**Luton Vulnerable Care Leavers protocol update May 2024**

**Contents**

1. **Aim**
2. **Cohort**
3. **Process of identification**
4. **V.C.L. Support post 18**
5. **Review of V.C.L.**
6. **Frequency of meeting**
7. **Accountability**
8. **Aim**

The aim of the protocol is to be confident that Vulnerable Care Leavers are identified and supported whilst they are in care and as a care leaver. Likewise, their pathway plan is implemented in a way that avoids drift and delay and address the issues linked to the V.C.L. status.

Likewise, to support planning and enhance the Vulnerable Care Leavers transition from being a Child Looked After to an Adult V.C.L.

The aim of the protocol is to ensure the young people remain supported and their plans are reviewed with independent oversight of their pathway plan form the 18+ I.R.O.

1. **Cohort**

Since April 2022, Luton Social Care now have a dedicated service to young people who have left care and are assessed as Vulnerable Care Leavers. This is the role of the 18+ Independent Reviewing Officer, whose role includes the continued monitoring of progress and review of their V.C.L. status along with their Pathway Plan.

It is a fact that some of our most vulnerable young people in and those who leave care, have ongoing complex and challenging needs; it is therefore vital that the Local Authority identify V.C.L. at an early stage.

All our care leavers are vulnerable to a certain degree examples of additional vulnerability could be the following such as: C.S.E. Substance misuse, Criminal Exploitation, gang Affiliation, Menta health issue, Separated Migrant Children, Children with disabilities, Children with E.H.C.P.

1. **Process of Identification**

Within the existing C.L.A. review process I.R.O. Team Manager, Social Workers can identify a Vulnerable Care Leaver. In the first instance discuss your worries with the young person and family. Once the nature of the vulnerabilities are identified you can then work with the young person to plan the intervention. It is vital that the planned intervention is reviewed on a regular basis to assess the effectiveness of the plan.

We want to ensure that there is seamless additional support available to our most Vulnerable Care leavers.

At this point the 18+ IRO will record on L.C.S. under hazard dropdown, put a note on case summary.

The V.C.L. will be graded on a R.A.G. rated basis i.e. red, amber, green, this will be based on level of need / risk.

1. **Vulnerable Care Leaver Support including post 18**

A Vulnerable Care Leaver can be identified before their 18th Birthday however f this has not occurred then at the final review of the young person will be asked if they wish the 18+ I.R.O. to be involved to support them.

Young person’s decision will be clearly recorded on the last C.L.A. Review, or if after this period a case note. If yes,

The 18+ I.R.O. will create a new involvement in L.C.S. from the date the role is likely to start - this can be set for a future date e.g. the date of their 18th birthday or the date they will be leaving care is a ‘Relevant’ young person. This additional support will begin once they are identified as V.C.L. and will continue with them until they reach 21 / 25 years or their V.C.L. status is reduced. This support and intervention will ensure that there is no drift or delay within their Pathway Plan, & a smooth transition into adulthood is achieved for these young people. The process for identifying, supporting, and tracking Vulnerable Care Leavers is in place. There is a clear pathway to refer to Adult Social Care in relation to post 18 Care needs. This additional support will ensure that no young person “Falls through the Gap”

1. **Review of V.C.L. status**

At each review of V.C.L. and Pathway Plan review case review the 18+ Personal advisor and the young person if present will confirm the continued involvement of the 18+ I.R.O, up to the age of 25 years or earlier as requested by the young person.

The young person can withdraw their agreement to have an 18+ I.R.O. involved in their plan at any time. The 18+ Personal Advisor will update the I.R.O. with any changes in the young person's plan.

It is noted that the V.C.L. status can change over time i.e. red may move to amber, or the other way around.

**6. Frequency of Meetings**

The 18+ I.R.O. will endeavour to review all V.C.L. at least once every six months for red case; between nine and twelve months for Amber, and as necessary for green cases additional meetings may be held but the 18+ I.R.O. involvement will be at the discretion of the service.

**7. Accountability**

This protocol is accountable to:

* Young people who wish to remain involved with the 18+ I.R.O. Service.
* Practice Manager of the Independent Review Officers.
* Head of Service
* Assistant Director of Children's Services