the needs of the children and families we work with;
- Practice Guidance - contains local guidance, tools and other information that supports and complements the policies and procedures in the procedures section; To add link when signed off
- West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership is a partnership of all the different organisations working to protect children and young people across the county.

Purpose

West Sussex Leaving Care Service Practice Guidance describes the responsibilities processes and expectations of Personal Advisors and their managers when working with West Sussex young people who are leaving care. All WSCC staff are required to comply and apply this guidance in their work.

This guidance is intended primarily for Care Leavers and Personal Advisors, it will also assist other agencies who provide services to care leavers.

Legal Context and Definitions

The guidance is based upon the legislative requirements and regulations set out in

- The Children Act 1989

- The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010
- Children and Social Work Act 2017

Care Leavers who meet criteria of Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant below are entitled to support as follows:

Eligible Child

- Young person aged 16 and 17
- Young Person will have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14
- Young person is still looked after
- Entitled to, a Personal Advisor, a Needs Assessment, a Pathway Plan, receive all the care and support they normally receive until they leave care

Relevant Child

- Young person aged 16 and 17
- Looked after by children's services for a period of 13 weeks since the age of 14
- Looked after for a period of time after their 16th birthday
- No longer looked after
- Entitled to: a Personal Advisor, a Needs Assessment, a Pathway Plan, Accommodation and maintenance financial support to meet education, training and employment needs

Former Relevant Child

- Aged between 18 and 21 or between 18 and 25 if still in full-time education
- Previously an eligible child and/or a relevant child
- Entitled to: a Personal Advisor, a Pathway Plan, kept under regular review, assistance with employment, education and training, assistance with accommodation, help with living costs
- Once a former relevant child becomes 21, they can choose whether to continue to have support and this can continue until they are 25.

Qualifying child

- Aged between 16 and 21 or between 16 and 25 if still in full-time education
- Looked after by children's services on, or after, their 16th birthday and no longer looked after
- Spent less than 13 weeks in care since 14th birthday, i.e. do not fulfil criteria for eligible or relevant child
- Entitled to, Advice and assistance from Leaving Care Service which may, be financial help with living expenses and if they are in higher education, they may also help with securing vacation accommodation. There is not an entitlement to a Pathway Plan or Personal Advisor

Qualifying Child: Special Guardianship Order

- Young person age 18-25
- You were being looked after when a Special Guardianship Order was made
- Advice and assistance from Leaving Care Service which may, be financial help with living expenses and if they are in higher education, they may also help with securing vacation accommodation. There is not an entitlement to a Pathway Plan or Personal Advisor

Responsibilities of the Personal Adviser

Section 3 Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires Local Authorities to provide access to Personal Advisors to care leavers from 16 until they reach the age of 25. In West Sussex, Leaving Care Personal Advisors can work with young people from 16 years up to 21 years, this continues up to 25 years of age if the young person remains in education or requires support under extended duties. Personal Advisors have statutory responsibilities to provide a service as follows:

- Support care leavers with all aspects of the transition from care towards independence
- Keep in touch with Care Leavers and meet responsibilities for contact including visiting at least every 8 weeks or more frequently as needs or risks require.
- To visit the young person in their accommodation within 5 working days of a move or change
- To maintain and review a Pathway Plan with the young person at least every six months and when there is a significant change in the young person's circumstances
- To ensure the plan meets its purpose and achieve the aims and objectives set out in the plan
- To support the young person to access appropriate health, wellbeing or welfare services
- Co-ordinate the provision of services and take reasonable steps to ensure the young person makes use of such services
- To support the young person to develop skills to enable them to become independent
- To provide support to develop financial capability-how to manage day to day finances;
- To support the care leaver access housing options;
- To support young people to access and maintain education, employment or training
- To identify and address risk, working with young people to manage risk taking behaviour and develop resilience
- To act as advocate or intermediary and if required refer to advocacy services.
- Provide high quality information, advice and guidance and signpost to appropriate provision
- To record work and interactions with young people
- To administer the young person's Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA)

The current role profile and person specification for LCS PA's can be found [here](#) or on SharePoint under Human Resources.

Co Working Responsibilities of Social Workers and Personal Advisers

The Leaving Care Service PA will be matched with a care leaver after their 16th birthday commence work with the young person at a point agreed with the individual young person and the Social Worker. Until allocation to the PA the Social Work PA functions will be undertaken by the Social Worker. In West Sussex all eligible young people will usually have both a PA and Social Worker allocated to them by their 17th birthday.

The Personal Adviser will be introduced to the child by their allocated social worker and together start planning for leaving care The allocated Social Worker retains statutory case responsibility working together with a PA to ensure a supportive transition from adolescence to early adulthood for children as well as a smooth transition of case responsibility from the Children's Social Worker to the PA at the age of 18 years. At 18 years old, the PA will become the allocated key worker for the Child and the Children's Social Worker role will come to an end.

The table below defines specific respective role responsibilities for 16 to 18-year-old Care Leavers. There will be times when it is appropriate for there to be negotiation about some tasks dependent on the knowledge, expertise and capacity of the worker

CO-WORKING RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN 16TH AND 18TH BIRTHDAY

Social Worker Responsibilities

PA Responsibilities

- All Looked After Children will have an allocated Social Worker
- By the child 16th birthday the SW and young person will identify if there is a need for a separate PA to be allocated or if these functions are better fulfilled by the Social Worker.
- The decision and proposed timeframe for matching introduction and allocation to a Personal Adviser will be recorded on Mosaic
- The SW discharge PA functions to 16-year olds until the involvement of a PA
- Allocation to a PA must be regularly considered and will always be a part of statutory reviews the timeframe may be brought forward if identified needs change
- When PA is required the SW will inform Leaving Care Service and a PA will allocated in 5 working days
- Following allocation, a 3-way meeting will take place between the young person, Social Worker and Personal Adviser
- All young people eligible for PA will have both a SW and a PA by their 17th birthday
- Mosaic will be updated with the name of the Personal Adviser and their Line Manager
- PA to create case summary within 2 weeks of the meeting

Keeping in contact

SW will undertake statutory CLA visits and record on Mosaic

PA will undertake statutory 8 weekly visits and record this as a 'PA Visit' on case notes within Mosaic.

It is recommended that some visits are joint between the Social Worker, Personal Adviser and Child.

Pathway Planning and Needs Assessment

SW will complete needs assessment and pathway plan by the Child's 16th birthday and will update every 6 months or at the point of any significant change in circumstances until young person reaches 18.

PA will participate in the Pathway Plan review with the Social Worker and the Child. The PA will take some actions from the PWP which will be jointly agreed with the Social Worker.

Pathway Plans should be prepared by the Social Worker, signed off by their Practice Manager and presented and discussed at each CLA review.

PA will attend and participate in CLA review where pathway plan will be reviewed by IRO until 18th birthday.

Transition Planning

Social worker will consider the needs assessment and identify if the Child will need post 18 support from

- CLDT
- Adult Services
- Adult Mental Health

Personal Adviser to be fully aware of the transition plans and support the work of the Social Worker, ensuring close relationships are developed with post 18 providers.

