

Policy to promote the welfare of young adults leaving our care

Children's Services



Revised: July 2019

Due for Review: July 2021

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Purpose of this Policy

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 was enacted in October 2001 and amended the Children Act 1989 to implement the proposals outlined in the 1999 report 'Me, Survive, Out There?' by the Department of Health. It significantly increased the powers and duties that local authorities had towards young adults who have left our care to ensure they were properly supported through their transition into adulthood. The 'Every Child Matters' framework (2004) built on this, and had, as two of its five priority outcomes for young people, 'to make a positive contribution' and 'achieve economic wellbeing', both essential elements of a successful transition from public care to independent living.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and amended by the Planning Transitions for Care Leavers guidance 2010 was established to improve the life chances of young people as they leave public care. The Act seeks to do this by:

- Delaying discharge until a young person is prepared and ready to leave care.
- Improve the assessment and planning and preparation for leaving care.
- Provide good personal support to young people leaving care.
- Improve the financial arrangements for young people leaving care.

The Act also makes clear the responsibilities for the local authority to act as a corporate parent and it defines for the eligibility to services.

The new seven **Corporate Parenting principles of the Children and Social Work Act 2017** will also apply and are incorporated into Bexley's own corporate parenting strategy. These are:

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

The London Borough of Bexley commitments to young adults leaving our care (see Appendix B) was devised with our young adults to further develop the range of services and support Bexley provides in supporting and enhancing the life opportunities for our young people leaving care.

Young adults leaving our care should expect the same level of care and support that other young people would normally receive from their birth parents. Our strategy is based on the principles of good corporate parenting by removing some of the practical barriers that young people leaving our care face as they progress into adulthood. We have explained our [local offer](#) to young adults leaving our care in simple language.

The standard of services for these young adults will be measured and defined by the quality of their experience when leaving care and how our support helps improve their life chances. This should reflect the preparation we facilitate before they leave our care as well as the services and support they will receive as they leave care.

In meeting our corporate parenting responsibilities to children and young people cared for by the local authority, it will require coordination with other departments and services that Bexley provides, such as housing, education, and public health services. This is necessary to provide a holistic support package for young people as they leave care and become young adults.

Bexley children's services works with the Signs of Safety practice model. In recognising that children looked after will be likely living in safe and supportive accommodation, the model has been adapted as Signs of Success within the leaving care service. This means when assessing information, we are looking at what the worries are for a young adult, what is working well for them, and what needs to change to improve their outcomes and future life chances. We are solution focused, in that we explore ways to help move away from problems or difficulties by focusing towards better and safer outcomes. In other words, we don't just focus on the difficulties, rather we work towards creative solutions, recognising any signs of success where things are working well from which we can build upon.

Positive Journeys Senior – Care Leavers Forum

Positive Journeys Seniors consists of young adults who were in our care that meet every fortnight to discuss ways to improve the lives of other young people who are looked after and are leaving our care.

The Forum is jointly led by Young Director (who is a care leaver), the Participation Officer. They are supported by Jenny Molloy (herself formerly looked after, expert adviser, author and Participation Consultant).

Forum members are currently working on a number of projects to influence change in the design and delivery of services that affect them. Some projects already developed by the forum include the Care Leaver Commitments, Care Leavers Handbook and the "bitesized" handbook in the form of a pocket guide.

The forum has also created a supper club which meets on a monthly basis where young adults can learn life skills such as purchasing and cooking meals. Guests will be invited to attend (ie: managers, personal advisers, or other professionals) where they can share information about services available to young adults and to hear the views and wishes about the support or training they would like

The forum also works with the Bexley Corporate Parenting Board, the London Children in Care Council and the London Participation Network.

Forum members also help deliver the Total Respect training to other professionals who work with young adults leaving care and children looked after. The purpose is to help professionals understand the care experience from the perspective of our young people and adults. This helps them to develop important skills in presentation, public speaking, and advocacy.

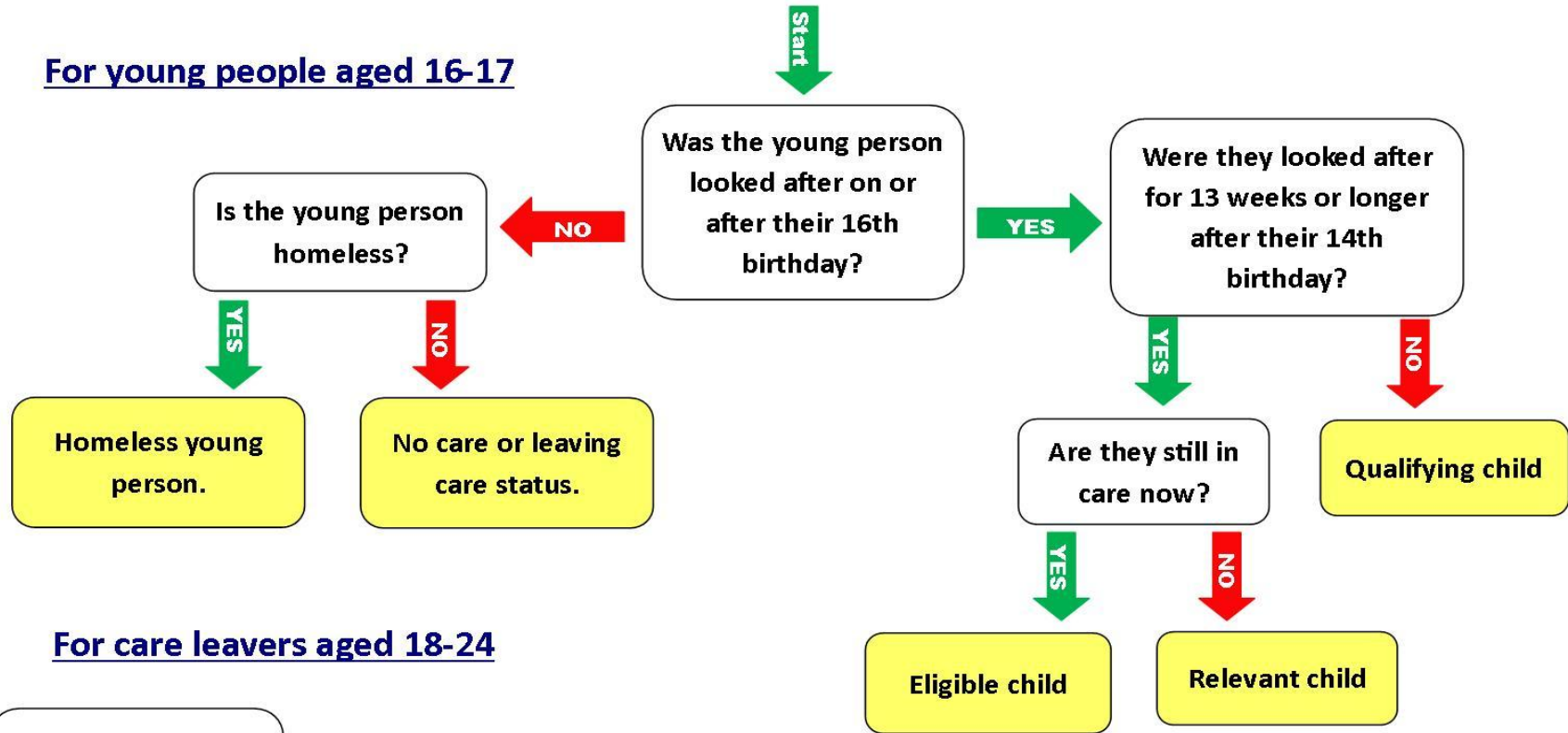
Personal advisers should encourage all our young adults to consider joining or participating in the work and meetings of Positive Journeys and any who are interested should be directed to the participation officer at: Natalie.Eastwood@bexley.gov.uk

Key Objectives of this Policy

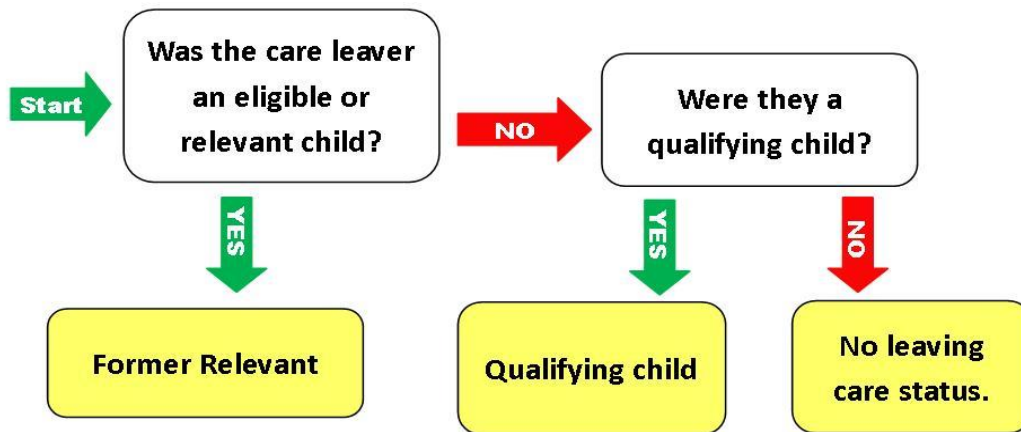
In supporting our young people into independence and adulthood, this policy aims to:

- Outline our [local offer](#) to young adults leaving our care
- Help young people remain in foster care for as long as possible, with moves to semi-independence or full independence taking place only when the young person is practically, mentally and emotionally equipped to make this transition
- Promote and maintain relationships with carers, families and social networks after young people leave care
- Prepare young people to be ready to leave care by supporting their development of practical self-care and life skills, health, budgeting, domestic skills and personal relationships
- Maximize the education, training and employment opportunities for our young people
- Ensure that our young people leaving care have access to a range of accommodation which is more appropriate to their individual needs, and they are supported in gaining the resilience and skills to maintain their housing
- Ensure that there is a contingency provision to support young people leaving care in the event of a crisis or when things do not go according to plan
- To provide and enable ongoing personal support. This will include the support of a specialist leaving care social worker or personal adviser, support from Bexley Council's training and career services and the support from a specialist NEET adviser
- Where young adults leaving care are entitled to claim welfare benefits, support will be provided to help them complete the process so as to ensure that they receive their full entitlements
- Involve our young people in a meaningful and clear way in their assessments, pathway planning, review and decision making arrangements for leaving care
- Inform our young people leaving care of their rights and available services, including how to access advocacy support or making complaints
- Continue to review and evaluate the outcomes and progress of any support or advice given to see if it is helping our young adults live as independently and successful as possible within their abilities and means

For young people aged 16-17



For care leavers aged 18-24



Determining Leaving Care Status

Section I – Leaving Care Entitlement to Support

*** Note: For the remainder of this policy, “care leavers” will be referred to as “young adults.”**

Defining Leaving Care Status

Eligible Child

- 1.1 Any child aged 16-17, who is looked after and has been looked after for at least 13 weeks (one off or cumulative) since the age of 14, and who are still looked after on or after their 16th birthday. As an eligible child they will be entitled to the full support provisions of a young adult leaving care upon reaching their 18th birthday as outlined in Sections I, II and III of this policy until they reach 25 years old.
- 1.2 Young people who are on a secure remand are also considered looked after and thus this time counts towards determining if they are eligible. Young people who are looked after under a Care Order, regardless of where they are living, will still be an eligible child (ie: child placed with parents but still subject of a Care Order).

Relevant Child

- 1.3 Any child aged 16 or 17 who is not now looked after but was looked after for at least 13 weeks (one off or cumulative) since the age of 14, but are no longer looked after on their 16th birthday. They are entitled to a pathway plan, a personal adviser, and a needs assessment along with support with accommodation and maintenance until they reach 25 years old.
- 1.4 Young people aged 16 or 17 who have returned home will remain relevant children for the first six months of returning home. If they become looked after again before they are 18 they resume being a relevant child.

Qualifying Child

- 1.5 Any child who left care on or after their 16th birthday, but were looked after for less than 13 weeks (one off or cumulative) since their 16th birthday. It also includes any young person who was still subject of a Special Guardianship Order until they reached 18 years of age and were previously looked after before the granting of the order. It also includes relevant children who have returned home for six months or more. There is a duty to keep in touch with our qualifying young people and to offer advice and assistance with education, training and employment if needed. Legislation states that housing accommodation if required should be provided for higher or full time education if required. Pathway planning is not required unless support moves from qualifying to relevant or former relevant. Financial assistance can also be provided in exceptional circumstances. Guidance on types of financial support to be considered can be found in the section entitled “Finance and Savings”.
- 1.6 Young people who have been privately fostered or accommodated by a voluntary organisation can become qualifying if they leave after reaching the age of 16, and if it appears that the private foster carer or voluntary organisation does not have the capacity to offer the young person on-going support. Social Workers who supervise Private Fostering placements should be aware that young people may be entitled to a service under this policy. The social worker should reach a view whether or not the private foster carer has the capacity to continue to advise and befriend the young person and this view should be recorded. In the event that the carer has the capacity, no further action needs to be taken, other than arrangements to keep in touch with the young person. In the event of the carer not being considered to have the capacity, the young person should be referred, via the social worker to children's social care via the MASH team.

- 1.7 Young people can also become qualifying if they were cared for in a health authority establishment, or residential school provided by the local authority for a consecutive period of three months. Any overnight stay away from the establishment with a person with parental responsibility will “stop the clock” and the three months period will start again on their return. In order to be qualifying the young person has to be discharged from the establishment or school after reaching 16, although the three consecutive months can have been at any time during their stay.
- 1.8 The local authority does not need to provide assistance to qualifying children who were not looked after, provided the authority is satisfied that the people who did care for them have the necessary facilities to adequately advise, support and befriend them. Such young people do not need to be provided with vacation accommodation under the Children Act 1989, although they may be entitled to general assistance under Section 24 of the Act. Should the previous carers not be able to assist and the young person would otherwise qualify for vacation accommodation, then there is a duty on the local authority to provide housing accommodation.
- 1.9 A qualifying young person who was educated in a residential school as a result of a statement of educational needs (SEN) or education, health and care plan (EHC), or who had been a long stay patient, who is undertaking a course of higher education, or residential further education, might have to be provided with vacation accommodation. It is unlikely that health services will be able to provide vacation accommodation, thus this may fall to the local authority to provide. For these young people a discussion needs to be had with adult social care to explore joint allocation of support between their Shared Lives service and the Leaving Care service.

