

**Next Steps Panel**

**Terms of Reference**



**Purpose and Function of Next Steps Panel**

The ‘Next Steps’ panel provides opportunity for scrutiny and ongoing review of proposed post 18 transition arrangements for all cared for children and young people in Sefton. This process begins when young people reach 15 years 6 months, just prior to their eligibility to begin the Pathway Plan Part One (Assessment of Need).

The panel has direct oversight of young people’s Pathway Plans to ensure they are robust and have clear contingency plans. The panel should also ensure that all aspects of a young person’s physical, mental, social, and emotional needs have been considered to ensure our cared for young people will have the optimum chances of success in their future living arrangements when they leave care. Checks are also undertaken to ensure young people are in receipt of their entitled benefits, personal documentation (e.g., passports, National Insurance numbers and birth certificates) and have access to their own bank accounts.

Next Steps also provides opportunity for relevant partner agencies to signpost, provide support, advice and guidance and ensure that correct pathways/procedures, particularly with regard to transition planning are clearly understood and adhered to in a timely way.

The panel will also provide the opportunity to raise awareness of young people who are approaching independence to the various partner agencies represented so they can start to track individual progress as well as being alerted to both current and future demand over the coming 2.5-year period (and beyond) which will inform future sufficiency planning and contribute to service delivery and design.

**Initial Next Steps Panels**

As the young person will be 15 and a half, these conversations are likely to be informal and a number of options/possible routes post 18 may be explored. This gives the opportunity to concurrent plan in the Pathway Process and should ensure that clear expectations are set out with regard to preparation for independent/future supported living arrangements in adulthood. If a Personal Advisor has yet to be allocated, this will be actioned via the attending Care Experienced Team Manager who will be present at the meeting.

**Thematic Next Steps Panels**

It is proposed that some cohorts of young people may benefit from thematic panels where further specialism is required for successful transition planning, particularly where there is additional vulnerability or a need for continuation of care and support post 18. These are currently identified (but may not remain exclusively) as follows:

* All Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)
* Any young person in receipt of a service from CAMHS (or waiting allocation)
* Young people in receipt of support via s.17\*
* Young people with complex care packages\*
* Generic panels (i.e., all other cared for young people aged 15 years 6 months up to 18 yrs.

**Next Steps Reviews**

Next Steps Panel occurs weekly every Wednesday afternoon. Reviews will be conducted in accordance with the following schedule:

**Generic Panels**

Initial panel to commence at 15 years 6 months, then 6 monthly thereafter until aged 17 years 6 months, then 3 monthly until just prior to young person’s 18 birthday. If cases are considered to be particularly complex or have significant risk management/ongoing safeguarding issues and the primary plan post 18 has not been established, the chair may wish to review these cases more frequently.

**UASC**

Given the additional vulnerability of this cohort and the current challenges in finding legal representation, these cases should generally be reviewed 3 monthly at specific UASC panels.

**CAMHS**

Dependent on numbers - current scoping exercise underway in partnership with health.

**Arrangements to oversee Pathway Plans when Young People Cease being Cared For**

On some occasions, it may be necessary for the designated service manager to continue to monitor/review the Pathway Plan for a variety of reasons. This may include (but not exclusive to):

* Young people who remain in receipt of care components/packages of support and or time limited continuations of placements where they resided prior to turning 18
* Any 16- and 17-year-old eligible for a leaving care service who is no longer allocated a social worker
* Vulnerable adults
* Any UASC who has an asylum claim pending a decision from the Home Office

These cases will not continue to be presented at Next Steps panel but will instead move to the Care Experienced Risk Management Forums chaired by the Care Experienced Service Manager (See Care Experienced Risk Management Forum TOR for further details.)

**Escalations – Next Steps Resolution Meetings (NSRM)**

If any immediate safeguarding or significant drift is identified the Chair may recommend a strategy discussion/urgent care planning meeting is convened. Alternatively, the chair may arrange a Next Steps Resolution Meeting with the social worker’s designated service manager and relevant practitioners in order to swiftly address concerns and move plans forward.

**The Role of the IRO (Independent Reviewing Officer)**

The IRO will be invited to attend a slot at the Next Steps panel for any young person on their case load. This provides further opportunity for independent challenge, scrutiny, and review, as well as an opportunity to offer informal challenge in respect of Pathway Plans and or proposed transition arrangements. It also an opportunity to highlight practice issues to the designated service manager or draw focus to any aspects of care and transition planning that may require further multi-agency in depth exploration.

Future Pathway Reviews chaired by the Independent Reviewing Officer should ensure that there are robust contingency plans in place and, as the young person approaches 17 and a half, a primary plan is being appropriately progressed and implemented.

As part of the IROs general scrutiny and oversight, they will have the opportunity to routinely ensure that actions and recommendations from the Next Steps panel are implemented in adherence with specified timescales. The IRO should follow the Dispute Resolution Process if there is evidence of drift and delay which is hindering progress for the young person.

**The Role of the Allocated Social Worker and Team Manager at Panel**

The Social Worker and Team Manager will be invited to discuss the young person for whom they have case responsibility. It is at the discretion of the Team Manager if they wish to attend, however the TM should attend in the Social Worker’s absence if the SW is unavailable. It is the responsibility of the social worker to ensure recommendations from the panel are adhered to within timescales and that these actions are incorporated into the child’s Pathway Plan as appropriate. The Team Manager should maintain oversight of the progress of Plans in supervision.

**The Role of the Personal Advisor (PA)**

Personal Advisors (PAs) are now routinely allocated at 16 years. The initial panel is therefore a good opportunity for the PA to gain an overview of the young person’s current circumstances and to plan their approach accordingly. At subsequent reviews, the PA will provide an update to the panel of the progress of the young person with their programme of independent living skills (The Resettlement Passport) and the young person’s engagement in this process. The PA will also report on the completion of key tasks (e.g registering for Property Pool) to confirm they have been completed.

**Panel Chairs**

Laura Doyle, Service Manager Cared for and Care Experienced Young People 14-25yrs – Generic, UASC and CAMHS Panels

Paula Seivewright, Complex Needs Service and Help and Protection Service Manager - s.17 & Complex Care Panels

**Panel Membership**

Each Panel will determine the relevant membership, and which will be attended by from the following: -

Virtual School (Charlie Smith)

Career Connect (Karen Vaughn)

LAC Health Nurse (Helen Case/Ann Quinn)

Transitions Coordinator Adult Services (Sonya Wall)

Young Person’s Team Manager (Mel Barlow/Sharon Cody)

Care Experienced Team Manager (Andrea Anderson/ Joseph Hulse)

Legal (UASC) (Sefton Legal Rep)

CAMHS

Adult Mental Health Specialist

Occasionally, representatives from partner agencies such as (but not exclusive to) YOT/Housing/Supported Lodgings may attend panel if this is conducive to effective Pathway Planning.

Panel Administrator