<p>The social worker will lead on making arrangements for the Child to be referred to the transition worker</p>	
<p>Social Worker to ensure by 16 years the child has a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bank / Savings account • NI number • Passport • Birth Certificate 	
<p>Identity</p>	
<p>Social Worker will continue to provide life story work (as appropriate).</p>	
<p>Social Worker will update Chronology every six months until the age of 18, ensuring it is up to date at the time of the Child's 18th birthday.</p>	<p>Personal Adviser will continue a Chronology post 18 for the duration the Child remains open to them.</p>
<p>Financial</p>	
<p>Social Worker will agree and arrange payments for pocket money, transport and clothing allowance whilst the Child is under the age of 18</p>	<p>Personal Adviser will support Child to claim benefits (if applicable) in preparation for turning 18 years. If the Child is NRPF, the Personal Adviser will take over payments from their 18th birthday.</p>
	<p>Personal Adviser will lead on allocation of the Setting Up Home Allowance. The bulk of this will be utilised post 18 when the Child moves to independent living. Personal Adviser will create the SUHA record at age 16 and maintain this with each spend.</p>
<p>Social Worker will provide Christmas and birthday presents for 16&17-year olds.</p>	<p>PA will provide a present for birthdays and a named festival from 18 years value in line with Financial Guidance</p>
<p>Accommodation for 16/17-year olds</p>	
<p>Any change of accommodation (planned or unplanned) whilst under the age of 18 will be managed by the Social Worker. They will be responsible for completing the placement referral and managing any physical moves. Social Worker will discuss potential placements with the Personal Adviser so they are aware of how any placement fits with the Child's preparation for independent living.</p>	<p>Personal Adviser will also support with any physical move.</p>
<p>Social Worker & Personal Adviser will work together on post 18 housing options. This should begin at age 16 via Pathway Planning. This should include planned step down to semi-independent accommodation during their 16th/17th year if not staying put.</p>	<p>PA can advise Child on accommodation options post 18 years. PA will support with housing register application if appropriate.</p>

Preparation for Independent Living

Social Workers will attend placement reviews and ensure Children are being given opportunities by providers to develop their independent living skills

PA's will work with Children and providers to complete resettlement passport or an equivalent programme of independent living skills development.

Health

Social Worker will refer for health assessment and gain Child's consent for this.

PA can support Child attending health assessment if required.

Social worker to ensure Child is registered with dentist and GP.

Social Worker to ensure Child is provided with Health summary by relevant Health Practitioner

Education, Training and Employment

SW to lead on PEP planning and reviews and ensure PEP pre 18 years is completed and up to date.

PA to attend PEP meeting and advise on

- Support education/training/employment
- University/college/training applications
- Support to attend open days/interviews
- Provide letter to college advising of care leaver status
- Provide letter of support for 16-19 bursary application
- PA to advise on financial support relation to education, training and employment

If a Child is NEET the PA will support them to identify and maximise appropriate ETE opportunities.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers

Social Worker to ensure Personal Adviser is aware of current asylum status and future milestones to post 18.

PA to ensure they are fully informed of any actions to be taken post 18.

Social Worker to ensure that Pathway Plan is triple planned.

Planned reunification with family

Social Worker to assess viability of a return home and make arrangements for this to happen if appropriate. To be aware of change in legal status and ongoing support see appendix A for details.

PA to work closely with social worker on future planning and to discuss exit point and/or ongoing support with team manager.

To consider and make timely arrangements to revoke full care order if a return home is viable.

Risk Management

SW to lead on risk management, safety planning and attend relevant meetings such as strategy discussions for under 18's.

PA to contribute to safety planning and be aware of risks.

Supervision

Practice Managers to provide supervision to SW and be the decision makers in matters relating to the young person (pre 18)

Team Managers to provide supervision to PA's with focus on post 18 planning.

Following last CLA review SW will prepare case for transfer to Leaving Care Service by completing a transfer summary.

Escalation

If the social worker has concerns, they should be raised directly with the Personal Adviser in the first instance

If the Personal Adviser has concerns, they should be raised directly with the Social Worker in the first instance.

If concerns remain, they should be escalated to their own line manager who will discuss them with the Personal Advisers line manager.

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If further escalation is necessary, the practice manager should liaise with their Group Manager to discuss with the Leaving Care Service Leader.

If further escalation is necessary, the team manager should liaise with their Service Leader to discuss with the Group Manager or Service Leader in CLA.

At the child's 18th birthday, the Personal Adviser will become the Allocated worker on Mosaic and can be closed to the Childs Social Worker on completion of the following:

- Pathway Plan next action set for PA to review
- Chronology updated
- Relationships checked and closed if appropriate
- All workflow steps are completed / finished
- Transfer summary completed and signed off by outgoing Practice Manager and the receiving Leaving Care Team Manager.

Recording

Work with the young person their family / friends and other professionals must be clearly and accurately recorded in a timely manner on the Mosaic case recording system. Visits must be recorded within 2 working days after a visit and 5 working days for all other contact. Safeguarding issues need to be documented on the same day.

PA's are required to complete the following records:

Assessments, Pathway Plans , and Reviews, Case Summary, Transfer Summary, Case Closure Episode, Chronology, Case Notes, Update Personal details, Upload documents, SUHA expenditure record, EDT Response Episode.

Young people and other professionals will request access to their files and their recording should be written with this in mind. Further information and guidance can be found in the document 'Mosaic for LCS PA's' which can be found [here](#).

Management Oversight

Management oversight must be evident across decision making records and the young person's case file. Case supervision by Team Managers, should be no less than three monthly. However more frequent oversight is required for those with greater risks and needs, All young people at the monthly Risk Management Oversight Meeting who are assessed as high risk, will be discussed monthly in supervision, to ensure actions agreed at the meeting have been completed. It is the responsibility of managers to have oversight on a regular basis and monitor the regularity of completing the supervision record on the case tracker and updating the Case Summary with any changes.

All managers will demonstrate quality assurance activities and management oversight including

- Case discussions, including critical decisions and discussions about young people
- Quality Assurance of assessments and plans prior to sign off
- Quality Assurance of transfer and closure decisions and records
- Case supervision
- Audits
- Clear actions and learning in response to audits

Evidencing Wishes and Feelings of Care Leavers

Working in a child centred way is an essential part of good practice. Communicating and listening to young people helps practitioners understand what life is like for them, what needs to change and how best to promote their wellbeing and development.

The young person's views and wishes are central to good practice and alongside the views of carers and other key professionals, are considered in as part of the help and support offered.

Young people should be involved as much as possible in the decisions being made and the help being offered.

Feedback should be sought from young people, and carers about their views of how helpful the support they are receiving is and this information will inform and influence how services are provided. Practitioners will promote relationship-based practice with young people their networks and other professionals.

PAs should understand what difference the help provided has made to the young person and what has improved for them.