Former Relevant Child

- 1.10 Young adults aged 18 to 25, and who would be eligible or relevant if they were under 18 years old, are former relevant. Former relevant children are entitled to a personal adviser to advise, befriend and support through their pathway plan and as outlined under Section II and III of this policy.

Exceptions

- 1.11 If the young person is no longer living at home as an agreed and informed decision they have made and have since lost their accommodation and approach housing, they will be deemed homeless. They may be entitled to assistance under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, however the housing department will be responsible for finding accommodation and the young person is not deemed to be looked after.
- 1.12 Leaving care entitlements do not apply to young people who have been accommodated under an agreed series of short breaks. These are usually children with a disability who have been accommodated for respite. To qualify as a short-term break the child must have been accommodated in a series of pre-planned episodes in the same placement, for less than a total of 120 days per annum. No individual episode to be longer than 28 days and the child must return to the care of a parent or other person with parental responsibility.
- 1.13 Young people, whose short breaks exceed 120 days per annum, or 28 days per respite placement, are considered to be looked after and this time will count towards determining their leaving care status.

Role of the Personal Adviser

- 1.14 The role of a personal adviser is to advise, support, and befriend young adults leaving our care. The nature of the support provided by the personal adviser will be agreed with the young person and outlined in their pathway plan. The pathway plan will be comprehensive by covering all the areas of a young person's needs outlined in Section II - Types of Support Offered and any relevant aspects within Section III – Additional Challenges to Independent Living.

- 1.15 In supporting a young adult leaving our care, the personal adviser will need to help develop and work with their support network. This may include family, friends, cultural or religious organisations, employers, education providers, and other support services or professionals.
- 1.16 The personal adviser helps the Council continue to fulfil its corporate parenting responsibilities to the children and young people it has helped to care for and protect from abuse and neglect. This should be at the forefront of all work undertaken, especially when working with other departments within the council that also provide services our young adults may come to rely upon (ie: housing).
- 1.17 The personal adviser is responsible for ensuring all young adults leaving our care are provided with a copy of the Bexley Care Leavers Handbook, which more clearly explains our [local offer](#) of support to them that is contained within this policy.
- 1.18 A personal adviser will be co-allocated from the Leaving Care Team to a young person when they reach the age of 16 years. The personal adviser will attend any pathway plan and looked after review meetings with the social worker before the young person reaches 18 years of age. Their role will be to advise on the quality of the pathway plan and how it will support the young person's transition into young adulthood and independent living. The personal adviser must satisfy themselves that key areas are addressed within the plan including; preparation for independence (such as clarifying where the young person will live once they turn 18), sourcing suitable education, employment or training opportunities, and resolution of any immigration issues. **Personal advisers must not be relied upon to step in for any other meeting or decision making process that would normally be the responsibility of the social worker.**
- 1.19 Where the personal adviser feels that the pathway plan is inadequate or has concerns that specific issues have been inadequately addressed they should discuss these concerns with the allocated social worker and IRO within 24 hours of the statutory review or receipt of the pathway plan, whichever comes first. In the event of any dispute about the content of the plan the relevant team managers must discuss the concerns raised. Where disagreements remain the team managers should discuss the concerns with the Service Manager or Head of Service who will agree next steps.
- 1.20 From the age of 18 the personal adviser will assume case responsibility and help review, implement and revise the pathway plan with the young adult as their needs change. Regulations prevent a personal adviser from completing any assessment of need or developing a pathway plan for any young person under the age of 18 years old.
- 1.21 It is in the best interest of a young adult to have a say who their personal adviser is and to maintain the same personal adviser for as long as possible. Changes in personal adviser should only be made by agreement or request of a young adult. However, in exceptional circumstances where this is not possible (ie: long term illness or personal adviser changing jobs) any changes in personal adviser should be managed as smoothly as possible by giving as much notice and planning as possible. Whenever there is a change in personal adviser, the team manager and new personal adviser need to understand the potential impact a change in worker can have on working relationships with a young adult and the people they are living with. In some cases these can be opportunities to develop new and stronger working relationships. In others, it can harm relationships where time and trust are needed, especially given the young adults' past life experiences of being looked after, thus taking much time to rebuild. Changes in personal adviser should never happen without informing the young adult as soon as possible and should always be justified in how it will achieve the best long term outcomes for them.
- 1.22 In fulfilling their role, the personal adviser will need to visit each young adult as frequently as needed in order to give the best chances of seeing their pathway plan successfully achieved. The minimum requirement for visits will be:
- First Visit:** Within three weeks of a young adult moving to new accommodation, or where a personal adviser is newly allocated,

Second: Within four weeks of the first visit following a placement move or new allocation of a personal adviser,

Subsequent: For young adults aged 18-20: At least every month
For young adults aged 21-25: At least every two months

- 1.23 The minimum requirements for frequency of personal adviser visits may not be appropriate for all young adults in all situations. For example, in situations where a personal adviser is newly allocated to a young adult, more frequent visits may be needed in order to develop a meaningful rapport. In others, a young adult may be experiencing periods of crisis such as risking losing their housing or dealing with substance abuse. Young adults may also request less frequent visits, especially in situations where they demonstrate good levels of stability and independence skills. The personal adviser in consultation with their manager and young adult should use professional judgement in deciding if it may be prudent to make more frequent visits. Any agreement to reduce visits to less frequent than every two months must be first discussed and agreed in supervision. The head of service must then be provided with a written request to seek approval and this will be then placed on the young adult's file. It is expected that for visits that are less frequent than every two months there should be agreement on how the personal adviser can keep in contact with the young adult via phone or other means at least every two months.
- 1.24 All visits need to be recorded on the young adults file within the relevant guidelines of the [Case Management and Recording policy on Tri-X](#).

Importance of Pathway Plans

- 1.25 The Children Act 1989, Guidance and Regulations, Vol 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers and Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 places duties on local authorities in how they are to support young adults leaving our care. Each young person who qualifies for services under the Leaving Act 2000 will have a pathway plan that will specify what services and support are needed for those aged 16 to 25 leaving our care. Statutory guidance states that;

“The Pathway Plan should be pivotal to the process whereby young people map out their future, articulating their aspirations and identifying interim goals along the way to realising their ambitions. It will also play a critical part in making the new arrangements contained within the Act work”.

“The Authority should work to ensure that the plan is owned by the young person and is able to respond to their changing needs and ambitions. It should look ahead at least as far as the young person's 21st 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”.

- 1.26 The pathway plan is pivotal in helping young people and young adults to set goals that assist them with their future development of life skills and independence. It is essential they are involved in the development of their plan and that it is both aspirational and inspirational in meeting their future life goals. Before reaching the age of 18 there will need to be a careful balance between the wishes and views of the young person and what is believed to be in their best interest. It should be seen as a live and engaging process that is continually evolving as the needs and wishes of the young adult does.
- 1.27 All pathway plans for young people (under 18 years of age) must be completed by the social worker with the young person. Although the personal adviser should be part of any pathway plan review for young people, they are not permitted by law to construct or modify the pathway plan or needs assessment for a young person until they reach 18 or older and become a young adult.

- 1.28 Before the pathway plan is devised, reviewed or revised, an up to date assessment of their needs must be completed. This will help to identify the areas that are working well, what is not working well, and thus what needs to change or improve for the young person to inform their pathway plan. The plan needs to be comprehensive and cover the areas outlined in Section II: Types of Support Offered. It is important that the pathway plan also draws upon and includes the support network of any family, friends, and professionals who will assist them in achieving the pathway plan goals and that their responsibilities are clearly known to them and reflected in the plan.
- 1.29 The initial pathway plan must be completed by the young person's social worker within three months of a child's sixteenth birthday, or if over sixteen then within three months of becoming looked after. A pathway plan must also be completed within three months of a young adult returning for support post 18 years of age. The pathway plan must be reviewed at least every six months or sooner if there is a significant change. The pathway plan must be reviewed and updated prior to the next looked after review meeting taking place that is chaired by the independent reviewing officer (IRO). The IRO will be responsible for reviewing the latest version of the pathway plan within the looked after review process to ensure it meets the requirements set out in this policy until the young person reaches 18 years of age.
- 1.30 The pathway plan must be inputted on the case file of a child looked after or a young adult according to the Liquid Logic process. It is most important that the pathway plan is written in a manner that a young person or young adult will best understand and be able to follow. This means careful consideration must be given to aspects of their language skills or barriers, cognitive abilities, any disabilities or other impairments that may impact on their ability to understand their plan. This will require consideration as to the length of the plan, which goals are prioritised, the language and terms used, acronyms or abbreviations, and creative means to communicate the plan such as using words and pictures.
- 1.31 The pathway plan will use the Signs of Success framework. This will focus on: what is working well, what we are worried about, what are the signs of success, and what needs to change or happen. It is important to be specific in each area so the young person or young adult is clear about what is meant in each area. The actions need to have specific and aspirational outcomes of what we hope to achieve, what the timescales are to achieve it, and who will help the young adult achieve it. Actions may also include those necessary to help a young adult be aware of and keep safe from the risks of harm or exploitation.
- 1.32 Although a young person or young adult must always receive a copy of the pathway plan that Liquid Logic produces, it should never be assumed that the format the system prints is always best for them to follow. This will require a personal adviser to be creative in providing a more bespoke version of the pathway plan that the young person or young adult is best able to follow as well as those who are helping to support them. Both versions must be inputted into Liquid Logic.
- 1.33 The pathway plan must be reviewed at regular intervals at no less than every six months. However, this is a minimum requirement and should not always be seen as the ongoing target. There are many factors that may necessitate the plan being reviewed sooner, such as a significant change in circumstances (ie: housing move or change of worker), by request of the young person or young adult, or by the request of the social worker or personal adviser. Where a significant change occurs, the pathway plan should be reviewed and revised accordingly within one week, or later if at the request of the young adult. If there is doubt about what constitutes a significant event warranting a review of the pathway plan, the personal adviser should consult with their team or service manager.
- 1.34 All young adults will be encouraged and supported to lead their own pathway plan review wherever possible and practical. In doing so they should be assisted in identifying what are the key considerations of support to cover within their pathway plan. These should be bespoke to the goals and wishes of the young adult, stated in a solution focused way, and must consider contingency plans should things not go according to plan.

- I.35 Young adults should be allowed to determine who else other than their personal adviser should be part of their pathway plan review. Where there are concerns for their mental capacity to make particular decisions, the Mental Capacity Act applies and the personal adviser should take the lead with the review process. Considerations and accommodations should always be made to help allow a young person or young adult to participate in and construct their pathway plan to the best of their ability. Such accommodations may include the use of interpreters, advocates, or using words and pictures.
- I.36 The pathway plan review must cover all areas in Section II: Types of Support Offered and it must clearly record an update in each area in a manner that shows it was considered, discussed, and amended as appropriate. The young adult's views of each aspect of their plan must also be recorded, even if it is to state they are happy for a specific action and goal to continue for them. The pathway plan review must also consider any relevant issues covered in Section III: Additional Challenges to Independent Living.
- I.37 There should be no surprises in the review meeting for the young adult presented by their personal adviser. It is expected that discussions would have taken place between them in advance so there is general agreement as to what the plan is likely to entail at the time of the review meeting.

Transfer Process

- I.38 For the process of preparing for the transfer of case responsibility from young people in the Looked After Children service to young adults in the Leaving Care service, please refer to the [Starting to Prepare for Independence guidance](#).

Section II: Types of Support Offered

Health, Emotional, and Behavioural

- 2.1 The pathway plan needs to consider the holistic health needs of young people and young adults. This includes their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. For young people still in care, their health needs should mirror that in their looked after care plan.
- 2.2 As a young person approaches adulthood it is important to make preparations for how their health needs will be taken care of and supported. Particular consideration needs to be given to the fact that services only available to those who are under 18 will not be applicable to those who are over as this will now be the responsibility of adult health services. For example, mental health services provided by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) will now be assumed by adult mental health services post 18 years of age.
- 2.3 Planning for this well in advance to provide as smooth a transition of services as possible is important to maintaining the health and wellbeing of young adults. To support this transition, the looked after nurse with Oxleas NHS Trust will send the social worker a health template to complete on or before the young person reaches 17.5 years of age. The social worker will then complete this within one month and return this to the looked after nurse so they can generate the health passport for the young adult. As part of this process, it will be important to connect with the appropriate adult health service that the young person may transition to and invite them to the second last looked after review meeting as well as the corresponding pathway plan review meeting.
- 2.4 As a young person becomes an adult they will need to be supported in understanding their responsibilities for registering for health services and encouraged to do so in a supportive way with an understanding of how this contributes to their good health and wellbeing. This may include registering with a local GP surgery, dentist, opticians, substance abuse and sexual health services. For young people with additional health needs it will be important to locate and register with the appropriate specialist health services in the area they will reside in as a young adult. For example, if a young person has asthma, it would be advised to locate a GP surgery that has an asthma clinic or specialist nurse. It will be important for them to have their health passport to help inform any health services of any health conditions or treatments the young adult has had or will need.
- 2.5 We recognise that making positive health choices can be hard for anyone and it can be especially hard for care leavers who may not have their full health background and history. This will be especially true for those case leavers with an unresolved immigration status. Because of this the health passports produced by health colleagues are so important. This document contains all the information about immunisations, operations, medical conditions, allergies, etc. that a young adult will need. Each health passport is given to the allocated personal adviser who must sign for it and give it to the young adult within one week of receipt. They must then record on the file that they have done so. These important documents should not be simply left with someone. Young adults must be offered the opportunity to discuss the information their health passport holds or to even meet with a health professional if they wish to discuss it or understand it further.
- 2.6 The personal adviser should encourage and support young adults to engage with health services and treatment on the same basis as if they were still looked after. This will include supporting a young adult to connect with counselling or therapeutic services via their GP or other means should they have emotional or psychological difficulties they are displaying or expressing. The personal adviser should offer advice and support to a young adult about the benefits such support could offer them, especially as this may be often linked to their past care and home life experiences. However, young adults will be the ones that ultimately decide which health or counselling services

they choose to engage with and how often. Where it is known or there are concerns about a young adult's mental capacity, the personal adviser should refer to Section III: Additional Challenges to Independent Living.