Visits to Care Leavers

Regulation requires that when a Care Leaver moves to new accommodation, the PA must see them at that accommodation within 5 working days of the move. Subsequently they must see the care leaver when Pathway Plan will be first reviewed, after 28 days and then visit the Care Leavers at no less than two monthly intervals. These are statutory minimum requirements; visits should regularly be scheduled to take place at the accommodation where the young person lives. On each occasion the PA must consider whether this accommodation continues to be suitable for the young person. The PA will need to observe the general state of the property and check how well the Care Leaver is managing in their accommodation and their financial commitments for rent, utilities, etc. Where a young person is living in semi-independent accommodation linked to the provision of housing related support, the

PA should monitor how well the accommodation, with its related support, is meeting the young person's needs. They should liaise closely with the young person and any key work staff.

We must keep in touch with the young person. Contact should take place as specified in the Pathway Plan. Keeping in touch between visits might involve a large range of communication methods, for example: calls, texts, social media, e-Mails and skype. Sometimes a young person may ask for a visit outside of working hours in this case the Personal Advisor must agree this with the Team Manager. All young people should be seen regularly, irrespective of, communication abilities or language barriers.

Pathway Planning

A Pathway Plan must be prepared for all Eligible and Relevant children and continued for all Relevant and Former Relevant children. The plan will be based on the initial Pathway Assessment and the previous Care Plan. It will set out the actions that must be taken by the local authority, young person, their parents, carers and agencies involved with the young person. The purpose of the plan is to ensure the young person is provided with the support and services they need to make a successful transition to adulthood.

The Pathway Plan should be prepared as soon as possible after the age of 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ by the Social Worker in collaboration with the PA if involved. The plan will be updated in line with needs and considered at each statutory review chaired by the young person's Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). At 17 the development of the Pathway Plan will be led by the Personal Advisor in collaboration with the Social Worker. From the age of 18 the PA is responsible for writing the plan with Team manager sign off.

The Social Worker or Personal Adviser preparing the Pathway Plan must engage with the young person to obtain views to help focus the plan Pathway plans must be developed with the young person. In addition, they should consider consulting if appropriate with:

- The young person's parents, other adults with parental responsibility and relevant members of their wider family network with the young person's consent;
- The young person's current carer and any provider of housing and accommodation support;
- The young person's designated teacher, college tutor or other educational professional familiar with the young person's learning needs and educational objectives;
- Any independent visitor appointed for the young person;
- Designated nurse for Looked After Children or any other medical professional providing health care or treatment named in their health plan.

PAs and Social Workers will use Pathway Planning Guidance available on SharePoint pages [here](#). The Guidance provides specific wording for key aspects Pathway Plans.

The Pathway Plan should include details of how we will meet the young person's needs and be explicit about the timescale by which any action required to implement any aspect of the plan will be carried out, and by whom. The Pathway Plan should always include a contingency plan.

The plan should include details about the support that the young person might expect their PA to provide. The kinds of issues where the PA will be the Care Leavers initial source of advice might include:

- The level of contact and personal support to be provided, and by whom;
- Housing options potentially available to the young person and how to access accommodation and advice;
- The plan for continuing education or training when they cease to be looked after;

- Assistance to obtain and sustaining employment or other purposeful activity;
- Support to develop and sustain appropriate family and social relationships;
- Support to develop the practical and other skills needed to live independently. How they will support the young person to develop their confidence and decision-making capacity;
- The financial support to be provided to meet accommodation and maintenance costs. Information about financial capability - how to manage day to day finances, how to take up any entitlements to benefits;
- Health care needs, including any physical, emotional or mental health needs and how they are to be met when they cease to be looked after.
- Information about leisure, sporting and cultural opportunities and how to participate in community life;
- Contingency plans for action to be taken if the Pathway Plan ceases to be effective for any reason.
- If Team Managers have agreed alternative methods of contact this should be recorded

West Sussex are no longer be primarily responsible for the young person's financial support and maintenance from age 18. If a former relevant young person is not intending to continue in an approved programme of education or training, then the Pathway Planning process should be concluded in an agreed way around the time that the young person reaches the age of 21. Where young people are continuing with an education or training course or under extended duties beyond their 21st birthday, the practical and financial support being provided must continue to be set out in the plan.

The Pathway Plan must be recorded in Mosaic and once signed off a copy sent to the young person. A case note should record when and how this was done. The young person should be asked for consent to share the Pathway Plan with other relevant professionals. The plan should be signed by the Personal Adviser Line Manager, the young person and their PA, as evidence of their commitment to achieving the plans objectives.

Pathway Plan Reviews

The PA must make sure the Pathway Plan is reviewed at 6 monthly intervals and convene additional reviews to ensure plans address changes in circumstances or needs. e.g., where there is a real risk of eviction from their accommodation, the PA convenes a review involving all relevant professionals and the young person, to develop a plan to enable the young person to maintain their accommodation or move in a planned way.

Given the serious implications for a young person's future, the PA should hold a review in these circumstances:

- a. Where a young person has been charged with an offence there is a possibility of their being sentenced to custody, which will risk losing their (suitable) accommodation;
- b. Where a young person is at risk of being evicted from their accommodation or otherwise threatened with homelessness;
- c. Where professionals are concerned about the parenting capacity of a relevant or former relevant young person, with there being a possibility that their own child may need to become the subject of a multi-agency safeguarding / child protection plan.

The PA should also hold a review in the following circumstances:

- d. If requested to do so by the young person
- e. If the Personal Advisor or Team manager considers a review necessary;

- f. For young people in custody it will be good practice wherever possible to carry out a review of the Pathway Plan at least a month before release in order to give enough time for pre-release planning.

PAs should schedule reviews at a maximum of 5 months intervals to allow for cancellations. The review will consider progress and impact of the plan and revise and update accordingly.

Immigration Status, Pathway and Transition Planning

A child's immigration status has no bearing on a local authority's duties to provide care leaving support. Unaccompanied children must be provided with the same support as for any care leaver, The following Guidance found [here](#) sets out additional points that must be in to the pathway plans of any Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young Person who is still awaiting a decision on their asylum claim. A child's status as an unaccompanied or trafficked child must be considered in the assessment of needs undertaken as part of the pathway planning process, and by the independent reviewing officer in any review of the pathway plan.

Transition planning will need to consider the challenges and issues, such as education or preparing for independent living. Planning for a care leaver that has recently entered the UK from overseas may need to cover additional support in understanding the institutions and systems. Unaccompanied children can be at particular risk of becoming isolated on leaving care. When planning for transition, the local authority must ensure that language or cultural factors are considered to reduce this risk. A trafficked child may still be at risk of exploitation from their traffickers on leaving care. This risk should be considered, particularly with regard to arranging accommodation.

Planning transition to adulthood for unaccompanied children is a particularly complex process that needs to address their care needs in the context of wider asylum and immigration legislation and how these needs change over time. Pathway planning to support an unaccompanied child's transition to adulthood should cover all areas that would be addressed within all care leaver's plans as well as additional needs arising from their specific immigration issues. Planning may have to be based around short-term achievable goals whilst entitlement to remain in the UK is being determined. For unaccompanied children who do not have permanent immigration status, transition planning should initially take a triple planning perspective, which, over time should be refined as the young person's immigration status is resolved. Planning cannot pre-empt the outcome of any immigration decision and may be based on:

- a transitional plan during the period of uncertainty when the care leaver is in the United Kingdom without permanent immigration status;
- a longer-term perspective plan should the care leaver be granted long-term permission to stay in the UK (for example through the grant of Refugee Status); or
- a return to their country of origin at any appropriate point or at the end of the immigration consideration process, should that be necessary because the care leaver decides to leave the UK or is required to do so.

Claiming asylum is a complex process. Social workers and personal advisors should work with the care leaver's legal representative and the dedicated decision-maker at the Home Office to ensure the young person understands the process and the possible outcomes, and to provide them with necessary support. There are four possible outcomes of the asylum claim:

1. Granted Refugee Status (i.e., granted asylum). Leave to remain for five years.
2. Refused asylum but granted Humanitarian Protection. Leave to remain for five years. This is most commonly granted when the person is at some risk of 'ill-treatment' in the particular country they left

but does not meet the criteria of the Refugee Convention. This is a rare category for unaccompanied children.

3. Refused asylum but granted Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) Leave. This is normally for 30 months or until the age of 17½, whichever is the shorter period. Once the child reaches 17½ years of age their case will be reviewed. UASC Leave is granted if at the time of the decision adequate care and reception arrangements are not in place in the country of origin (i.e., a return cannot be effected safely).

4. Refused asylum with no grant of leave. In this case the unaccompanied child must return to their country of origin.

Those found to require Refugee Status or more rarely, Humanitarian Protection, are usually granted leave to remain for five years. Although it is not guaranteed that further leave to remain will be granted at the end of the five-year period, it is certainly a strong likelihood and care and pathway planning should primarily focus on longer term residence in the UK, in the same way as for any other care leaver.

Support for UASC who Appeal Rights Exhausted

Planning for a return home may be difficult, but care and pathway plans should include contingencies for durable and best interest plans for unaccompanied children and young people who are likely to have to return to their country of origin. Pathway plans should always consider the implications for the care leaver if: their application for asylum is refused without a grant of leave; or their application to extend their leave to remain, or their appeal against refusal of that application, is dismissed. In such circumstances, the person will become unlawfully present in the United Kingdom and be expected to make plans for return to the country of origin.

Use of Translators

If the young person's comprehension and use of English precludes them from being able to fully participate in assessments pathway planning or other key meetings, then a translator should be used. This is particularly important for significant events i.e. if we are withdrawing LCS support. If professionals are choosing not to use a translator or the young person declines the rationale this must be documented.

Young People at Risk of Harm

PA must liaise with the Social Worker to understand the needs of the child including any risk to the young person and also risks they may pose to themselves or others. Until the young person reaches 18 years the Social Worker will lead on safeguarding and child protection and safety planning matters. The LCS Team Manager/PA will work with relevant Team Manager/SW to support the safety plan. Three months prior to the young person becoming 18, any concerns or risks will be raised for discussion at the LCS Management Oversight and Risk Meeting to understand what safety planning is required as part of transition including any involvement with Adult services and/or Adult Safeguarding Procedures.

When the young person reaches 18 the PA has a responsibility to understand risks and undertake assessment of risk of serious harmful behaviour utilising all sources of information available including work with other agencies

Adult Safeguarding and Risk Management

Recognising and responding to risk is dynamic process, harmful behaviours to or from the young person should be monitored for change. If the PA identifies that risks could meet the threshold of serious harm the matter should be discussed immediately with a Team Manager and consideration given to making a referral to Adult Safeguarding.

The guidance and tools for making a referral to Adult Safeguarding referrals are found:

<http://sussexsafeguardingadults.procedures.org.uk/>

<https://www.westsussexconnecttosupport.org/s4s/WhereILive/Council?pageId=2283&Search=&Attribute=57B72539-416B-42B1-8ABF-A55600B827AC,&Page=1>

The PA should refer to the threshold document and may check with a social care practitioner in our Adult safeguarding hub on 033 022 28400 (professionals only).

Regardless of the decision of the Adult Safeguarding Team, if it is identified that the risk of serious harm is 'high' a risk of harm assessment and safety plan should be completed. This should be recorded on the young person's mosaic record and shared, according to information sharing protocols, with other relevant person responsible for ensuring the safety plan is delivered.

If the risk of serious harm is 'high', the young person will be considered at the monthly Management Oversight and Risk Meeting and safety plans put in place. The plans and actions in place will be recorded on the action log and reviewed at each meeting until risks to the young person reduce. Case supervision between the PA & TM will be conducted monthly, as a minimum, and evidenced on the mosaic record.

Out of Touch Young People

Firstly it is important to note the difference between young people we have 'lost touch' with and where we are 'out of time with statutory contacts': The latter is where the statutory 8 weekly visit is overdue. We know where the young person is living and what they are doing; we may be in touch with them via text or phone or via other intelligence. This matter is not covered in this section.

Lost touch is where we do not know where the young person is or their circumstances and we are unable to contact them and they are not responding to the contacts and efforts we make to contact them. Young People under 18 cannot be regarded as out of touch they are missing and required actions are set out in Children's Services Missing Procedures. There are a range of reasons why we might lose touch with a young person. Some deliberately go "missing", for example young people may leave accommodation in order to avoid actual or perceived actions by the United Kingdom Border Agency to detain them for removal from the UK. Young people may refuse to engage and make themselves unavailable and some will refuse the service and request to 'sign them out of service'.

If the young person is out of touch the PA must discuss this with their manager at the earliest opportunity. The PA and their manager will assess the level of risk and always consider making a missing person's report to the Police via 101. If a decision is made not to report them then this with the rationale must be recorded on Mosaic and be reviewed weekly. The Police will decide on the basis of the information they have if the person is missing or absent and will lead and advise on the strategy to find them.

PAs must continue to make all reasonable attempts to contact the young person and attempt to re-engage them. Good practice will use all of the following strategies where appropriate:

- Weekly call to the last known number
- Phone known family of friends (refer to relationships listed on Mosaic)
- Monthly letter to the last known address
- Monthly knock on the door at the last known address
- Speak to neighbours of last known address
- Use Facebook messenger (LCS account) or other social media to make contact
- Contact last known school / college or employer

All attempts to contact the young person should be documented on Mosaic and the young person should be discussed at monthly supervision until they are found and have re-engaged. In addition to the steps above, when Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers young people go missing, the UK Border Agency and Home Officer Case Worker should also be informed. The young person's solicitor should be contacted to request current contact details if held and to notify them that the young person is missing or absent.

Where the young person goes missing, refuses to engage or makes themselves unavailable; this must be considered a significant event and a Pathway new plan developed that details what steps will be taken over the next three months to find and re-engage the young person.

The Pathway Plan review will document the agreed strategy to locate the young person and also be written 'as is' to document the most recent information we have available for each section. It should be written in the words of the PA as opposed to the 1st person.

Subsequent three-monthly reviews should then review those actions and then continue and/or develop fresh ones. The Pathway Plan should also detail what services would be available should the young person be in touch so that if s/he came to the attention of the Out of Hours Service or duty they know how to respond.