- 2.7 The leaving care team, in partnership with other agencies, will ensure that all young people leaving care have sufficient knowledge and access to services to enable them to take good care of their health. This must be holistic and include such areas as physical, mental, sexual and dental health needs.
- 2.8 In supporting young adults with disabilities or mental health conditions, please refer to Section III: Additional Challenges to Independent Living.

Education

- 2.9 The pathway plan needs to consider the educational goals of young people and young adults. This should relate to what their future learning and career aspirations are. It will be important for the social worker to identify this for young people and that this informs the future support work provided by the personal adviser post 18 years of age and up to the age of 25 years old.
- 2.10 We have a duty to assess the needs and support young adults in education until the age of 25, by which time they should have completed their education or training. However, the local authority may decide to extend support past the age of 25 in exceptional circumstances where it is considered appropriate to do so. For example, where it is important to furthering any career for a young adult that was highlighted within their previous pathway plan. This will be on a case by case basis and will need to be approved by the Resource and Care Panel as soon as this is identified in the pathway plan, or no later than one year before the young adult's 25th birthday.
- 2.11 There are three main options available to all young people aged 16+ provided by all local authority education departments. These are **academic studies** (for university qualifications), **specialist and vocational qualifications** (for tech level qualifications needed for skilled trades), and **work-based study** (for direct employment related experience as an apprentice, intern or trainee). This section will focus on academic education routes, whilst the other two are covered in the section called "Employment and Training".
- 2.12 For young people pursuing the **academic study** route in education they will need to be supported in completing their A-Level courses in order to enrol in university or apply for general qualifications that support university endorsed qualifications. Whilst in care this will be informed and supported by the young person's personal education plan (PEP), which should largely inform the educational goals and aspirations of the pathway plan. The government has set up a National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) to provide further information on education and career advice and support to our young adults. Further advice and support can also be found on the Universities and College Admissions Service (UCAS). For these and other providers see Appendix A.
- 2.13 Bexley young adults leaving our care will also be eligible for a higher education bursary of £2,000 if progressing on to higher education (university). Young adults will also be able to receive additional funds to support them in remaining in higher education. Details of these can be found under the section called "Finance and Savings".
- 2.14 For young adults who have discretionary leave to remain in the UK as a result of being an asylum seeker and wish to seek higher education support, please refer to the section "Immigration and Settlement" further in this policy for additional information on financial support.
- 2.15 It is important to keep in mind that for many young people and young adults the thought of pursuing academic studies can often be both exciting and a daunting experience. Their personal adviser will need to be mindful and understanding of this when supporting young adults with their

educational pursuits, especially in times where they experience self-doubt or anxiety. This can often contribute to poor emotional or mental wellbeing. A focus on their strengths and signs of success will be important to include in the pathway plan to help keep young adults focused and inspired in achieving their educational and future career goals. It may also be necessary for the personal adviser to increase their support or explore referrals to mental health services with the young adult should the need arise.

- 2.16 The Children and Families Act 2014 outlined a reform programme for providing educational services and support for children ages 0-25 years old with disabilities or additional learning needs and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC). For young people and young adults in this situation, it is important to refer to and follow the [Bexley Children and Young People Aged 0-25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities policy on Tri-X](#).

Employment and Training

- 2.17 As stated under the section "Education", there are three main options available to young people for education and training opportunities. This section will focus on **specialist and vocational qualifications** and **work-based study** routes to training and employment opportunities.
- 2.18 It is important that all young people and young adults are encouraged and supported with identifying their career goals and future learning aspirations. The pathway plan should therefore have a clear connection between the goals in education and that of employment and training. Academic routes are not the only route to future career opportunities. Many young people and young adults will choose more specialist and vocational trades to work in.
- 2.19 A full list of post-16 education and training providers can be found on the UCAS Progress website. The site offers easy access to students on all providers and courses, including course details and entry requirements. Individuals can create a personal profile so to store all information, make multiple applications and track offers. Details for UCAS can be found in Appendix A.

Specialist and Vocational Qualifications: Tech level employer endorsed qualifications for those wanting to specialise in a particular industry or sector and technical certificates that are needed before starting a tech level or entering a skilled trade.

Work-based study: Apprenticeships which are paid employment that has a training component which leads to

- 2.18 Bexley Council can offer work experience and apprenticeships across a range of departments. There are also a wide variety of community and employer based opportunities to young people and young adults. Further details of providers and opportunities can be found in Appendix A.
- 2.19 Most young people will receive a National Insurance Number on or before their 16th birthday if they are resident in the UK

Housing

- 2.20 Moving home is one of the most stressful things any of us will ever do, so for young adults leaving our care and moving at such a young age can be especially stressful. The role of the personal adviser is to make the move as smooth and stress free as possible by talking to the relevant housing departments, providers and associations where possible, organising the receipt of the setting up home grant, and providing a helping hand to our young adults.

- 2.21 For an increasing number of young adults it will be important to consider Staying Put or Staying Close arrangements as part of their future housing needs. For details on these arrangements please refer to the sections below on both of these housing accommodation options.
- 2.22 The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Homelessness Act 2002 are designed to ensure that local authority children's services and housing departments work together to ensure that the accommodation needs of young adults are met.
- 2.23 The Housing Act 2002 states that a young person has a priority need for accommodation if he or she is:
- A person under 21 who was (but is no longer) looked after by the local authority between the ages of 16 and 18 (except relevant students).
 - A person aged 21 or more who is vulnerable as a result of having been looked after by the local authority.
- 2.24 The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and accompanying regulations and guidance also detail how the local authority strategy for housing young adults leaving our care should take into account:
- The diverse accommodation and support needs of our young adults
 - The capacity to offer young adults a degree of choice of accommodation
 - Existing and planned provision of safe affordable accommodation
 - Any gaps in housing provision
 - The need for contingency arrangements should a young adults housing become unstable
- 2.25 The personal adviser along with the housing department are jointly responsible for doing their utmost to prevent any young adult from becoming homeless. Regardless of their circumstance for losing their housing, they should always be considered priority need as part of the council's corporate parenting responsibility.
- 2.26 As corporate parents, Bexley Housing Allocation Team accepts young adults onto the priority housing list band A to ensure that young adults who are assessed as being fully prepared for independence can access their housing association tenancies at the age of 18.
- 2.27 It is acknowledged that some young adults, who have been placed out of borough for a significant duration of their care experience, may have relinquished links with their family and friends in the Bexley area and have established enduring links within the area that they have been placed. It may not be appropriate for such young adults to be expected to return to Bexley at 18, due their inability to access accommodation in the local area that they have been living. In situations such as these, an application for social needs housing is to be provided to the allocations department of Bexley housing, with a request for a social needs referral to be negotiated with the appropriate borough, or local authority.
- 2.28 There can be varying levels of co-operation from other boroughs/authorities who have no duty to accept a housing referral. For those young adults who are unsuccessful in obtaining social housing via this route, a request should be made to the head of service for looked after children for support to provide rent in advance and a deposit for private tenancy accommodation so the leaving care grant does not have to be used. Attention needs to be paid to the level of rent payments and that these are within the housing benefit allowance level post 18 years of age.
- 2.29 The personal adviser must review the accommodation of any young adult at least every four months. This should be done during visits with the young adult. However in cases where visits are agreed to be less frequent, then reviewing the housing accommodation can be done by checking in with the young adult and their housing provider by phone or other means on a four monthly basis, unless the young adult is adamant this is not to happen. If this is the case, this needs to be agreed in supervision and clearly recorded on the young adult's file.

- 2.30 Whenever a personal adviser or their team manager becomes aware that a young adult is in rent arrears of two weeks or more, or their benefit claim has not been completed, they must alert the service manager or head of service of this within 48 hours. In this way we will be able to explore how we offer support and guidance to the young adult and it will enable us to take a multi-disciplinary approach to the problem that avoids the young adult incurring further debts or being at risk of losing their housing.
- 2.31 There are monthly housing review panel meetings held between the Leaving Care Team, the allocations service manager and the property procurement manager in Bexley. The aim of these review meetings is to discuss:
- Referrals and tenancy nominations for our young adults.
 - Progress with young adults bidding for allocations.
 - Ensure support with monitoring tenancies\rescuing lost tenancies.
 - Ensure rent payments are up to date.
 - Monitor, review and project future referrals and demands for housing need.
 - Discuss any concerns and problem solve to seek solutions.
- 2.32 The monthly meeting will also jointly assess and meet the diverse housing and support needs of young people leaving care. Young adult's leaving our care are automatically classified as priority status Band A for housing accommodation and should receive accommodation within three months of an application being accepted or by the time they reach 18 years of age.
- 2.33 Referrals to the housing review panel need to be made by the time a young person reaches 17.5 years of age to begin planning. The social needs quota (SNQ) letter along with a risk assessment (see Appendix C & D) must be completed and sent to the leaving care team manager for approval. The manager will then forward this onto the regeneration communities and customer services team of Bexley council.
- 2.34 When making a SNQ housing referral it is important to carefully consider whether private leased housing is the best option for any young adult if they are in employment due to the possible increased costs. This should be discussed in supervision prior to the referral being made.
- 2.35 If Staying Put or Staying Close arrangements are being explored and negotiated, a referral for housing should still be made. This can be put on hold as part of contingency planning in the event the Staying Put or Close arrangement is not agreed.
- 2.36 Young adults who are looking to attend university may also qualify for university accommodation and utility bills being covered for up to three years by the Unite Foundation. Details can be found in Appendix A.
- 2.37 For our young adults aged up to 25 years old we will have a duty to provide continuing assistance, regardless of whether they are still in education or training. Housing services will have a duty to provide accommodation if the young person becomes homeless through no fault of their own and is vulnerable (and in priority need) as a result of having been in care.
- 2.38 For young adults with disabilities, mental ill health, or special learning needs there are meetings held every three months between managers from the leaving care team and Bexley housing to share information on our most vulnerable tenants living independently in order to best promote their safety, stability, and well-being.

Finance and Savings

- 2.39 The social worker is responsible for developing a clear and individual financial plan with young people before they leave our care. This plan will outline what the likely expenses are for the young person as they approach adulthood. This plan will include such expenses as rent, utilities, food, travel, personal care, clothing, and any others needed to provide for their basic care and support their good welfare. The plan will be reviewed as part of the transfer meeting to the leaving care service. This plan will continue to be reviewed by the personal adviser with the young adult after they turn 18 and revised as their life and financial circumstances change.
- 2.40 The social worker is responsible for ensuring that any benefits a young person leaving our care is entitled to, such as universal credit, are applied for at the earliest opportunity (usually one month before their 18th birthday) so that our young adults leaving care don't accrue debts that will impact on them for some time to come. Personal advisers will play a key role in providing further assistance to young adults in supporting their applications or helping to resolve difficulties in receiving benefit entitlements as young adults. Universal Credit is not paid to any claimant for five weeks but claimants can apply for a loan, which is then paid back directly from their benefits once they commence. However; to avoid young adults falling into debt and taking this loan where UC is claimed we will provide young people claiming UC with the single person amount applicable for their age until their benefits complete.
- 2.41 Young people and adults should be encouraged to sign the "Consent to Share Information Agreement" (see Appendix G), which allows us to support them by talking to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and housing providers so that we are alerted as soon as a claim is not completed or a rent payment is missed. Whilst young adult's can refuse this support we must emphasise the supportive aim of the agreement and that we will not routinely access information about young adult's of a sensitive nature.
- 2.42 Young adults who are currently awaiting the outcome of an asylum application, are a lone parent, or have a registered disability or mental illness should be able to apply and receive any available government benefits provided by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS), child benefit, or disability living allowance as applicable.
- 2.43 Young adults aged 16 to 17 who are relevant and not in foster or residential care will be entitled to receive subsistence payments from the Leaving Care Team once their financial needs have been discussed and reviewed with any adult they are living with. The amount of any subsistence payments or educational loans will be based on an assessment of financial need of each young adult using the form contained in Appendix E of this policy and must be agreed by the head of service. Young adults aged 18 and older will be expected to apply for income support benefits or obtain employment. It is therefore important for the personal adviser to assist with applying for benefit payments as soon as possible to avoid any delays in payments. As a good corporate parent, we will support young people and adults to access suitable education, employment, or training opportunities. Where they are not, we will review their support needs with them and their care provider. Financial support, where provided, will not exceed the Universal Credit limit.
- 2.44 If a young adult does not have a bank account to receive their benefit or subsistence payments in, their personal adviser should support them with opening one. In cases where a young adult does not wish to have a bank account, an agreement can be made for direct subsistence payments with management approval.
- 2.45 To set up any direct or BACS payment, the personal adviser should seek line manager approval and then contact the Finance Team in Bexley to enquire about the process for setting up the payment.
- 2.46 Young adults who are in full-time education are entitled to receive a £1200 bursary per year from their education provider from the ages of 16 to 19 years old. The personal adviser should assist

the young adult in enquiring about these bursaries with the education providers they are considering.

- 2.47 Any young adult attending a higher education (university) institution will also be entitled to receive a £2000 bursary per year from the Leaving Care Team whilst enrolled.
- 2.48 Young adults will be entitled to receive any savings that have been put aside into their bank savings account. They may also have additional money in a Child Trust Fund or Junior ISA. The annual limit on contributions to Junior ISAs for Looked After Children is £4368 for the tax year 2019-2020. This is in addition to their £2000 leaving care grant. This is normally used to further assist them with expenses that are associated with their ability to live independently, obtain training and employment, and/or to further their education studies.
- 2.49 All eligible young adults will be provided with a £2000 leaving care grant. The purpose of this funding is to help a young adult pay for a substantial expenses that will help promote their ability to live independently and achieve their future life goals. It is rare for this money to be given in one lump sum and it should be carefully planned, discussed and agreed with the young adult so the funds are spent in the most efficient and supportive way.
- 2.50 For young adults who are not in higher education, they will be encouraged to support themselves by working and earning wages or in actively seeking work and claiming job seekers allowance and housing benefit.
- 2.51 In addition to any benefit or subsistence payments received, young adults may also receive additional funding in the following circumstances, subject to a financial review:
- Travel costs for attending a training course.
 - Fares to job and education interviews will be provided to our young people not in education or training - NEET.
 - Travel warrant to support contact with family if located a significant distance outside of Bexley.
 - Current payment vouchers as follows:

18 th birthday	£40 in vouchers
19, 20, and 22-25	£15 in vouchers
21 st birthday	£30.00 vouchers
Christmas	£15 in vouchers.