Once located and engaged a new plan will be required to detail the services and support to be provided.

Unfortunately some young people in care do go missing and are not located. Those young people who are over 18 years and have been missing for more than 6 months will be reviewed by the LCS Group Manager and relevant Team Manager. If the actions and process above have not identified any information which could locate their whereabouts then the Group Manager may agree that young person will no longer be allocated a PA or have a Pathway Plan. The decision making process and rationale must be recorded by the Group Manager and signed off by the Service Leader.

The LCS TM will ensure we continue through the helpdesk to make enquires on whereabouts a six monthly basis with any relevant adults and services including Home Office legal representative and Police who know the missing young person. The findings of these enquiries must be recorded on mosaic and shared with the Team and Group Manager who will then review and consider and record if a PA and Pathway Plan are required or not.

Young People who refuse Leaving Care Services

You may be working with young people who refuse to engage with their PA and say they do not want to receive a service. This can be for a variety of reasons and these should be considered to explore the best approach. It may be that the young person is very settled and independent and feels they need very minimal support, or it could be they have difficulty building trust with professionals and relationship will take longer to build.

Whatever the reason may be, our statutory duty remains to keep in touch with this young person until they are 21 and attempt to visit every 8 weeks. Whilst we cannot force a young person to see their PA, every attempt should be made to engage with that young person, build a relationship and keep in touch.

If you have a young person who is refusing support you must discuss this with your team manager. Your team manager will explore with you different approaches to use and if they still refuse contact, will arrange to meet with the young person to look at a way forward for future engagement.

Support for Care Leavers in Custody or Secure Estate

Where a relevant or former relevant child enters custody, pathway planning must continue. The young person must be visited on a regular basis by the PA. The first visit must take place within ten working days of their being placed. The role must not be fulfilled by a YJT worker. The establishment should facilitate the visits, and PAs should be afforded the same status as legal visitors. The responsible authority must liaise with criminal justice services to support the young person emotionally, practically and financially whilst in custody. Payments of £20 per month will be made to any young person placed in prison without a family support network.

All young people will require the responsible authority to contribute to the plan for their resettlement on release. It is good practice wherever possible to carry out a review of the pathway plan at least a month before release in order to give sufficient time for pre-release planning. Plans should be in place so that the young person is able to move into suitable accommodation, with the right kind of support, on release from custody.

Where a care leaver is remanded or sentenced to custody, the following steps are likely to be necessary to ensure that they can access suitable accommodation on their release:

- PA to inform Placement Finding Team and the accommodation provider and discuss options.
- PA to liaise with the local authority's housing advice/homelessness service to obtain expert advice on the young person's options.
- If the young person is remanded or serving a short sentence, consideration should be given to retaining the young person's accommodation placement for their return on release.
- If this is not possible or appropriate, steps should be taken promptly to give up the accommodation according to the requirements in the tenancy or license agreement and collect and store the young person's possessions. This will prevent a build-up of rent arrears and/or assumed abandonment by the landlord, both of which may lead to the young person's eviction in their absence, resulting in more limited housing options on their release and an amassing of debt.
- Where the young person's previous accommodation has been given up or lost, alternative accommodation should be identified and be available to the young person on release. It will only be possible to plan for care leavers' wider needs, including planning the support they'll need to divert them from further offending, if a stable base has been secured for them.

It is the PA's responsibility to inform the Care Leaver as soon as possible and ideally no later than 14 days before release of the following:

- who is collecting them;
- where they will be living;
- the reporting arrangements;
- sources of support – including out of hours;
- arrangements for education or employment;
- arrangements for meeting continuing health needs;
- arrangements for financial support;
- when they can expect to see their PA;
- the roles and responsibilities of the respective leaving care and youth justice or probation staff.

It is essential that there is collaboration and clarity about who is responsible for each element of the young person's plan. The PA should record these arrangements as part of the pathway plan and make copies available to the young person, the supervising YJT officer, Probation Officer and the

establishment and other agencies involved with supporting the young person after release, including, wherever appropriate, their family.

A toolkit for HMPPs staff supporting care leavers in custody provides a framework to improve joint working can be found at <https://www.nicco.org.uk/directory-of-resources/toolkit-for-supporting-care-leavers-in-custody>

Community Support and Supervision from Youth Justice/Probation

Leaving Care Service must remain involved during any period of supervision by the YJS/Probation Service. The supervising YJS or Probation Officer involvement will be determined by the length of any order and the care leaver's offending behaviour rather than their wider needs.

Young people are vulnerable in the early days after release and will need help to:

- readjust to living in open conditions;
- meet the requirements for reporting and surveillance;
- sort out finances;
- settle into accommodation;
- negotiate work or college;
- re-establish relationships with family and friends;
- avoid situations where offending may occur.

It is helpful to have some joint appointments with the care leaver, supervising YOT/Probation Officer and the allocated PA, so information is shared, and services are delivered in an integrated manner

The PA and supervising YJT/Probation officer should keep each other informed of significant events, including any changes in service delivery or plans revising the risk assessment and risk management plan. Whilst the care leaver continues to be supervised by criminal justice services, it is good practice to include the supervising YJT/Probation officer in reviews of the pathway plan.

It is important to involve the young person in deciding who should participate in their review. However, should they wish to exclude their supervising YJT/Probation officer, the PA would need to understand and agree their reasons and rationale and, in any event, ensure the information from supervising professionals is included in a review.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

PAs have a significant part in the prevention of harm to children and young people, along with safeguarding and promoting their welfare. All staff must know: the signs and symptoms of concern and how to respond to a child or young person who discloses abuse; and what to do if they are concerned about a child or young person. PAs must work to the West Sussex Children's Safeguarding Procedures For all Leaving Care Service staff these procedures are mandatory,

West Sussex Continuum of Needs and threshold guidance, which are found at: https://sussexchildprotection.procedures.org.uk/assets/Documents/ws_continuum_need.pdf This tool assist practitioners working with children and young people identify a child's level of need and consider whether additional support may be necessary to help them achieve their potential and keep them safe. It is used by all agencies, including MASH, and provides a common language and approach that will enable all practitioners to work together effectively and consistently. Thresholds for Referral to Children's Social Care and escalations as set out in the Safeguarding Children Procedures.

PAs are required to recognise and respond to different types of harm including Exploitation Neglect Physical Emotional and Sexual harm relating to care leavers who are under 18 years and children they come in contact with as part of their role including the children of care leavers. Information regarding identifying abuse and neglect of a child under the age of 18 years old can be found

at:<http://www.westsussexscp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/WS1953-Threshold-Guidance-2018-v08.02.19-AW-amends-FEBRUARY-2019.pdf>

PAs have clear lines of reporting for any safeguarding issues. through their line manager who will act as a source of support, advice and expertise in making appropriate timely and good quality referrals to MASH/Children's Social care. All safeguarding issues need to be brought to the attention of a manager as soon as possible and in no case should this be longer than 24 hours. This should include making contact by phone not only email to ensure the manager has received the information and can respond. Referrals to Children's Social Care should be made in accordance with the [Making a Referral Procedure](#).