These amounts are currently being reviewed and may be revised in future.

- 2.52 If our young adults are employed and in part time education the pathway plan should specify how funding for the course may be met. Young people must apply for all relevant grants and allowances and must be supported to consider whether they can self fund some or all of the costs of the course. In exceptional circumstances we may be able to help with the cost of their course. This will need to be discussed in supervision and with the service manager before being taken for approval at Resource and Care Panel.
- 2.53 If a young adult is working and they have difficulty paying rent we may be able to help or advise on what other sources of finance or support the young adult can access, including access to local Credit Unions/Citizens Advice etc. Any decision on the Leaving Care Team providing rent monies must be discussed with the Team manager and Service manager and subject to their agreement taken for discussion to Resource and Care Panel. The Young Director is excluded from this provision since it is an employment by the Council and provided by sponsorship.
- 2.54 Any funds that are provided to a young adult under this section must be clearly recorded on their file. This must clearly show when the funds were provided, by what means (ie: P Card BACS), who

it was it provided to, what it was provided for, and how it was agreed (ie: manager approval, panel decision).

- 2.55 Sponsorship of the Young Director is to enable their apprenticeship to be viable and their accommodation and living expenses to be affordable for the duration of their tenure, usually two years.
- 2.56 The Council has made a commitment to secure 10 apprenticeships across all departments for young adults leaving care, under its Opus scheme. Each Opus apprenticeship lasts one year and every apprentice under this scheme must have a financial assessment undertaken before they start so that their outgoings (rent/food/bills etc) can be measured against their income as an apprentice. Young adults living independently must claim housing benefit to assist with their housing costs. For some young people there might be a deficit (for example where they are living independently with high service charges etc) whilst for others (eg those living in Staying Put) the young person may have a considerable sum left once their contribution to the carer has been accounted for. Whilst on the scheme LB Bexley commits that each Opus apprentice will have the current level of Universal Credit each week left over once the financial assessment above has been completed. This money will be for the young person themselves and they will not be expected to pay any bills, food or housing costs from it. On occasions this may mean that the young person receives a greater top than the UC level if their outgoings are greater than their salary and any Housing benefit they may be entitled to. Some young people may not get any top up.
- 2.57 There may be other young people undertaking an apprenticeship and the same financial assessment must be undertaken by the PA. Additional financial support may be available but this must be discussed and agreed with the Service Manager and HoS before it can be finalised.
- 2.58 All financial support to apprentices outside the Opus scheme must be recorded and monitored in the appropriate place on the finance system by the team manager.

Personal Safety

- 2.59 The pathway plan should consider all reasonable aspects of a young adult's safety. Due to their life experiences, many young adults may have additional vulnerabilities to behaviours and relationships that may place them at risk. This may include substance abuse, anti-social behaviour, criminal activity, online bullying or exploitation, self-harm, domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, or gang activity. It is important for the pathway plan to clearly articulate what the safety concern or worry is, anything that helps reduce worries or provides safety, and what the plan of support will be to help enable a young adult to support themselves keeping safe. This needs to be articulated clearly, not in vague terms such as 'keeping themselves safe from harm'. Be specific as to what the worry or concern for safety is and what specific support will be provided to help young adults keep themselves safe. A risk assessment must be completed for all young people in care at age 17 using the form contained in Appendix D. This will be submitted with any application for social need housing.
- 2.60 There may be times where a young adult engages in risky behaviours, likely due to their vulnerability from their past care experiences. As adults they are legally able to make their own decisions, subject to having the mental capacity to do so, but the personal adviser's responsibility is to deter such behaviour and advise the young adult of their responsibilities and consequences of their actions. A harm reduction approach should be taken when working with young adults who engage in any risky behaviour. This means that even if we do not agree with the young adult's behaviour, we continue to support them in a way that helps to reduce the harm or consequence of their risk taking behaviour. It also means being clear with young adults about "red lines" where a

personal adviser will have to contact police, emergency services, or Adult Safeguarding services if the young adult is at risk of harming themselves or another person.

- 2.61 If there are concerns or questions about a young adult's capacity to make informed decisions that do not place themselves or others at risk of harm, please refer to Section III: Additional Challenges to Independent Living.
- 2.62 Where there may be concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a vulnerable young adult with disabilities or mental health conditions who have care provided for them by others, then a referral to adult safeguarding must be considered. The Care Act (2014) outlined that safeguarding adults is the responsibility of all professionals, similar to the expectations for safeguarding children. It will be important for the personal adviser to help provide personal and emotional support to the young adult through any safeguarding process, without interviewing them or others as part of the investigation process. The personal adviser may be required to be interviewed or contribute to any adult safeguarding investigation and assessment process.
- 2.63 Increasingly, more young people and adults are being recognised as victims of trafficking or modern day slavery. They may be coerced, forced, or deceived into working in such areas as construction, farming, car washes, shoplifting, the sex trade, and cannabis farms, usually being exposed to unsafe and illegal work conditions and paid below minimum wage, if at all. They may also be forced into living in accommodation provided by their exploiters where several other victims reside, often in unsafe, overcrowded, and unsanitary conditions. They may also be transported around to various other locations or countries where they will be further exploited and abused, where their exploiters will often control or sever their contact with family and friends. Personal advisers need to be aware of the risk factors for trafficking and modern day slavery and discuss these with their line manager where they believe a young person or adult may be at risk or actually exploited in this way.
- 2.64 Where there is evidence a young person or adult is being trafficked or enslaved, this should be reported to the police. The personal adviser should also seek consent from the young person or adult on making a referral to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) of the Home Office, which tracks victims of trafficking and modern day slavery and offers advice and support to them. There is a duty to refer to the NRM and referrals can be made anonymously if the young person or adult does not wish to be identified. Further advice and information can be obtained from the Modern Slavery Helpline. Details on the NRM and the helpline are contained in Appendix A. Further information can be found in the [Bexley Modern Day Slavery Strategy and Toolkit](#) on TriX. Victims who do not have citizenship or leave to remain in the UK may be worried about making a referral to the NRM. However, the Home Office may grant victims discretionary leave to remain where they qualify. This will be assessed by the Modern Slavery Human Trafficking Unit of the Home Office.

Identity, Social Presentation, and Self-care

- 2.65 The pathway plan needs to consider the young person's identity, social presentation, and self-care skills. It should be informed by how the young person or young adult identifies themselves and how they may wish to be supported in connecting with other groups or organisations that reflect and support their identity.
- 2.66 A young adults social presentation will inform your objective assessment based on how the young adult presents, expresses themselves, their physical appearance and their demeanor. This will be descriptive and should include perspectives from the young adult and the personal adviser as well as anyone else deemed relevant.
- 2.67 Self-care will be a crucial aspect of the pathway plan as this will explore what skills the young person or young adult can do independently or still requires ongoing mentoring and support with.

It is important that this is specific avoiding vague terms such as, "He has good independence skills." This should also be done in a progressive way, focusing on some self-care skills at a time to work towards and then identifying new goals and skills to work on next. For example, a pathway plan may identify working on cooking skills and personal hygiene. If those are confidently achieved by the next review, the pathway plan may then be modified to work on doing laundry and going shopping on a budget.

- 2.68 This will also cover whether the young adult has identity documents, such as passports and birth certificates. These should have been sorted well before a young person leaves care as they are crucial to a young adult getting access to vital services and benefits.

Family Relationships, Community and Support Network

- 2.69 Many young people may decide that they wish to return to or have more frequent contact with their birth parents or family members once they reach 18 years of age. Even if this was not advised or allowed before, as a young person becomes an adult they will increasingly make these decisions for themselves. Thus, this needs to be carefully considered as part of the pathway plan process so that re-establishing or increasing contact is not necessarily a sudden event that occurs once they reach 18 years old.
- 2.70 Many other young people will still maintain a positive relationship with their birth parents and family and thus want this to continue post 18 years old. They will also have friends that may also be part of their support network.
- 2.71 Some young adults may have siblings who remain in care. It will be important to explore what contact arrangements will likely be before a young person reaches 18 years of age. This will require coordination and agreement with the social worker for the siblings who are in care.
- 2.72 Young people and young adults will have likely made some of their own friends or may need to be supported with making new friends, especially if they are living in a new area. It will be important for the personal adviser to support young adults with ways they can explore making new friends, such as joining clubs, community groups, activities or connected with other young adults at the Bexley Care Leavers Forum or the Care Leavers Association (See Appendix A for details).
- 2.73 We may not always believe that those people young adults choose to associate with, be friends with or have an intimate relationship with are ones that are considered to be a positive influence. It may be necessary to have open conversations about this and share what our concerns are whilst understanding their right to determine who their friends are and accept the consequences of this. We must equally reinforce the positive influences and friendships our young adults have and how they contribute to their overall wellbeing and future aspirations. The charity Family Action also provides a mentoring service to young adults and details can be found in Appendix A.
- 2.74 Young people and young adults may also be encouraged or already involved with various community groups and organisations, such as a football club, mosque, church, or gym as some examples. They may also receive or be in need of support from other agencies or professionals, such as an advocate or careers adviser.
- 2.75 As the ultimate goal is to provide a young adult with as much independent living skills as possible, a key component of this will be to help them develop and strengthen their own support network they can turn to or rely upon when they need help or advice.
- 2.76 Regardless of the choices young adults make in relation to their own support and family networks, it is important we still see our role as corporate parents to young adults leaving our care. This will mean providing personal support and appreciation at significant stages or events during their life. Such examples will include sending a birthday card, making a "good luck" phone call or sending a

text message ahead of exams, or wishing them well on a job interview or first day on the job. In this regard, it is important the personal adviser sees their role as that of any other parent of a young adult leaving home and what ongoing support and encouragement one would expect them to provide in this regard, unless and to the point of which a young adult tells us to no longer provide this sort of support to them.

Independence Skills

- 2.77 It is important that young people are supported with their increasing development of independence skills that will enable them to live more independently into adulthood. This needs to be carefully planned in advance and incremental so as to avoid overwhelming a young person. For most young people, leaving care and living more independently is a daunting and anxious experience.
- 2.78 Planning for independence should be SMART. Generic statements such as, "they will be supported with independence skills" are to be avoided. Independence skills can encompass a variety of aspects of everyday living, of which each young adult will be more or less proficient in. Therefore, skills that they can do well should be specified along with those they need to further develop. They need to be achievable and realistic, thus it may not be appropriate to work on a long list of independence skills at once, rather there is a need to prioritise those to be worked on during each pathway plan review period.
- 2.79 As transitioning into adulthood and independent living can be both a liberating and daunting experience for many young adults, it needs to be acknowledged that this is a significant change in how they live and the new responsibilities they must assume. It is therefore crucial that contingency planning covers what support will be put in place when a young adult struggles or is not able to do all responsibilities expected of them living independently.

Contingency Plans

- 2.80 The focus of the pathway plan will be on what we want to see change or happen to help young adults be as supported as possible to become successful in later life. However, any good pathway plan must consider contingency, or the "what if?" scenario as not everything goes according to plan. This is especially important that young adults get the message that if one approach does not work, try something else until you find one that does.
- 2.81 Contingency plans need to be specific and relate to potential pitfalls or crisis situations that may arise. For example, if there is a risk of housing instability, the plan should be more specific than stating other housing will be sought. It should explore ways of preventing issues from arising, what a young adult should do when they do arise, and who will help support in the situation and what help is available and when. Contingency may include multiple options (ie: plan B, C, and D).
- 2.82 Contingency plans need to also establish what the bottom lines are for any support or service offered after which less or no further support can be offered. The range of options and consequences will need to be explained to a young adult as clearly as possible to allow them to make informed decisions and be responsible for the outcome. It is important for the personal adviser to present these options in a manner of helping a young adult make an informed decision for themselves and not in a way that is seen as a threat or attempt to intimidate a young adult into making what the personal adviser believes is a better option.
- 2.83 Contingency planning must also be included as part of any risk assessment and risk management planning. Such plans should identify risk indicators and potential difficulties young adults may face and include the appropriate support. Contingency planning should be flexible and sensitive to any problems and acknowledge the right of young adult to return later for support. The risk assessment should be placed on the young person's file and referred to within the Pathway Plan.

Staying Close

- 2.84 The government report entitled "Keep on Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence" published in July 2016 outlined a new pilot project to help young people in residential care settings to maintain contact and support with their former placement after they leave care. It further provides that young adults should be supported with identifying housing accommodation in the area near the residential care setting they were residing in.
- 2.85 In supporting young adults with staying close arrangements, it will require the social worker to begin planning for these arrangements when the young person reaches 17 years of age. This will mean working closely with the placements and fostering services to plan and reach agreement on what the support offer will look like for the young adult and how funding arrangements will be managed for these. Where a young person is in a residential setting or foster placement provided by private agency, this will require the respective agencies approval to any such arrangements. All support provisions for staying close arrangements will need to be approved by the Resource and Care Panel no later than three months before the young person's 18th birthday.
- 2.86 Staying close arrangements will be regularly reviewed as part of the pathway planning review process.

Staying Put

- 2.87 The primary aim of staying put is to promote a gradual transition from care to adulthood and independent living. As most young people in society will maintain contact and are increasingly given ongoing support from their parents and families, as an extension of Bexley's corporate parenting responsibility we offer opportunities for young people in care to remain living with their current carers after reaching 18 years of age. In cases where young people are residing in supported lodging, consideration will also be given as to whether they are provided with a staying put arrangement.
- 2.88 When considering a staying put arrangement, a discussion should take place within the looked after review meeting following the young person's 16th birthday with them and their foster carer. This will mean a significant change for both the young person and foster carer and thus will need time for each to consider this option carefully. This option should continue to be discussed at every subsequent looked after review until a decision is taken as to whether a staying put arrangement should be sought or has been decided against.
- 2.89 Although the aim is to minimise disruption and promote stability, moving to a staying put arrangement will likely change the dynamic of the placement as young people will usually be expected to take more responsibility for themselves and that the intensity of support will gradually reduce as part of supporting a young adult into independent living.
- 2.90 The decision to use a foster placement for a staying put arrangement will be made by the young person, foster carer and social worker by the young person's 16th birthday and no later than when they reach 17.5 years of age.
- 2.91 This decision will be subject to the foster carer's agreement to undertake specific independent living skill tasks with the young person in conjunction with the young person agreeing to take on areas of particular responsibility; this will be formally drawn up in the placement agreement meeting. For foster carers who belong to independent providers, additional agreement will need to be sought by their respective agency.

- 2.92 In order to help the young person and others involved make an informed decision about what is in the young person's best interest, all other housing and accommodation options should be discussed and considered looking at the pros and cons of each.
- 2.93 Agreement for staying put arrangements must be sought from the Resource and Fostering Panels no later than when a young person reaches the age of 17.5 years old. Staying put arrangements can be put in place until a young adult reaches 21 years of age. As part of the pathway planning process the personal adviser should review with the young person and the staying put carer the next steps for the young person as they approach 21 years of age. Planning should start at least six months before the young person turns 21 so that they have time to prepare for their next step in their living arrangements. This may include securing a tenancy or remaining with the carers as a part of their family. In exceptional circumstances; such as a young person completing their degree and where a move would disrupt their studies, staying put payments can be extended, but the personal adviser must attend Resource and Care Panel at least three months before the young adult reaches 21 and outline the costs, reason for an extension and the young adults plan once the extension has ended.
- 2.94 As a young adult in placement will be over 18 and therefore not subject to the same procedures as a looked after child, the Staying Put placement will be supervised under a license agreement and placement agreement which will be drawn up between the young person, carer, leaving care worker, and allocated supervising social worker.
- 2.95 Once approved, a young adult can remain in a staying put arrangement for as long as they are eligible to receive a leaving care service. However, all arrangements will be reviewed regularly through the pathway plan to ensure that they still meet the assessed need of the young adult, and that plans are being progressed for a transition to independence or appropriate adult services.
- 2.96 Foster carers who provide a staying put arrangement but want to maintain their fostering approval to continue to foster other children will remain allocated to their supervising social worker and be subject to the same requirements and support provided under [Section 5.1 of Fostering Services policy](#) on Tri-X. Consideration will need to be given about reviewing a foster carers approval as having a young adult in their home may impact on the number and types of placements they can continue to provide.
- 2.97 For those foster carers who are providing a staying put arrangement but who no longer wish to maintain their fostering approval, they will continue to have a named supervising social worker who will visit them at least every six months for the duration of the staying put arrangement. If in discussion with the foster carer, social worker or personal adviser, and young person it is not believed that visits need to be every six months, then a manager can approve for visits to be once per year in order to complete their annual review. The review will take account of the views of the foster carer, young adult, supervising social worker, personal adviser, and any other relevant professionals and include a health and safety checklist. This review will not need to be presented to the Fostering Panel, but will be passed on to the leaving care team manager for verification.
- 2.98 All foster carers providing a Staying Put arrangement will be expected to adhere to the same confidentiality procedures, although daily records will not be expected to be kept but significant events should be communicated to relevant workers and the young adult. They will not be required to conduct regular DBS checks, unless they remain approved foster carers for other looked after children.
- 2.99 Foster carers providing staying put arrangements will continue to receive a reward element payment. As the placement will be in the form of a license agreement, the young adult is still entitled to claim housing benefit. Bexley will pay foster carers providing staying put the standard weekly housing benefit rate for a single room in a dwelling (ie: the rate of renting a single room in a multi-bedroom flat, not the rate of a single bedroom flat).

- 2.100 The young adult will normally be expected to cover most other additional living expenses, such as food, toiletries, and clothing from their employment income, benefit payments or bursaries. There should be an expectation that the young adult also make a financial contribution towards the household utility bills. The financial arrangements should be decided on as part of the contractual agreements and included in the young adult's pathway plan and initial placement agreement.
- 2.101 Staying Put arrangements will be reviewed as part of the pathway plan review process. This will need to look at what support needs the young adult has that will be supported as part of their eventual transition into independent living and when this will likely take place.
- 2.102 If a young adult or foster carer wishes to end a staying put arrangement early, they will need to provide 28 days notice to allow time to explore alternate accommodation. Exceptions to this may be in cases where there are safety concerns for the carer, young adult, other members of the household or due to illegal activity.

Returning Home

- 2.103 Many young adults who leave care may decide to return home to their parents or carers who once cared for them before they became looked after. If they return home from being looked after less than six months before they turn 18 years of age, they will still be deemed a former relevant child and thus entitled to full leaving care support. For those who have returned home for longer than six months before turning 18, they will lose their former relevant status and become a qualifying young adult (unless their Care Order remained in place). It is therefore important to explain these options and outcomes clearly to young people so they can make informed decisions about returning home and that any discussion and decision is clearly recorded on their file.
- 2.104 Returning back to their parents or carers after leaving our care can be a rather complex and difficult situation for young adults. Often there can be misconceptions for them about what life may be like if they return home given the difficulties or concerns leading to why they were looked after previously. Those issues may likely still be present and thus the personal adviser may be worried about the ongoing impact this may have on the young adult we are supporting. However, consideration must also be given as to whether those worries have been reduced or improved upon, either by the increased maturity or resilience of the young adult or by the parents or carers own acknowledgement and efforts to improve on those areas of their parenting.
- 2.105 Ultimately it is the young adult's decision whether they decide to return to their parents or carers home after leaving our care. Thus, we must make our best efforts to assess what their needs may be prior to this taking place and putting in the best support possible using a harm reduction approach to make it as safe and supportive as possible. Taking a firm stance of objecting to the young adult's decision will do little if anything to help support them with their future life goals, thus the role is to give the best advice and support possible regarding the decision a young adult has taken. Consideration should be given to convening a family network meeting in order to help explore and plan for a young person returning back to their parents or carers. Further consideration should be given to the section on Personal Safety in this policy.
- 2.106 It is important to remember that young adults who choose to return home will still be entitled to support from a personal adviser, either as a qualifying or former relevant child as applicable, and must continue to be supported as such unless they make it clear they do not wish this support to continue. This may require the personal adviser to be creative in finding ways to engage with them, especially if there are difficulties in the relationship between the family and Children's Services. Young adults may choose to refuse leaving care support, which will be managed in line with the section entitled Refusing Advice and Support in this policy. It is important however that the personal adviser obtain this view in a genuine way directly from the young adult and not by

intimidation or expressed by their parents or carers on their behalf, as they can no longer legally make decisions on their child's behalf.

Understanding My Life and Care Experience

- 2.107 For many young adults leaving our care they will have questions about their care experience and the reasons why they were looked after by us. To help understand this, they may have a desire or be curious about seeing their record we hold about them. The responses to this can vary, from those who are keen to see it to others who have worries or fears about what they may read and hear. Some young adults may have already seen their record before, in part or fully, and may wish to request to see it again or in more detail.
- 2.108 It will be important for the personal adviser to ensure they have advised the young adult about their right to see their record and what the process is. In the first instance an email will need to be sent, either by the young adult or by the personal adviser with their consent, to **FOI@bexley.gov.uk** Decisions will then be taken as to what information may be vetted and censored because the young adult may not have a right to see this (ie: legal advice or information relating to other persons).
- 2.109 Making a decision to see ones record should never be taken lightly as our young adults will have no idea about the full content they are likely to be exposed to. Therefore, it is crucial this is well planned for with this in mind and that the personal adviser is available to support the young adult through each stage of the process. This may include offering to be present or available to the young adult as they are reading their information. Further considerations should also be made about seeking counselling or therapeutic support for the young adult in anticipation of the emotional and psychological impact viewing their record may have on them.

Section III: Additional Challenges to Independent Living

Refusing Advice and Support

- 3.1 If a young adult has explicitly stated they do not wish to receive a service from the leaving care team, have no desire to supply us with information and do not want to be contacted again, this will need to be clearly recorded on the young adults file. The personal adviser will need to make every reasonable attempt to inform the young adult of the support they are entitled to receive and that they are able to approach the local authority in the future up to the age of 25 if they change their mind. This will require a considered approach to avoid being perceived as harassing the young adult into receiving a service they genuinely do not want.
- 3.2 Where a young adult refuses to receive a service, the personal adviser should attempt to seek agreement on alternate ways of keeping in touch. Such examples may include contact via phone or text, contact through an agreed third party, or contact via another involved professional working with the young adult.
- 3.3 If a young adult insists they do not wish to have any contact or support from the leaving care team, then agreement needs to be sought from the line manager on whether the case should be prepared for closure. A decision to close a young adult's file before the age of 21 years must be agreed by the service manager. An updated pathway plan is to be completed by the personal adviser and put on the young adults file. The letter "Refusal of Support" (see Appendix F) needs to be sent to the young adult so they know we will try to keep in touch annually and they are always welcome to request support in the future up to the age of 25 years old. The personal adviser must also ensure the young adult has been provided with a copy of the Bexley Care Leavers Handbook so they know what their entitlements are to support should they ask for this again in the future.
- 3.4 If contact with a young adult is unexpectedly lost this should not be immediately assumed they do not wish to receive a service. In such cases all reasonable attempts should be made to contact the young adult via any known available means. This may include directly calling the young adult, making an unannounced visit, or contacting family members, friends or professionals who are normally in touch with the young adult.
- 3.5 The young adult may also wish to have more independent support from an advocate to help express their wishes and better understand their rights and responsibilities. Advocacy services are provided by the National Youth Advisory Service (NYAS) and Coram Voice. Details of these services can be found in Appendix A.

Young Adults Returning Later for Support

- 3.6 Any young adult who has declined support from a personal adviser previously can return at anytime in the future up to the age of 25 years old in order to receive a service again, regardless of whether they are in education, employment or training/apprenticeship settings.
- 3.7 When contacted by the young adult or their advocate, the leaving care team manager should arrange for a personal adviser to be allocated within five working days of the request. If the case has been closed more than six months, the personal adviser will need to complete an updated needs assessment that helps to inform a pathway plan review. This assessment will help understand what the young adult has been doing since they last engaged, what they would like to see for their future, and what support the leaving care service can provide to them. Once agreed, the support offer will be incorporated into the updated pathway plan and reviewed regularly.

Immigration and Settlement

- 3.8 Dealing with immigration and settlement issues for many of our young adults can be rather complex. There are many laws, statutory guidance, and legal precedents that govern these affairs and frequently change. It is therefore important that personal advisers seek legal advice and support from the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) team within the council when supporting young adults in this situation. For further information on working with asylum seeking young adult's post 18 years of age please refer to the [Unaccompanied Migrant Children and Child Victims of Trafficking and Modern Slavery](#) policy found on Tri-X.
- 3.9 All young adults leaving our care who require leave to remain in the UK are entitled to their own legal advice. Public funding may be available for them to make an application for leave to remain in the UK and the care leaver should be referred to a solicitor (see Appendix A for legal services available on immigration and settlement issues) to clarify what application best meets their circumstances. If the care leaver is not eligible for public funding then Children's Services will cover the cost of their legal representation.
- 3.10 There are many ways in which the young person could have become subject to immigration control. Some young adults were unaccompanied asylum seeking children and will have applications with the UKVI under consideration for asylum. Others will have made applications for leave to remain in the UK subsequent to their arrival in the UK. These applications can take years to process during which time the young person or young adult will not have permanent status in the UK and may not be eligible to receive regular benefits. They may be able to work if their leave to remain permits this. If the local authority would have a responsibility to the young person leaving our care if it were not for their immigration status they will be entitled to leaving care financial support and in some circumstances to be provided with accommodation whilst an active immigration application is still in process or should they be granted leave to remain.
- 3.11 It will be important that these considerations above are planned for as much in advance as possible before the young person reaches 18 years of age.
- 3.12 In cases where a young adult who is subject to immigration control is offered a higher education place they may be able to receive a student loan via the Student Loan Company. New regulations came into effect by the Department for Business, Innovation, and Skills in 2017. In determining eligibility for a student loan under the new regulations the following must be satisfied:
- i) Applicants aged under 18 years of age are required to have lived in the UK for at least seven years (including three years lawful ordinary residence before the first day of the first academic year of the course), AND
 - ii) Applicants aged 18 years and above are required to have either spent at least half of their life in the UK or at least 20 years in the UK (including three years lawful ordinary residence before the first day of the first academic year of the course)
- 3.13 If the young person is not eligible for a student loan the local authority will have to consider whether it is appropriate to pay the college fees to enable the young person to pursue their further education course as a young adult. If this is identified in the young person's pathway plan as being in their best interests then there would need to be a good reason for a decision not to fund these fees. Approval for funding must be agreed by management and endorsed by the Resource and Care Panel.
- 3.14 Regardless of their immigration status, all young adults who meet the requirements for former relevant or qualifying children are entitled to the same support as a similar young adult with settled immigration status in the UK, until such time as:
- i) All appeal rights have been exhausted (ARE), AND