The LCS PA Training Pathway identifies the appropriate level of child protection training for the role and sets out in the training requirements Training at the identified appropriate level is mandatory for all LCS staff. The manager must ensure all staff have accessed have read and understood the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and West Sussex Continuum of Need 2018 Thresholds.

Care Leavers who are Parents to be or Parents

PAs will support and help young people prepare them for parenthood and ensure they access all appropriate universal services While we do not pre-judge parents to be, the outcomes for babies and children of a parent who are disadvantaged including those who are care experienced can be less favourable. Alongside support for Care Leavers staff need to be aware of any risks to their children both pre and post-natal.

The PA should discuss with their line manager all cases where a care leaver is an expectant parent to ascertain and agree what actions are needed based on risk. This requires the PA to refer the mother or the father to Children's Services MASH as soon as the PA is aware of the pregnancy. The MASH will make a decision based on the referral and background information if a threshold is met for Child and Family Assessment this will be carried out by a Social Worker.

The PA should make the young person aware of the referral; however, we do not require consent for the referral to happen. The Personal Adviser should continue to inform their line manager through supervision and regular discussion regarding progress as the pregnancy progresses.

If the MASH decide that a Child and Family Assessment proceed then the PA may be required to provide information for the assessment If the MASH decides an assessment is not required or concludes that a Child and Family Plan is not required then the matter will be closed to Social Care The unborn / new born child may be subject to an Early Help plan.

PA should not be involved in meeting direct responsibilities regarding children of care leavers that are subject to Child in Need or CP plans i.e. completing and reporting visits to the child as part of their visits to Parents. The PA must to be mindful of risks of harm and if they have concern regarding a child to immediately raise this with their Line Manager and Children's Social Worker or MASH.

Care leavers have access to additional support through the Young Parent's Pregnancy Pathway. This offer is provided by the Early Help and Family Nurse Partnership. At the point the PA is aware of the pregnancy alongside making a MASH referral the PA must notify the Early Help Hub lead Family Nurse Partnership (FNP for Young Parents to inform them of the pregnancy.

The Young Parent Pathway is available on the SharePoint site [here](#)

Care Leavers with Children subject to Care Proceedings

When a Local Authority is concerned that a parent or carer is not meeting the Childs' needs, they may be subject to a Child and Family Plan or Child Protection Plan. PAs will typically be involved in such plans and reviews in their role as providing services to the Care experienced parent. In some circumstances, Child Protection plan may result in pre proceedings. These are usually initiated a letter before court proceedings or 'public law outline letter' to the parent or carer and followed by a formal meeting. PAs should not offer or attend any pre court meetings or court hearings with care leaver with children in proceedings. PAs needs to be clear with young people and other professionals that they are unable to undertake this role. PAs will support the young person in accessing advocacy and support [here](#)

A PA working with a Care Leaver parent going through proceedings is in a difficult position; it is important they continue to work with Care Leaver regarding their Pathway Plan. The advocacy service and legal representative is best placed to support the Care Leaver as a parent in proceedings. A PA must keep their line manager informed about their involvement with care leavers with children in proceedings. PAs are members of West Sussex Children's Services and therefore must not accept any requests by parents or children or other professionals to provide reports or statements. Any requests must be made to the Service leader through Legal Services Should PA / Team managers receive such requests these must be raised and discussed with the relevant WSCC Social Work Group Manager and Legal Services.

If the child is removed from the care of young person, a consultation should be made with the PAUSE Manager for consideration for allocation of a worker. This will usually be done by the Line Manager.

Stable and Safe Accommodation and Prevention Homelessness

This is fundamental requirement of young people and a priority. This guidance is underpinned by a Joint Working Protocol for Care Leavers (JWPCL) between WSCC and the 7 District and Borough Housing Authorities along with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Long term accommodation needs should be planned at an early stage with effective information sharing and joint planning meetings between LCS, Local Housing Authority and the young person. We should offer a joined up response to care leavers at risk of becoming homeless and prevent the use of unsafe and inappropriate accommodation

Where a risk of breakdown in accommodation is identified, the PA will contact the Local Housing Authority (LHA) to work together to prevent homelessness, typically this will be a joint meeting with the relevant authorities and the young person and identify both preventive actions and consider alternatives. Homelessness legislation places duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas and provide homelessness services to all those affected. Care leavers under the age of 21 are automatically in priority need, unless they are 'relevant students'

The JWPCL defines an accommodation crisis for care leavers are over 18 as a same or next day eviction or accommodation breakdown. The process for initiating the joint assessment is with LCS who will contact the LHA to arrange a meeting If initial presentation is out of hours it is the LCS to source accommodation through Commissioning Placement Finding team

Bed and Breakfast Accommodation

West Sussex Children's Services does not place care leavers in B&B accommodation or endorse this practice. Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities updated 2/6/2020 states B&B's including hotels and nightly let accommodation with shared facilities, are not considered suitable for care leavers under 25 and should only be used in exceptional circumstances and for short periods.

If a Local Housing Authority (LHA) offers B&B this should be escalated to Team Manager to take up with Senior Housing officer in line with the protocol to identify an alternative. If this is not resolved LCS should immediately refer and request suitable emergency accommodation from WSCC Children's Commissioning and encourage young people to take up such accommodation

If a care leaver is placed in B&B by a LHA (including those who presented independently to a LHA and placed) then the following actions are required

- The PA to notify their line manager or in their absence another manager and record on Mosaic same working day
- PA to contact the Local Housing Authority and notify them the young person is a care leaver and request joint work to pursue a move on for them
- PA to visit them in their accommodation within 3 working days and with LHA officer identify any risks / issues and mitigation and agree a move on plan within an agreed timescale.
- A summary of any risks their mitigation and move on plans be recorded and shared with young person and relevant partners placed on Mosaic as a Case Note and endorsed/ signed off by the Team Manager
- The young person circumstances the plan and the progress of move onto suitable accommodation will updated regularly by the PA in discussion with the young person and LHA and other key partners
- Team Manager oversight and review of plan and the progress will take place weekly and recorded as a Management Case Note. TM will escalate if required
- Group Manager will review plan and progress with Team Manager and PA at least 2 weekly and record as a Management Case Note and escalate to Service Lead

Support under Extended Duties

If a young person requires extended support or is continuing in education past their 21st birthday then they can remain open to the service and receive support up until their 25th birthday. The criteria for receiving support under education is that the young person is on an accredited course that is a minimum of 12 hours a week or more.

As the young person approaches age 21, their PA will discuss with them whether they wish to continue to receive support beyond age 21. Where the young person does want PA support to continue the pathway plan should be reviewed and updated to reflect their current needs. PA support should continue to be provided for as long as it is requested and required or until they reach age 25. The level of support that each care leaver will need differs depending on their circumstances. If the young person does not want or require support on an ongoing basis, the case will be closed until the care leaver makes another request for support. The Personal Advisor will discuss the exit arrangements, including ongoing contact, with their line manager and the case will be closed. Care leavers may return to the local authority at any point after the age of 21 up to age 25 and request PA support. (Extending Personal Adviser support to all care leavers to age 25 statutory guidance for local authorities, February 2018)

While the local authority is not under a duty to provide PA support where a care leaver has not accepted the offer, there may be cases where a PA considers that a young person needs support to

avoid putting themselves or others at risk of harm. In these cases, a plan to monitor will be agreed by the team manager, with the appropriate agencies.

Pathway Planning for Extended Duties

In all cases where the Leaving Care Service is approached for support, a record should be produced and recorded initially on mosaic, setting out the issues discussed, so that the Leaving Care Service can demonstrate what action they have taken in response to the young person's request for support.

Once a needs assessment has taken place, details of any support that the local authority has agreed to provide will be recorded in a Pathway Plan format. However, a full pathway plan will not be necessary in every case. As with care leavers aged 21 or over who are currently receiving support because they are in education and training, it may only be necessary to complete the relevant section of the pathway plan. This approach can be used where a young person requests support that relates to only one aspect of their life. Where a young person is experiencing a number of problems and is likely to require on-going support, a full pathway plan may be completed.

Frequency of Contact under Extended Duties

The frequency of contact between PAs and care leavers will vary depending on the nature of each individual's circumstances. The issues which have arisen that are affecting the care leaver will dictate how often pathway plans will need to be reviewed and updated, but as a minimum this should be at least every six months.

Financial Support under Extended Duties

Extended duties does not introduce new responsibilities in relation to finance or accommodating care leavers. Any support already provided by other local authority Departments, such as Housing and Adult Social Care, should therefore continue to be provided and funded by the relevant service. We will work with Care Leavers to access relevant funding but will not administer funding itself. The Personal Advisor should discuss with the Team Manager about the Young Person having access to their SUHA under extended duties.

Former Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children Extended Duties

Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 makes particular categories of people ineligible to receive leaving care support, because of their immigration status. If a former UASC care leaver has not been recognised as a refugee or been granted any other valid form of leave to remain and becomes "appeal rights exhausted" (ARE) they will fall into a category of "ineligible person" listed in Schedule 3. The Home Office ceases to provide leaving care funding to the local authority three months after the individual becomes ARE. In these circumstances, the local authority will only be able to continue to provide support to the extent necessary to avoid a breach of the person's rights under the European Convention on Human Rights. Therefore, the new duty **does not** automatically apply to all UASC.

Case Closure

All case closures should be discussed with the relevant line manager and agreed well in advance. Personal Adviser should ensure that the pathway plan is reviewed within the final six months to agree what needs to happen in this final period and what the PA and young person will do to identify appropriate support for the young person going forward. Under no circumstances should it be rushed, or the young person is made to feel that they are reaching a cliff edge. It is good practice to plan an ending session with the young person to celebrate the end of their relationship with the personal adviser.

When appropriate to cease services and close the young person, the young person should be provided with a letter from the Service Lead found [here](#) or on SharePoint. The PA may also provide a personal letter from them, detailing any specific arrangements for how the young person can access support

going forward and who from. The Personal Adviser must close the case on Mosaic guidance on SharePoint [here](#) provides detail of screen shots for this process.

Financial Support for Care Leavers

A guidance document is available from the LCS SharePoint site [here](#) which details the financial arrangements / entitlements for care leavers.

Client Engagement Expenses

PA's are expected to meet the young person in their placement/ home or at locations that do not incur a cost to the authority and are private to enable confidential discussions to take place while adhere to our lone working guidance and meet the needs of the young person. Examples include, FIO centres, WSCC office locations and libraries. When this is not possible it may be appropriate to meet that YP in a public location such as a café. In these circumstances Personal Advisers may purchase refreshments for young people. Refreshments are defined as a drink and something to eat, such as a piece of cake. The PA may also purchase themselves a drink (not food) when meeting with a young person.

PA's are issued with P cards enabling them to pay for items. Alternatively, PA's can pay in cash and claim back through the expenses system. We do not hold petty cash to reimburse PA's directly. If the young person requires emergency sustenance, a meal may be purchased for the young person up to the value of £5. If further food is required, please refer to the financial guidance document. PAs should inform the Team manager when they have made such arrangements

Religious and Cultural Festivals

Young people may require financial support to take part in religious or cultural festivals, which may involve travel to be with friends and family or the purchase of particular items. The service will support these through payments to a maximum of £50 per year where they form part of a planned activity. This should be discussed with the young person and included in their pathway plan. The Leaving Care Service does not support travel costs for regular worship or attendance at church / mosque.

Birthdays and other celebrations

Birthdays are an important milestone that as corporate parents we should celebrate with the young person. Personal Advisers can purchase small gifts for young people for their birthday and at Christmas or other key religious festival up to a value of £15. We will also buy a small gift for birthday and Christmas for any children of our care leavers. Personal Advisers should recognize key events and points of celebration by sending a greetings card.

Identification Documents

The service will fund a Passport/renewal Passport and Driving Licence for over 18's. Under 18's should approach their social worker and be paid for the CLA budget. The Leaving Care Service now has an internal arrangement for the provision of birth certificates. Should a young person need a birth certificate the normal £10 fee will be waived on application by stating on the application that the young person is a care leaver. The Team Managers are certified officers and will be able to verify the entitlement. The application form can be found on 'The Point' [here](#)

Compliments and Complaints

Every young people has the right to make a formal complaint and if this happens they should be directed to the complaints procedure which is available on the WSCC website [here](#) using the printable or online form. In the event that you receive a complaint this should be discussed with your manager, the complaint logged and responded to within the required timeframes. Staff may have compliments written to them in the form of a letter or e-mail these should be sent to the Team Managers to be logged.

Advocacy

PAs must consider the use of the advocacy service for young people in the above which can be a useful resource to help the young person articulate concerns and find a mediated way forward. Further details of the advocacy service can be found on SharePoint [here](#).

Access to Records

The Data Protection Act 1998 says all personal information must be dealt with properly, however collected, recorded and used, whether on paper, in a computer, or on other material. The Act gives anyone the right to find out about the information held about them. West Sussex County Council provides access to files and records for care leavers, to enable their understanding of their personal history, the reasons for their care and increase their sense of identity.

At 18 a young person can request access their social care records and will need to put a request in writing. PA's can support this process, the request form which needs to be sent to the Access to Records Team. Personal Advisers must be aware that the narrative which social work records contain could be emotive for young people and careful planning will be required when they are provided their records. It is recommended that the Personal Adviser should ensure adequate support is in place for the young person with this to help them understand what they are reading and to answer any questions that they have.

Information Sharing

Sharing information with other agencies is vital to keeping children and young people safe. All staff have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children and young people. Where possible, we share information with consent, however under the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018 you may share information without consent if, in your judgement, there is a lawful basis to do so, such as where safety may be at risk. All staff must be aware of the 'Information sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services' 2018 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice> and will apply the seven golden principles of information sharing. Namely it is Necessary and Proportionate, Relevant, Adequate, Accurate, Timely, Secure, Recorded.

PA's are not authorised to share social care records with young people or other agencies without following process, to notify the Team manager and advise MASH of requests.