- ii) A removal directive has been issued by the UKVI, AND
 - iii) A human rights assessment has been completed which concludes that the young adult could return to their home country without there being a breach of their human rights both in the UK and their home country
- 3.15 Considerations for a human rights assessment of a young adult will be whether there are any legal or practical barriers preventing a return to their home country? (e.g. a pending application for immigration status or human rights appeal with the UKVI, a lack of passport or the necessary travel papers, ill health or being in the late stages of pregnancy).
- 3.16 When the local authority is clear that return is reasonably practical because there are no legal or practical barriers that will prevent the young adult from leaving the UK, then it will need to determine whether the provision of support will be necessary to prevent a breach of their human rights. This means that the local authority would need to consider whether return to the home country would result in a breach of their human rights.
- 3.17 When considering whether a refusal of or withdrawal of support will amount to a breach of human rights, primary consideration must always be given to the best interests of the child.
- 3.18 When considering the rights of children of young adults, both Article 3 rights and Article 8; the right to private family life, must be considered. The courts have given the following guidance in this regard:
- A decision as to what is in the best interests of children will depend on a number of factors, such as (a) their age; (b) the length of time that they have been in the UK; (c) how long they have been in education; (d) what stage their education has reached; (e) to what extent they have become distanced from the country to which it is proposed that they return to; (f) how renewable their connection with it may be; (g) to what extent they will have linguistic, medical or other difficulties in adapting to life in that country; and (g) the extent to which the course proposed will interfere with their family life or their rights (if they have any) as British citizens.*
- 3.19 If refugee status is approved this will normally last for five years and be subject to review. It will also grant the applicant the right to work and claim benefits.
- 3.20 Alternatively, limited leave to remain can also be granted for a three year period which can be extended usually on a three year rolling basis upon application. Any young adult who has been granted leave to remain will continue to qualify for support as a former relevant child or qualifying child, whichever is applicable.
- 3.21 It is essential for the social worker and personal adviser to be aware of the young person's immigration status well before their 18th birthday. It is common for unaccompanied asylum seeking children to be granted leave to remain only until they reach 17.5 years of age. It is our duty to plan well in advance of this to ensure any application to extend a young person's limited leave to remain before they reach 18 years old is made. If an application is made before the status has expired then the young adult will continue to have limited leave to remain post 18 until the immigration status is decided. Post 18 it is essential that any young adult with limited leave to remain is supported in making an application to extend that leave before it expires.
- 3.22 Support should also be provided to the young adult with regard to an application for British citizenship, if this is what they want, as soon as they become eligible to make such an application.
- 3.23 As part of the contingency planning in the pathway plan it will be important to talk about what will happen if an asylum or immigration application is denied. This will explore the appeals routes as well as what happens if the young adult is facing removal from the UK and how this may need to be planned for. Triple plan approach will be taken: Support while the application is under consideration, a plan for if leave to remain is granted, and a plan for if the asylum or leave application is declined and a return to their home country is to happen.

- 3.24 If an asylum or immigration application is refused, there is an appeals process the young adult will want to consider. Personal advisers should encourage young adults in this situation to immediately speak to their immigration solicitor in order to advise them on the best course of action as there will be time constraints to how long they have to appeal a decision.
- 3.25 Where a young adult is a victim of trafficking or modern day slavery and they do not have settled immigration status in the UK, a referral should be made to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) of the Home Office (see Appendix A). The Modern Slavery Human Trafficking Unit of the Home Office will offer advice and support and for those who qualify, they may be granted discretionary leave to remain.

NEET – Not in Education, Employment, or Training

- 3.26 Where a young adult is at risk of or is not in any formal education, training or employment setting it will be important to help provide immediate support to help them get back on track. When working with young adults in this situation it will be necessary to explore and consider the impact of contributory factors to becoming NEET, such as anti-social or criminal behaviour, risk of exploitation, substance abuse, or mental health issues to name a few. Having a coordinated approach from the young adults support network of family, friends and involved professionals will be important to help giving any support the best chance of succeeding for the young adult.
- 3.27 Working with young adults who are NEET can be challenging and a considered approach will be needed that supports the young person to get back on track with their career and educational goals, whilst not being overly zealous and thus risking putting the young adult off from engaging with any support offered. The message must always be that we will never give up and will always be there to support the young adult when they are ready to engage in training, employment or education.
- 3.28 In cases where a young adult is at risk or actually NEET they may be co-allocated to the specialist NEET personal adviser in Bexley. Their role will be to try various means with the young adult that can help get them back into employment or education in a supportive and planned way.

Missing and Exploitation

- 3.29 If a young adult is unexpectedly missing and no longer contactable, even via a third party, this may raise concerns about their whereabouts, personal safety, and if they are at risk of or being exploited, such as sexual exploitation. This will also be a key consideration in cases where a young adult is at risk of or has had an application for refugee or immigration leave to remain denied.
- 3.30 Unlike young people, young adults are adults and are able to assume responsibility for their own lives and where they wish to go or if they continue to engage with the leaving care service. A young person who has explicitly stated they do not wish to receive a service from the leaving care team and then have cut off all means of contact or communication should not automatically be assumed as missing. This will require a careful assessment of the information at hand to explore what the contributing factors are that led to a young adult going missing in order to inform future actions.
- 3.31 Where there is a concern that a young adult is missing or being exploited, the personal adviser must consult with their line manager with a view of convening a meeting with involved professionals, adult safeguarding lead, and police within two working days. The purpose of the meeting will be to consider the reasons why the young adult is deemed missing, if anyone else has a means of contacting them, where and with whom do they normally associate, and to develop a

strategy that explores what professionals will do in order to help locate and make contact with the young adult.

- 3.32 In situations where it is known or believed to be that the young adult is missing and it is considered an unexpected event, consideration will need to be given in discussion with the line manager as to whether the police should be contacted in order to assist in locating the young adult. The guiding principle should be, what would another parent be reasonably expected to do if one of their own children of a similar age went missing and their whereabouts were unknown.

Emergency and Exceptional Payments

- 3.33 There may be unexpected situations that arise for a young adult that leaves them in a crisis situation or at risk of destitution due to a lack of financial support. In these cases a one off emergency payment can be provided by the team manager of up to £20 by agreement of the line manager. These must be recorded on the young adults file with clear reasons as to why the support was provided, and how the young person will continue to get by thereafter without an ongoing reliance of future emergency payments.
- 3.34 There may be circumstances where a young adult has secured a low paying job or apprenticeship and will struggle to meet all their basic financial responsibilities. In our efforts to promote their independence we may need to consider providing additional financial support in order to help our young adults get on a ladder to independence. In such circumstances the personal adviser should discuss this with their team manager with a view of carrying out a financial needs assessment. This should outline what expenses the young adult can reasonably be expected to meet, what their shortfall is, and what is the long term plan for meeting this in future. Such an example may be, supporting a young adult to the conclusion of an apprenticeship where it is anticipated they will secure more stable and better paying employment that will allow them to be more financially independent in the near future.
- 3.35 The financial needs assessment will then need to be agreed by the service manager and presented at Resource and Care panel for approval. Any agreement by panel to supplement a young adult's income must be reviewed at least every three month's by the panel, or sooner if the panel specifies.

Criminal and Anti-Social Behaviour

- 3.36 There may be situations that arise where a young adult gets involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour. They will continue to have a personal adviser and they will need to arrange to visit the young adult in the prison or institution they are confined in, and to coordinate with any probation or prevention services.
- 3.37 If a young adult receives a custodial sentence, this will not preclude the personal adviser from continuing to support them. Regardless of the length of sentence given, it will be important for the personal adviser to work closely with any criminal justice and probation services working with the young adult to help provide them with the best opportunities both in custody and upon release. Planning for release will be essential even if the length of sentence received means that their young adult entitlements have been exhausted once they are released.
- 3.38 Pathway plans must review the same arrangements expected of a young adult not in custody. It is not acceptable for a pathway plan to mainly conclude that services will be considered upon discharge from custody. Pathway plans must explore what supports are likely to be available upon release and how this will help support the young adult with their future life goals.
- 3.39 Visits to young adults in custody will be dictated by the visitor regulations of the institution the young adult is being held in. However, visits should be scheduled at the same frequency as a young adult not in custody, unless other arrangements are made at the young adult's request.

- 3.40 For young adults who engage in anti-social behaviour, they should be encouraged into more positive behaviours through reviewing and amending their pathway plan that helps steer them away from the anti-social behaviour and promote and support more positive and nurturing behaviours. It is an important aspect of the Signs of Success approach to not simply state what behaviour we want to stop; we also need to clearly identify what the new behaviour will look like and how this will be supported.
- 3.41 In all cases where a young adult has engaged in criminal or anti-social behaviour, an updated risk assessment needs to be completed and shared with the young adult and relevant professionals and their support network. The risk assessment will need to be reviewed as part of the pathway plan reviewing process, or more frequently if a change of circumstances dictate otherwise.

Pregnancy and Family Planning

- 3.42 For our young adults preparing for parenthood, their personal adviser will need to work closely with midwifery services or specialist mental health midwives to help support them. Pregnancy and parenthood can be both an exciting and daunting experience for any young adult. An additional anxiety for young adults can often be wondering what social services will do given their own experiences of being in care. It is important to have this understanding when supporting young adults with pregnancy and family planning and not make assumptions about how they will be as parents based on their own childhood experience.
- 3.43 It will be important for the personal adviser to work closely with the young adult, their partner, and any involved health or other professionals in order to discuss and consider what the best approach is to support the young adult become a loving, nurturing and stable parent to their child. As part of these discussions, professionals will also need to consider any risks or concerns about a young adult or their partner's behaviour that may pose a risk of harm to their unborn child.
- 3.44 If there are safeguarding concerns for the unborn child, this will need to be discussed with professionals and the young adult as well as with the personal adviser's line manager. All professionals are responsible for safeguarding children and thus if there are concerns for the safety and welfare of the unborn child then a referral should be made to the MASH team in Bexley, or the relevant local authority to where the young adult resides. A referral for assessment and support can be made at any stage of the pregnancy or after the birth. The personal adviser will have the same responsibilities as all professionals in safeguarding children, and thus it is important to explain this role to the young adult so they understand why a referral was made.
- 3.45 In cases where a young adult is going through the child protection or child in need process, their personal adviser should support them through this and ensure that the pathway plan is updated accordingly. The personal adviser is primarily responsible for supporting the young adult. They will provide support in relation to the unborn or infant child to the extent this helps enable the young adult to be a safe, supportive and nurturing parent.
- 3.46 During any child protection or child in need process, the primary responsibility for the case management of the unborn or infant child will rest with the allocated social worker for the child.
- 3.47 If the outcome of any child protection and care proceeding process is that the young adults child/ren are removed because of safeguarding concerns, it will be important for the personal adviser to make efforts to engage and support them through this difficult time. This may include assisting with a referral to specialist support services, such as counselling or therapy. An open and understanding approach is needed so as to help preserve and promote the ongoing relationship between the personal adviser and young adult. Engaging advocacy services can help mediate this process while ensuring the young adult's rights, wishes and views are shared and duly considered.

- 3.48 Young adults are eligible for support through the family nursing partnership; a voluntary intensive visiting programme to support young parents aged 19 and under starting from early pregnancy and who are less than 28 weeks gestation with their first baby. The family nursing partnership is a national NHS progress, which operates in Bexley via Oxleas NHS trust. It provides health and parenting advice and support services to young parents in preparation for parenthood. Details can be found in Appendix A.
- 3.49 For young adults aged 19 and older they can access support from the Bexley Best Beginnings specialist midwifery team and will continue to receive advice and support from the health visiting service after baby is born up to the age of four years old. These can be accessed via the Oxleas NHS trust. The NHS provides a similar service across the country and these can be located by searching on NHS Choices. Details of these can be found in Appendix A.
- 3.50 There may be some young adults who are considering having a termination. Where this is shared with the personal adviser, it will be important to work closely with the young adult and involved health professionals to give advice and support in a sensitive and non-judgemental way.

Young Adults with Disabilities or Mental Health Issues

- 3.51 All young people who are allocated within the Children with Disabilities team and have been considered looked after will have a pathway plan as per this policy. As these young people approach adulthood it will be important to properly plan for the transition of support services to Adult Social Care. It will be necessary to make a referral to Adult Social Care via Preparing for Adulthood team through the Bexley Contact Centre in time for them to allocate a worker to attend the second last looked after review meeting when the young person reaches 17.5 years of age. This will give time for any necessary assessments and transition arrangements to be put in place in time to support the young person when they become a young adult.
- 3.52 All young adults opened to Adult Social Care will continue to be former relevant and thus qualify to have a personal adviser allocated to work with them alongside the adult social worker. Their pathway plan will need to be reviewed and revised as per this policy and it requires close coordination between both services to provide the young adult with the best level of support into independence as possible.
- 3.53 Young adults with disabilities and who have an Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plan will continue to receive support with their health, education and care until they are 25 years of age. Details on whether this is primarily assumed by adult or children's social care and the types of support that are offered can be found in the Bexley [Children and Young People Aged 0-25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities](#) policy on Tri-X
- 3.54 For young adults who have a mental health diagnosis it will also be important for the transition of services to take place between CAMHS and adult mental health. It will therefore mean that the relevant CAMHS practitioner is invited to the second last LAC review when the young person reaches 17.5 years of age to help plans for transitioning support to adult mental health.
- 3.55 For young people who are aged 17 and under and are presenting with mental health concerns, these referrals will be made to CAMHS for assessment. The personal adviser and social worker may need to advocate on behalf of young people approaching 18 to help ensure they receive the timely mental health assessment and service they need.
- 3.56 If there are concerns about the mental health condition or capacity of a young adult not already open to adult social care or mental health services, then the personal adviser should support the young adult with engaging with the appropriate service to get the support they need. This may include helping to complete referrals to mental health services where a young adult may be unable to do so. In Bexley, referrals should be made to the Locality Mental Health Service in Erith (note:

This will alter in the future with the development of Bexley Care and all referrals on "go live" will be via the Bexley Contact Centre).

- 3.57 In cases where a young adult refuses all support offered, and there are concerns their mental health and decision making is placing themselves or someone else at risk of harm, then the personal adviser must inform their line manager on what the next best approach is. Where there are safeguarding concerns, a referral to Adult Social Care must always be made immediately or within 24 hours of any concerns arising. This may include carrying out a mental capacity assessment to determine if the young adult is able to make a specific decision or convening a legal planning meeting to decide if further legal intervention is necessary to make decisions in the young adult's best interest. In cases where the risk of harm is more immediate, then an urgent discussion with the line manager should take place on whether emergency services should be notified. Bexley's mental health Crisis Resolution Service should also be contacted in these situations. Details are found in Appendix A.
- 3.58 In cases where there are concerns for a young adult's ability to make an informed decision, the Mental Capacity Act (2005) provides a legal framework for determining capacity of a person to make informed decisions. The Act supported by the accompanying Code of Practice, sets out how the person's capacity should be assessed, and if they are found to lack capacity, how decisions should be made on their behalf and who should make them.
- 3.59 The Act is intended to assist and support people who may lack capacity and to discourage anyone who is involved in caring for someone who lacks capacity from being overly restrictive or controlling. The Act also aims to balance an individual's right to make decisions for themselves with their right to be protected from harm if they lack capacity to make decisions to protect themselves.
- 3.60 Under the Mental Capacity Act, capacity assessments are the responsibility of the person who has responsibility for the decision being made. The Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice defines the person with responsibility for the decision as the Decision Maker. This means the decision maker can be the young person's social worker or young adult's personal adviser, depending on the type of decision being considered.
- 3.61 Possible causes of incapacity are wide-ranging and include dementia, acute confusion, depression, psychotic illness, distress or emotional disturbance. Mental health conditions can impact different people in different ways depending on a wide variety of factors, from environment to treatment. This means a young adult can have episodes of poor mental health where impact on their ability to make an informed and safe enough decision. They can also have periods of relatively stable and good mental health and thus regain capacity. No specific diagnosis should be assumed to imply a lack of capacity or the degree that one's capacity is affected. A capacity assessment by the Decision Maker must be bespoke to the young adult and the decision taken, based on evidence and input from health and other relevant professionals and members of the young adults support network.
- 3.62 Young adults can be more vulnerable to stresses, such as moving house, living on their own, and being responsible for paying bills and managing their own finances. For many, they may not have families that they can either live with or who can help support them living independently. This is especially difficult as many young adults will generally be more vulnerable than children who have not grown up in care. These vulnerabilities can be attributed to a variety of factors, such as being diagnosed with ADHD, having a learning delay, suffering the effects of past harm or neglect, or being impressionable and easily exploited by others to name just a few. Despite their vulnerabilities young adults may not often meet the threshold for Adult Social Care services. Consideration must be taken on what other services the leaving care service may need to provide to a young adult in this situation to help promote the well-being of their emotional and mental health, and which agencies we should engage with to provide the required support. Where there may be cost implications, this will require management agreement and approval needs to be sought through Resource and Care Panel. Such service recommendations must feature in the young adult's pathway plan following an updated assessment of need.

Appendix A**List of Available Services and Supports for Young Adult's Leaving Care**

Agency & Contact	Type of Support	Description
UCAS www.ucas.com/ucas	Education & training	Provides a list of post-16 higher education university providers and the application process. Visit their special section of their website dedicated to supporting young adults.
Bexley College www.bexley.ac.uk Sandra Hopperton Sandra.hopperton@bexley.ac.uk	Employment & training	Offers a wide range of vocational and higher education courses. Support for those with special learning needs is also available.
The Learning & Enterprise College www.thelearningcentrebxley.ac.uk Lesley Clarke Lesleyclarke@tlc.ac.uk	Education, employment & training	Offers a wide range of vocational, training, higher education, and apprenticeship opportunities.
NEECL www.nnecl.org	Education & training	The national network for the education of young adults has lots of information and guidance on college and university opportunities and funding sources for young adults.
Skills for Growth www.skillsforgrowth.org.uk	Training & employment	Providing information and opportunities for employment and apprenticeships.
ICON Training www.icon-training.com	Training & employment	Providing information and opportunities for apprenticeships, specialising in sports, athletics and management.
Propel www.propel.org.uk	Education & training	Providing information and search engine to find college and university courses from providers that help support young adults. This is run by the Become charity.
Become www.becomecharity.org.uk Tel: 0800 023 2033	Advocacy, rights & responsibilities, coaching	Charity providing looked after children and young adults with advice, information, and support on their rights and responsibilities. Offers a free advice line, coaching programme, and the Propel programme.
Bexley Council Apprenticeships https://www.bexley.gov.uk/services/jobs-and-careers/apprenticeships	Training & employment	Bexley council offers a wide range of apprenticeship opportunities. For details visit the main council webpage and look for apprenticeships.
Job Centre Plus www.gov.uk/jobsearch	Training & employment	Personal advisers and young adults can search for jobs and apprenticeships advertised with Job Centre's across the UK.
NHS Choices www.nhs.uk	Health, emotional, and behavioural	Provides health information and advice, including a search engine to find any local health service across the UK.

Care Leavers Association www.careleavers.com	Support network, identity, and independence skills	A national charity to help advocate and campaign for the rights of young adults leaving care. Provides advice, support, and networking opportunities for care leavers to connect with other care leavers.
Asylum Support https://www.gov.uk/asylum-support	Immigration & settlement	Information provided by the government on asylum applications, process, and appeals.
Asylum Support Appeals Project Tel: 0203 716 0283 www.asaproject.org	Immigration & settlement	Provides advice and support on asylum application appeals.
Bexley Preparing for Adulthood Team screeners@bexley.gov.uk Tel: 0208 303 7777	Health, emotional, & behavioural	Adult mental health and learning disability support service providing support with health and educational needs.
Bexley Locality Mental Health Service www.oxleas.nhs.uk Tel: 020 36689 490	Health, emotional, & behavioural	Bexley adult community mental health service providing assessment, diagnosis, and treatment.
Prospects www.prospects.co.uk Tel: 0203 045 5555	Training & employment, NEET	Prospects provide support workers and drop in services to young adults to age 25 years old. They can help with employment, education, training, and personal issues.
Bexley Crisis Resolution Service Tel: 020 8836 6649 / 6724	Health, emotional & behavioural	Provides services to adults experiencing an acute mental health crisis.
Family Nursing Partnership Bexley: oxl-tr.bromleycat@nhs.net National: enquiries@fnp.nhs.uk	Health, family relationships, community and support network	Providing pre-natal and parenting advice and support to young mums and dads aged 19 and under.
Bexley Safeguarding Adults Team safeguardingadults@bexley.gov.uk Tel: 020 8303 7777	Personal safety	Where there are concerns about a disabled or vulnerable young adult who may have been abused or neglected by a person or agency providing care and support to them.
Unite Foundation www.unitefoundation.co.uk	Housing, education	A charitable organisation that helps fund accommodation and utility bill expenses for young adults pursuing higher education studies in university for up to three years.
Coram Voice www.coramvoice.org.uk Tel: 0808 800 5792	Advocacy, rights & responsibilities	National information and advocacy services to young people and young adults aged 16-25 years old on what their rights and responsibilities are. They have advocates who specialise in young people and young adults who have a mental health condition or disability.
Coram Children's Legal Centre www.childrenslegalcentre.com Tel: 020 7713 0089	Advocacy, rights & responsibilities, immigration & settlement	Provides free legal advice and representation to children, young people, and young adults leaving our care, including on immigration.

NYAS www.nyas.net Tel: 0808 8081001	Advocacy, rights & responsibilities	The National Youth Advisory Service provides advocacy support, legal representation and a helpline to young people and young adults.
Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) www.ceop.police.uk	Personal safety	Provides a lot of helpful advice and information for young people, adults, and professionals on the risks and how to protect yourself from online abuse and exploitation.
Family Action www.family-action.org.uk	Family Relationships, Community and Support Network	Provides a mentoring service to young adults leaving care called "Friendship Works". Their vetted volunteers promote a friendship, mentoring and support relationship which has been shown to improve the emotional wellbeing and future life chances of young adults.
National Homeless Advice Service (NHAS) https://www.nhas.org.uk	Housing, rights & responsibilities	Provides free expert advice, training and support on housing related issues. The section for advice to young people includes housing related issues for young adults who were formerly looked after.
Stonewall www.stonewall.org.uk	Emotional, Identity, Community & Support Network	Provides free advice and support for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and trans people across the UK.
Bindmans LLP Tel: 0207 014 2090 www.bindmans.com/what-we-do/immigration	Immigration & settlement	Provides legal advice and representation offering a special local authority rate for children in care and care leavers on immigration matters.
The Law Society www.lawsociety.org.uk	Advocacy, rights & responsibilities, immigration & settlement	Independent professional body representing solicitors in England and Wales. Provides legal information and a searchable database to find a solicitor on any legal matter, including sorting by those who accept legal aid.
National Debt Line www.nationaldebtline.org Tel: 0808 808 4000	Finance and Savings	Provides a wide variety of free information and advice on budgeting and managing debts.
Department for Work & Pensions https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions	Training and Employment, Finance and Savings	Provides information and support in respect of employment, benefits, pensions, and health and safety.
National Referral Mechanism https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-trafficking-victims-referral-and-assessment-forms	Personal safety, immigration & settlement	Home Office link to the National Referral Mechanism for people who are victims of trafficking or modern day slavery.
Modern Slavery Helpline https://www.modernslaveryhelpline.org/ Tel: 08000 121700	Personal safety	Provide advice, information, and support to victims of trafficking and modern day slavery and professionals who support them.

Appendix B

Our Commitments in Bexley to All Young Adults Leaving our Care

This document explains how your personal adviser and social worker will carry on supporting you as you become a young adult. The statements written here are also things that the Council commits to do so that you have the best chances to succeed in your lives and futures.

As your corporate parent, we make the following commitments to you:

Getting Ready for Adulthood

- We will help you with the changes that happen when you stop being a child who is 'looked after' and become a young adult 'care leaver'. We will do this in a supportive and positive way, making sure that you have the time it takes to be ready
- We will help you remain with your foster family for as long as possible. We will only start thinking about independent living with you when you are practically, mentally and emotionally ready
- We will help you maintain relationships with your carers, family, friends and social networks so that you have help and support during and after you leave our care
- We will help you to understand what you need to be able to successfully live on your own and to be happy. We will also show you that we understand that leaving our care is a big step and that you need our patience and understanding, even when you make mistakes



Practical Help

- We will make it our priority to help you to find and keep a safe and welcoming home. We will make sure that you understand and take part in making your personal housing plan
- We will help you learn how to take care of yourself, stay healthy and safe, manage your money, take care of your home, go to school, college or university, find a job, and have good relationships, able to raise families of your own if that is what you would like to do
- We will understand that just because you become 18, this does not mean you will suddenly know all there is to know about being a responsible adult. We will help you to work out what being a responsible adult means, support you when you make mistakes and when we feel worried about you, we will make sure especially during the tough times, that we stand ready to help you.
- We will make sure that we see you every month (more regularly if we can) and more often when you first leave our care. We respect your choice to see us less if that is what you would like.
- We will help you to understand how to deal with conflicts and challenges without getting angry and frustrated at others or making things worse. We will help you through our own example, being patient and understanding. When things don't go according to plan, we will help you make a plan B to fall back on
- We understand that as an adult you may make choices that are not good for you and may even mean that you are unsafe. We know that you are free to make such a choice, but we will always act to help you to protect yourselves and others around you. There may be times that we need to

make contact with other services or people who can help you. If we need to do this, we will make sure that you know and are clear about what will happen next

- We will help you to find special support, like therapy or counselling, when the time is right for you and if you tell us that this would help you
- We will make sure that you feel part of our Bexley "corporate family" and like other families; we understand that you need to have a sense that you belong and are valued. We will help other people in the council understand this when you may need their support, for example with housing or other services.

Our Relationship Together

- We will always help you dream and aspire to be better than you are today. We will help you to believe that you will continue to grow and to succeed. Your pathway plan will be something that inspires you to achieve great things in your life, whatever that means for you.
- We will always listen to you, even when we don't agree with one another
- We will hear you out and help you to speak your mind in a way that helps you be heard by others who need to listen
- We will include you in all of the important decisions that need to be made about your life and your future
- We will respect the times when you need some personal space or may not be ready to see or speak with us. We will always leave the door open so that you know you can seek us out when you are ready to have our help or advice. You will have help and support from us up until the age of 25.
- We will make sure that your current social worker or personal adviser does not leave you without saying goodbye and introducing you to the new adult who will be supporting you. All our new personal advisers will understand that getting to know you and to earn your trust will take time.
- We will help you identify the triggers that may lead you to become angry, lash out, hurt yourself or turn to drugs or alcohol to cope. We will help you plan for these situations and identify who you can turn to for help when you need it. If it is helpful, we will help you to make a safety plan so that you have some control at times when you feel vulnerable and worried
- We will not make commitments to you unless we know we can honour them. We know that our honesty will be important if you are to trust and work with us. That may mean that sometimes we have to say things to you even when it may not be what you want or like to hear
- We will help you to understand your history and how it is you came to be in our care. We recognise that having your life story book, pictures and mementoes are all important to your recalling important people and events in your life We will support you if you find this upsetting and if you want to see your case files, we will make sure that your personal adviser is available to help you read through papers and to ask questions
- We will make sure that you understand your rights and your responsibilities. This will include knowing who else can help you to express your views if you want to make a complaint because you feel you have been treated unfairly. If we are not able to keep these commitments to you, we understand that this will mean you may need to complain.
- We will always offer you a hug or a shoulder to cry on if that will help. It's ok for you to say no though!



Your commitments to us:

So that we can have the best relationship together through these commitments, we ask that you try your very best to:

- Treat us with respect, even when you don't agree with suggestions we are making
- Keep in touch with us as much as you can or feel comfortable with
- Listen to and think about our advice and guidance, even if you don't always follow it
- Let us know if you feel we are treating you unfairly or if we have made a mistake. We would like a chance to make things right
- Accept our support, and let us know when you don't want or need our help
- Understand that we have to make decisions about your safety when the law says we must or when you are in danger
- Apologise and take responsibility for your actions when you make mistakes
- Keep working hard on your goals, dreams and ambitions to the best of your ability
- Be open and honest with us as much as possible
- Tell us what your views, wishes and feelings are on anything we do to help
- Let us know if you are in trouble or are making decisions that are not good for you



Children's Social Care & Safeguarding

Leaving Care Team
Civic Offices, 2 Watling Street
Bexleyheath, Kent, DA6 7AT
020 8303 7777
www.bexley.gov.uk

Appendix C

Reference:

Direct Dial 020 3045 0000

Date 10 October 2017

name@bexley.gov.uk

Name

Address

FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE HOUSING NEEDS MANAGER

SOCIAL NEEDS REFERRAL

Please arrange for housing under the Social Needs Procedure to be allocated to our young person who is in the transition in moving to independence from having been a Looked After Child.