Staff Conduct Personal and Professional Boundaries

West Sussex County Council set out expectations of all employees regarding conduct and requirements that apply to how we work [here](#). All PA's have a responsibility to comply with behaviour in the workplace requirements maintain clear professional boundaries regarding relationships and take steps to understand and apply these.

Particular areas of risk and vulnerabilities should be discussed with your manager, appropriate control measures put in place. Maintaining personal and professional boundaries is a crucial consideration when working with young people. Remaining "in role" at all times minimises the likelihood of false, or unfounded allegation and ensures that professional codes of conduct are adhered to. Respecting the personal space and privacy of all young people is critical, examples to avoid include:

- Unwarranted or unwanted touching
- Initiating, permitting or requesting inappropriate or unnecessary physical contact with a young person (hugs, kisses, tickling, or facilitating situations which unnecessarily result in close physical contact

- contact with care leavers outside of reasonable working hours, including by telephone unless with prior consent from a Manager
- Inviting, allowing or encouraging pupils to attend your home.
- allowing access to personal social networking internet locations and personal devices
- PA's should ensure that any risk of violence, abuse etc. is recorded on Mosaic using the alert function and that team managers are made aware Safer Working Practice

Safe Working Practice

The safety of both staff and young people is of the highest priority. All staff have a shared responsibility to ensure safe working practices. Staff have a legal responsibility for their own health and safety and others who may be affected by their actions or your failure to act. Staff must co-operate with the policies, codes of practice and other rules put in place. The West Sussex Safer working policy and lone working policies [here](#) should be applied.

PA's working alone in any location used by the LCS. When working in a WSCC office there will be occasions when staff will be working alone. Staff must not see young people when there are no other PA's/other professionals in the building under any circumstances. PA's conducting home visits either out of office hours or during office hours. Working with children and young people can carry potential risks, which could arise from a range of sources such as; young people, parents/carers and other family members, a young person's peers and associates, or members of the public. PA's will use their training, service guidelines and professional judgement to reduce the potential exposure to those risks and to maximise personal safety.

PA's should be aware of for their own safety and plan visits and consider available information before a visit. This should include a check on the relevant recording system. When planning to visit a young person of concern contact other agencies involved in their case, particularly youth justice or probation to ascertain if a young person is assessed as a risk to staff and how this can be managed.

Details of the visit must be written on the PAs electronic diary sheets (client initials; location; expected time of return). When there is a safety concern PA's must speak to a manager to make a joint decision on whether to complete the visit, and if the meeting should take place in a safe office location.

When undertaking any home visit at any time, PA's should observe the following:

- Always carry your identity card on visits outside the office.
- Always carry a charged mobile phone.
- Where possible, give the young person reasonable advance warning of your visit and the reason for it.
- If you get an aggressive reception at the door, do not enter.
- During the visit, if necessary, ask for dogs and other pets to be secured and excluded.
- Be aware of the layout of the house and exits, try to sit in a chair closest to an exit (preferably the front door of the property) in case you need to leave quickly).
- Stay calm and try to ensure that you remain in control. If you feel you are losing control, prepare to leave before the situation becomes too difficult.
- Be mindful about where you put your belongings as you may need to leave quickly,
- If you are threatened or attacked, withdraw if possible and seek appropriate assistance. Once you are safe please let a manager know straight away and they will debrief with you and when you feel able will support you to complete a violent incident report form, record the incident on the case file while the incident is still fresh in your mind.

If PA's find themselves in a dangerous or threatening situation, they should remember that their safety is paramount. The advice therefore is not to restrain the person causing the threat and to remove them from the situation as quickly as possible.

PA's should then use their professional judgement to call the police or their manager or a duty manager.

If PA's has had a difficult experience where they have been threatened or assaulted, they should immediately contact their line manager to discuss appropriate support.

An Incident Form should be completed, and updates should be placed on Mosaic at the earliest opportunity either by the PA or their manager.

A risk assessment will need to be completed before any PA is able to work with that client again. PA's will be supported following a dangerous or threatening situation.

Co working and Buddy systems

A buddy system should be used for visits to young people outside of normal working hours. Inform your Buddy (another PA) about the visit before you leave for the home visit and ensure they have the full address where you will be and the estimated time of your return. The buddy will be another PA who expects to be office based for the period of the home visit or if it is after hours a manager that has agreed to be contactable by mobile. When your visit is completed you must contact your buddy to 'sign out'. If a PA doesn't sign out: The buddy should contact the PA and leave a message if no response. If there is still no response after 10 minutes, then the buddy should try any alternative contact details they have for the location or client. If still unsuccessful then the buddy is to contact the team manager immediately. If unavailable, then contact any other team manager or senior manager.

Emergency Contact Details

It is the responsibility of the Personal Adviser to ensure their line manager has up to date contact details for them and their next of kin, including current address, personal telephone and mobile phone numbers. Personal contact details will be kept securely and will only be used when absolutely necessary, e.g. an emergency situation or to keep in contact during a period of sickness or during maternity leave.

Transporting Care Leavers

When transporting young people or their children in a car you should ensure the following:

- Ensure your car is safe and registered with WSCC for business use.
- That your ID badge is on the dashboard.
- That where appropriate you have obtained parental consent (under 18, if this is not possible please discuss with your line manager)
- If transporting an infant with parent that the parent has supplied, you with a British Standard approved car-seat, you cannot use your own for this.
- Everyone within the car must wear a seatbelt at all times.
- Ensure you adhere fully to the Highway Code i.e. speed limits and traffic signals.
- If you have a convertible the roof must be up when transporting clients
- Ensure you are driving legally and safely (no mobile phone use whilst driving)
- Should an incident occur you should call your manager when safe to do so.
- No more than three young people can be transported in a car at any one time.

Storage of Belongings

The Leaving Care Service are unable to store belongings for care leavers. However in some exceptional circumstances we may need to facilitate storage of a limited amount of items This will be assessed on

a case by case basis and only agreed where the care leaver has absolutely no other alternative it is for a very short period and there is storage space available.

Where the service do not know the whereabouts of the young person any belongings left behind will be inventoried and taken and stored in secure storage for a period of 3 months after which they will be disposed of if no contact is received from the young person. In this event two members of staff will together pack belongings and complete an inventory. Every attempt will be made to contact the young person and to re-unite them with their belongings before this happens. The request form for items to be stored can be found [here](#)

Leaving Care Service Help Line

The Leaving Care Service operates a helpline staffed by Personal Advisers available from 9am until 5pm Monday to Friday. The help line is available to care leavers, practitioners and partner agencies. **The phone number is 0330 222 2004.** Outside of these hours, the line will automatically divert to the Children’s Services Emergency Duty Team, who will respond accordingly.

All Young People should be given a GEM card at their first meeting with the PA; this has the helpline number on the back. PA’s should ensure that all young people are made aware of the phone number and in the event that the PA is unable to respond to the young person, they should be encouraged to contact the helpline to help resolve any urgent issues. Young people must be made aware that the helpline is for emergencies only. If it is a non-urgent issue, they should leave a message for the PA to call them back. For further information see Helpline guidance for staff [here](#)

Review / Contacts / References	
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