I have discussed in supervision this application and I am referring my young person for (please tick)

SNQ

Private Leased Housing

Private Leased Housing would not be applicable for our young people if in employment due to the possible increased costs. Please discuss the viability of both options in supervision.

Yong person's name:

Date of Birth:

Age:

Address:

Ethnicity:

Legal status:

Social Worker:

Telephone Number and Extension:

Section I
(Background and current circumstances)

Please describe below your young person's circumstances and their ability to manage their first home independently. It is really useful to also include details of the support they have received from their foster cares or keyworker. Please detail how they have become more confident in managing the responsibilities of this exciting but demanding move.

Section 2

- Are there any areas within Bexley that could present a risk?

- Will there be a need to provide additional support for your young person to help them manage their tenancy? Please specify if there additional concerns in the risk assessment within this referral.

- Has your young person completed a housing application form?

- Do they have British Citizenship?

- Do you have a copy of their birth certificate or passport?

- If your Care Leaver is awaiting an immigration decision do they have documents confirming their asylum entitlements?

- How will their rent be funded? If they ware self-funding through employment it will be important to determine the affordability of SNQ referral or application for Private Leased Housing.

- If your care leaver is a parent do they have their children's/child's birth certificate?

- If your care leaver is an expectant parent do they have GP confirmation of their pregnancy?

Signed : _____

Date: _____

Name of manager
Team Manager
Looked After Children and Permanence Team

Appendix D

**Looked After Children and Permanence Team
SNQ Risk Assessment**

The assessment is used to determine the suitability and risks of accommodation that could be offered and to forward plan the level and type of support to ensure our young people successfully manage the important transition to independent living.

Name of Young Person:

D.O.B

Name of social worker

Current address:

Type of placement:

Date of assessment:

Suicide and self-harm	Last 6 months (incl dates)		Ever	
	Y	N	Y	N
Have there been risks linked to acts of suicidal intent				
Suicidal talk				
Self-harm				
Has your young person been hospitalised due to risks of suicide or self-harming behaviour.				

Protective factors

Other agencies involved and level of engagement

Overall risk evaluation

High Medium low

Harm from others	Last 6 months (incl dates)		Ever	
	Y	N	Y	N
Is the Young person at risk of neglecting their own safety?				
Are they at risk of				

violence from others				
Risk of sexual exploitation or abuse				
Risk of financial abuse				
Risk of emotional/psychological abuse				

Please give information about anticipated risks our young people may post to others and details of any recent incidents.

Protective factors

Overall risk evaluation

High medium low

Risk of harm to others	Last 6 months (incl dates)		Ever	
	Y	N	Y	N
Risk of sexual assault				
Has young person even been convicted of a sexual offence?				
Violence to family				
Violence to staff				
Violence to peers				
Violence to public				
Has the young person ever been convicted of a violent offence?				

Arson	Last 6 months (incl dates)		Ever	
	Y	N	Y	N
Has young person ever been convicted of an arson offence?				

Offences	Last 6 months (incl dates)		Ever	
	Y	N	Y	N
Has the young person been convicted of any other offences?				

If they have been convicted of other offences can you provide detail.

Overall risk evaluation

High medium low

Substance and Alcohol misuse	Last 6 months (incl dates)		Ever	
	Y	N	Y	N
Does Young person use drugs or drink alcohol.				
If yes what are they known to be using:				
Is their Substance/Alcohol reduction therapy in place?				
If yes please give details				
	YES		NO	
Is the Young person aware of the risks linked to substance misuse				
Would they be able to seek help if needed.				

Overall risk evaluation

High medium low

Risk of going missing	Last 6 months		Ever			
	Y	N	Y	N		
Is there a history of your young person going missing or their whereabouts not being accountable?						
Overall risk evaluation			High	medium	low	
If yes please describe:						

Support needs

Please detail the level of personal support as outlined within the young person's Pathway plan.	
---	--

Have you assessed the level of support they will require in managing their own tenancy? If so what additional networks will you be employing to ensure they are supported fully in this important transition.	

Assessment of risk:

(Please highlight the most likely causes of risk and the most appropriate response.)

Person completing assessment:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix E**LEAVING CARE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE APPLICATION FOR UNIVERSITY****INTRODUCTION**

Congratulations on gaining your place at university. This is the first step towards an exciting next few years of study, finding new friendships and opportunities.

The next challenge will be getting your head around student finance which is never a simple topic to cover. The introduction to our financial application will touch on the most important things you will need to know as a student. The figures contained in the introduction will be updated yearly to make sure they provide an accurate guide.

The maximum universities can currently charge for tuition fees is £9,250 per academic year. The Tuition Loan covers your fees and is paid directly to the university. You don't have to repay this until you leave your course and are earning enough.

On top of the student loan full-time students can also apply for the maximum maintenance loan.

The maintenance loan amounts for 2017/2018 are dependent on where you are living.

Living at home	£7,097
Living away from home	£8,430
Living away from home (London)	£11,002
Living away from home (abroad)	£9,654

Don't forget that these are just the maximum amounts you could apply for.

What you **actually** get will vary: the numbers are different for the rest of the UK, with household income ultimately dictating what you're entitled to ask for.

As a rough guide, in England you'll need household income of £25,000 or less to get maximum maintenance.

Paying back the debt

The average university graduate could have a student debt of around £48,000

You do not pay a penny towards this until you graduate and earn £21,000 per annum.

Repayments are then 9% of anything above this.

After 30 years any outstanding student debt is written off

Interest is charged at the rate of inflation +3% pa whilst you are at university, which continues at interest plus 0-3% pa thereafter (depending on your salary)

Your student loan repayments are deducted from your income by your employer.

YOUR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE APPLICATION

I. YOUR DETAILS

Your name

Your date of birth

Your current
Address

Your phone
number

Your email
address

2. YOUR EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR

- It will be important to write down the qualifications you have already achieved so that we can make sure you are accessing all opportunities that could be available to you.

College/School	The dates you attended	The award you achieved

3. DETAILS ABOUT THE COURSE YOU ARE APPLYING FOR.

- What subject will you be studying and what qualification are you aspiring to achieve?

- Is your course full or part time?

- What is the name and address of the University, College or training provider you are enrolling with?

- When will your new term start and how long will your course last for?

4. DETAILS ABOUT YOUR ACCOMMODATION DURING TERM TIME.

- If you know where you will be living during term time please write down the address details.

- What will your term time home be?

Student housing

Private Housing

Will you be remaining in your
Current home

- **Do you know where you will be staying during holiday periods?**

Student housing

Private Housing

Will you be returning to where
you were formerly living?

5. YOUR FINANCIAL SUMMARY.

- **YOUR INCOME**

A. Tuition Loan	£
B. Maintenance Loan	£
C. University Bursary	£
Total Income A+B+C	£

- **WHAT WILL YOU BE FINANCIALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR?**

A. Tuition Fees	£
B. How much will it cost you to travel to your place of study?	£
C. How much will the books and equipment cost for your course over the academic year?	£
D. If you are in student or private housing how much will your rent cost through the entirety of the academic year.	£
Total Expenditure A+B+C+D	£

- **Personal Expenditure**

The money you have left from your Maintenance loan after the total expenditure is deducted (excluding fees) will be your personal expenditure.

You will need to budget for a range of things each week out of this money if you are living in student accommodation. This would include your food, utility bills such as gas, electrical and water; you may also need to contribute towards a TV license, pay your phone or internet usage, your toiletries, clothing and set aside money for time with friends.

Please remember that your maintenance loan is paid on the understanding that it will give you enough money to cover the summer holiday period. We will help you find employment during this time to give you an additional income.

If there is a short fall of funds once your income and outgoings have been taken into account we will consider paying additional monies to make up your weekly money to what you would receive through Income Support. This totals £3010.80 per year and is a minimum weekly amount set by government.

Total Income -	£
Total Expenditure -	£
Governments minimum weekly amount to live on (currently £57.90 x £52 weeks =3010.80)	£

Total money left	£
-------------------------	----------

If total money left after deducting the above numbers = 0 or below then we will need to provide you with funds to make sure you are not losing out financially.

We will aim on making up your money to make sure you are not in deficit.

- **Leaving Care Bursary**

We will provide you with a non-refundable bursary of £2000 each academic year of your university course.

This is money paid in addition to any other financial support we provide.

Your bursary can be paid in three different amounts. Your personal adviser will discuss with you each option and what would be the most suitable for your circumstances. This will also be detailed in your pathway plan which you will have a copy for safe keeping.

Our bursary will be paid to your bank account either

1. Termly £666.66
2. Monthly £166.66
3. Weekly £38.46

Your personal adviser will discuss these options with you to help you decided.

Where you will be living during term time.

If you are not remaining with your foster family under a 'staying put' arrangement it will be important to make sure you are able to find accommodation that is affordable.

Often the most cost effective options are house shares with other students or in halls of residence which are part of the university campus.

For the second year your university may also run a student land lord scheme which could offer cost effective options during term time. We can help you talk to the university to find our more details.

Don't worry as we will be alongside you helping to find housing that you will be able to afford.

If you are likely to require somewhere else to live over vacation periods we can talk with our housing colleagues to help discover options that you could access. Don't forget as a care leaver you are entitled to student housing for 52 weeks of the year. Other students may need to vacate during holiday periods and to return at the start of the new term

THE TERMS OF THE ASSISTANCE

Your financial assessment is calculated for 52 weeks of the year. Your assessment will tell you how much you will receive and any other monies that will be paid by Bexley council to support your journey through university.

- Funding will be reapplied for and calculated every year.
- We will ask you to complete a consent form. This will enable us to liaise directly with student finance on your behalf to make sure you receive your full entitlements.
- You will need to budget ahead if you decide to purchase items that fall outside of your budget plan.
- You will need to remain actively involved with us for the duration of your course as we really want to make sure you remain on track to succeed.
- We will contact you at the end of each term to see how you are getting on.
- You must tell us straight away of any important changes.

DECLARATION

The information that I have given is accurate to the best of my knowledge and I am willing to abide by the terms of assistance.

Signature of care leaver

Date

Signature of personal adviser

Date

Signature of team manager

Date

AUTHORISED BY:

Signature of head of service

Date

Children's Social Care & Safeguarding

Leaving Care Team
Civic Offices, 2 Watling Street
Bexleyheath, Kent, DA6 7AT
020 8303 7777
www.bexley.gov.uk

Appendix F

Reference:

Direct Dial 020 3045 0000

Date 10 October 2017

name@bexley.gov.uk

Name

Address

Respecting your decision about the support we offered you as a young adult leaving our care

Dear Name

I am writing to you to confirm your decision about leaving care support. You have made a decision that you do not wish to have support from a personal adviser or our leaving care service.

Whilst we respect your decision and that it is yours to make, I want you to know that you are free to change your mind at anytime in the future and we can continue to support you until you reach 25 years of age. If you decide to reconsider, please contact our MASH team on **0203 045 5440** and tell them you are a care leaver wanting to receive support from us. We can arrange for a personal adviser to be assigned to you again and to work with you to update your pathway plan based on your new goals and aspirations.

You are also allowed to ask to see the records we have about you, even if you do not wish to receive support from us. If you wish to see your records you can email your request to our freedom of information team at: FOI@bexley.gov.uk They will help make arrangements for this to happen for you.

We still care about you and would like to check in every year just to see how things are going for you. If that is okay, we would like to call you or even arrange to come see you. You don't have to meet with us, but we would like to hear that you are well and to see if there is anything we could do to help you with your life goals.

Something you may want to consider checking out is the charity called Become. They provide lots of useful advice and support for care leavers like yourself that you may wish to access. Their website is: www.becomecharity.org.uk

You may also wish to check out the Care Leavers Association. They are a national network to help care leavers connect with each other, offers advice, support, and advocacy on your rights and improving the lives of care leavers. Their website is: www.careleavers.com

I hope we hear from you again in the near future. We want you to know that you will always be welcome to get back in touch with us. Just give us a call whenever you're ready.

Best wishes,

(Name)

Social worker

CONSENT TO SHARE INFORMATION AGREEMENT

Appendix G

Dear

We know that leaving care can sometimes be a bit scary and with so many things to do it can sometimes feel a bit overwhelming. So your personal advisor can really help you, we might need, on occasions, to contact other agencies on your behalf and ask them to share with us personal information about you. This can be particularly important with agencies like the Department for Work and Pensions (these are the people that pay benefits like Job Seekers Allowance or Universal Credit) and your landlord/housing provider so that if you ever get into any difficulties with paying your bills and develop arrears or debt we can help you early on and stop things becoming really worrying. To do this, we need your written consent.

The following are the people we may want to contact – please tick yes or no:

GP (in case you are very unwell and we need to find a way to help you)	Yes	No
College/university (In case you are having problems and we need to talk to your tutor about help you might need)	Yes	No
Employer (in case you have any problems at work that we might be able to help with)	Yes	No
Police (We don't think you will get in trouble with the Police but there might be other reasons you are involved with the Police and we want to help you)	Yes	No
CAMHS/other therapeutic agency (sometimes young people need extra support and we want to help you to get any specialist help you might need)	Yes	No
Substance misuse agency (sometimes young people need extra support and we want to help you to get any specialist help you might need)	Yes	No
Hospital (if you are ill we want to help you to get any specialist help you might need)	Yes	No
Other (please specify)	Yes	No

Your personal advisor will always talk to you before they contact another agency on your behalf so you and your personal advisor agree what information is being requested and the reason for this. We would never contact someone without your agreement and just because you agree to us making contact with someone once you can always change your mind.

You have the right to see the information held by these agencies about you. When your personal advisor contacts an agency, they will talk to them about sharing information they give us with you.

You can change your mind at any time about this and if you do, just talk to your personal advisor.

I agree to Bexley Children's Services contacting the agencies detailed above. A copy of this letter gives permission for these agencies to share information about me.

Signature:

Printed Name:

Personal Advisor:

Date: