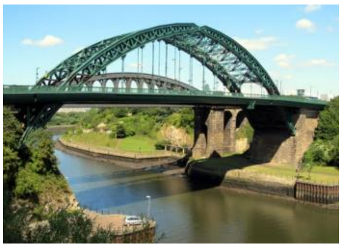
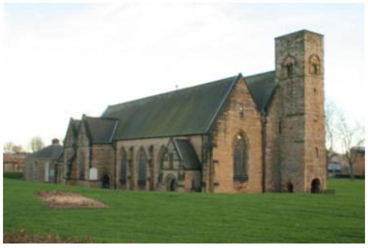
Sunderland City Council

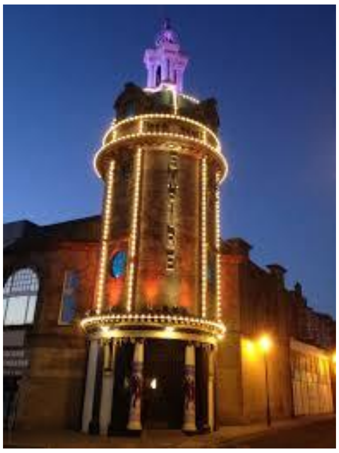
NEXT STEPS

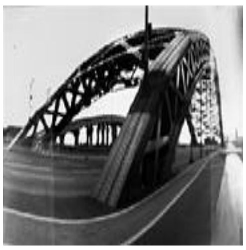
GUIDANCE ON THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LEAVING CARE PERSONAL ADVISERS

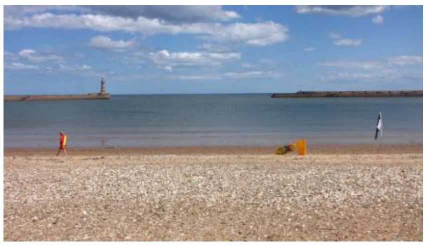
Children's Services











SUNDERLAND
CHILDREN'S SERVICES

VERSION TWO

Sunderland – Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of Leaving Care Personal Advisers

Introduction

The following guidance sets out the broad framework in regard to the roles, responsibilities and tasks of leaving care personal advisers working with 'Eligible', 'Relevant', 'Former Relevant' and 'Qualifying' care leavers. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers (England) Regulations and Guidance 2010 (revised 2015), particularly Chapter 3 and Appendix A.

All eligible, relevant and former relevant (children) care leavers are required to have a named personal adviser. All 16 & 17 year olds who are eligible children will have a named qualified social worker who is also deemed to be the young person's leaving care personal adviser. All 16 & 17 year olds who are relevant children will have a named leaving care personal adviser. The social worker/personal adviser is responsible for completing the Leaving Care Assessment of Need within three months of the young person becoming an eligible or relevant care leaver and using the Assessment (with other information) to develop the initial Pathway Plan (also based on the Care Plan).

The completion of the Leaving Care Assessment of Need should be undertaken in consultation with all people (parents, carers, teachers, health professionals) involved with the young person and importantly with the co-operation of the young person. Depending on the needs of the eligible child (aged 16 - 17), the Leaving Care Assessment of Need may require a separate personal adviser to ensure compliance with the Caerphilly Judgement. In addition, and to ensure further separation from the assessment and planning process the young person may have an advocate and will have an Independent Reviewing Officer to ensure impartial oversight and scrutiny. The review of the care plan and pathway plan for an eligible care leaver takes place through the statutory review process.

The social worker/leaving care personal adviser for 16 & 17 year olds, is responsible for co-ordinating and/or meeting both the care needs and preparation for independence needs of the eligible/relevant care leaver. The care plan and pathway plan should set out both the care planning needs of the young person and also how the local authority will support the young person to make a successful transition from care to independent living, or to an adult service.

Roles and Responsibilities of Leaving Care Personal Advisers

The section below applies to leaving care personal advisers that have a range of qualifications and experience; who are not social work qualified and therefore do not hold social work case responsibility for 16 & 17 year olds. This group of leaving care personal adviser are allocated to jointly support an individual young person when that young person reaches the age of 17½ - 17¾.

Until the young person reaches the age of 18 the social worker/personal adviser remains the named worker and case co-ordinater; with the leaving care personal adviser being the secondary worker who uses the period until the young person's 18th birthday to get to know them, their situation and their leaving care needs. From the young person's 18th birthday the leaving care personal adviser assumes full case responsibility. Where a young person aged 18 to 19 (former relevant care leaver) has complex needs, it may be deemed appropriate for the social worker to remain involved and be the responsible case holder for an extended transition period.

Roles, Responsibilities and Tasks

Prior to taking case responsibility for former relevant care leavers reaching the age 18, leaving care personal advisers have a role in ensuring that young people are prepared for leaving care and independence. This is likely to be achieved by and through, the provision of training or knowledge sharing to workers and carers supporting children looked after and helping them to understanding the preparation for independence process, the leaving care tasks and timescales and the services and support that is available to meet care leavers needs.

Leaving care personal advisers have a breadth of specialist knowledge relating to leaving care services and have a role to impart this expert knowledge to those supporting children and young people aged under 18.

The following list of roles, responsibilities and tasks that leaving care personal advisers should undertake must not be taken as a definitive list, but provides a broad set of expectations. Given that each care leaver is an individual with a unique set of needs and skills, personal advisers must be flexible in their approach and role.

- Preparation of the pathway plan

- In conjunction with the senior practitioner and/or team manager review the young person's leaving care assessment of needs.

- In conjunction with the senior practitioner and/or team manager review the young person's pathway plan.

- Co-ordination and/or delivery of a range of services to ensure that care leavers are prepared for semi-independent and independent living and that they are supported in these settings.

- To ensure that young people have a range of identity and other documents that helps them to access universal services, i.e., registering for housing, welfare benefits, health services, education and training services. Depending on the needs and abilities of the young person, personal advisers will need to assess how proactive they should be with this task, in certain situations personal advisers will need to undertake the task of obtaining documents on behalf of the young person.

- To support young people to access service that are identified as being required to improve their well-being and individual outcomes. This will range from identifying and highlighting individual services, to making appointments, with or on behalf of the young person, through to taking young people to appointments, or accompanying them at appointments/meetings.

- Assisting young people to identify and access support services (and specialist services) that can broaden their support networks. Where it is assessed that young people will have ongoing support needs, personal advisers should identify services that can continue when the leaving care responsibilities end.

- Personal advisers should take responsibility for liaison with all parties involved in the young person's support/network, i.e., family, staying put carer, keyworker, housing officer, health professionals, education and training professionals and any other relevant individual or agency. This will depending on the needs of the individual young person and may also vary over time.

- Ensure each young person has an accommodation pathway that may involve helping them to access 'Staying Put', supported lodgings, supported accommodation, independent accommodation (from the housing department, housing associations or other registered providers), private sector accommodation or arrangements where young people live with family or friends.

- Provide practical support, for example, helping young people to complete forms, access benefits and other services. The approach should always be one of transferable learning, i.e. completing the required task with the young person, but with the aim of enabling the young person to complete the task at a future point without assistance. This approach will need to be tailored to each young person, some will only need assistance with a task once, and others may require longer term and/or ongoing assistance.

- Ensue that on reaching the age of 21 all young people have a portfolio of documents/certificates and information about their care and family background with a detailed chronology of significant events and dates:
    - A Comprehensive health history and family health history, including a record of immunisations, significant illnesses and accidents, allergies etc, the information should include information about their family health issues and any hereditary illnesses or health risks;
    - Comprehensive information about their family history;
    - Comprehensive information about their care and leaving care history which includes all of their placements, placement addresses and details and dates;
    - Information about why they came into care;
    - A detailed eco-map, genogram or information about significant family and important people and their contact information and details.

- To provide a consistent and positive role model for young people leaving care, i.e., ensure young people know how to contact their personal adviser and when their next appointment or meeting is, to be on time for appointments/meetings, to ensure completion of all agreed tasks, or an explanation of why tasks have been delayed/not completed or changed.

- To provide emotional support to young people by encouraging, positively challenging and pro-actively keeping in touch with young people. This should include being aware of significant events for individual young people and contacting them before/after these events to encourage, support and 'listen'. For example, personal, phone or text contact before exams or interviews can often be very supportive and will indicate an interest in the young person, additionally a phone call after a driving test or difficult anniversary indicates an interest in the young person's situation.

- Attend meetings appointments (both in and out of office hours).

- Arrange leaving care financial support in accordance with the leaving care finance policy in a timely and proactive manner.

- Keep in regular contact.

- Be aware of any risk issues and work to manage identified risks; where appropriate with other professionals and agencies, for example, being aware of substance misuse, sexual exploitation, gang issues, offending issues, self-harming, ‘missing’ episodes, exploitation by family and friends. In addition, by being aware of any risks that the care leaver may pose to others, for example to their own children, to exploiting others to bullying others.

- Ensure accurate and timely records are keep of all contacts with young people and the different professionals/agencies involved with each young person.

- Ensure managers are informed and kept up-to date with any issues to do with the young person that may pose a risk to them, others or the reputation of the local authority.

- Complete statutory visiting requirements at the proscribed frequency. Statutory visits and/or eight weekly visits must take place within the young person accommodation, in part to assess how well they are managing independent living.

- To act in a professional manner at all times.

Appendix One – Roles and Responsibilities

Transition to Adulthood – Leaving Care Requirements

Roles and Responsibilities – Leaving Care Assessment of Need, Pathway Plan, Personal Adviser

The responsibility for undertaking and completing the Leaving Care Assessment of Need is the Social Worker who holds social work case responsibility in whichever team the child/young person's case is located. A) Locality Team, B) Permanence Team, C) Next Steps Team, D) Disabled Children's Team.

The Leaving Care Assessment of Need should commence when the child reaches the aged of 15½ and should be completed when the young person becomes an 'Eligible' child (at the age of 16) as defined within the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations and Guidance 2015.

The Leaving Care Assessment of Need should be approved by the child, the child's social worker, the independent reviewing officer and the social workers manager. In situations where differences exist between the views of the child, the parent (s), the placement provider, the independent reviewing officer, the social worker (or any parties) these should be set out within the Leaving Care Assessment of Need.

Once the Leaving Care Assessment of Need has been completed and approved, it should form the basis of the initial Pathway Plan. The Leaving Care Assessment of Need and Pathway Plan must be completed at the latest within 3 months of the child becoming an 'Eligible' child (age 16 and 3 months).

The responsibility for completing and up-dating the Pathway Plan (alongside the Care Plan) is the Social Worker who holds social work case responsibility in whichever team the case is located. A) Locality Team, B) Permanence Team, C) Next Steps Team, D) Disabled Children's Team.

From the age of 16, all children looked after who are, or will become 'Eligible' children are required to have a named Leaving Care Personal Adviser. The Social Worker who holds social work case responsibility in whichever team the case is located. A) Locality Team, B) Permanence Team, C) Next Steps Team, D) Disabled Children's Team will also be deemed the Leaving Care Personal Adviser and is responsible for the completion and up-dating of the Pathway Plan.

In situations where a potential conflict exists between the 16 & 17 year old child looked after and the local authority, the respective case holding team should allocate an additional unqualified worker (as well as the Social Worker) who will be deemed the Leaving Care Personal Adviser. This will ensure that there is a separation between the Social Worker responsible for developing the Pathway Plan and the Leaving Care Personal Adviser providing services to ensure tasks identified in the Pathway Plan are achieved.

The separation between the worker responsible for developing the Pathway Plan and the worker delivering services ensures that the functions of the leaving care service (personal adviser) are compliant with the Caerphilly/Munby Judgment. In these situation the child looked after should also have an independent advocate.

In the discharge of their function when reviewing the Care Plan and Pathway Plan, the Independent Reviewing Officer will ensure the Leaving Care Assessment of Need and the (Care Plan) Pathway Plan provides an impartial assessment and planning tool for delivering a 'leaving care service'. Furthermore, the independent advocate provides an additional impartial oversight mechanism.

16 & 17 'Relevant' children are not required to have a named qualified Social Worker, but will have a named Leaving Care Personal Adviser.

Case Transfer to the Next Steps Team

In situations where a child looked after is social work case held within a Locality Team, social work and leaving care responsibility will transfer to the Next Steps Team in accord with the Locality to Permanence Team, Transfer Protocol.

All children social work case held within the Locality Team or Next Steps Team will be allocated a Leaving Care Personal Adviser from the Next Steps Team on reaching the age of 17½. Social work case responsibility remains with the Social Worker until the child reaches the age of 18. On reaching the age of 18, case and leaving care responsibility for the young person transfers to the named Leaving Care Personal Adviser in the Next Steps Team.

Children with Disabilities

In situations where a child looked after is case held within the Disabled Children's Team, a Leaving Care Personal Adviser from the Next Steps Team will be allocated at the age of 17½. The Next Steps Leaving Care Personal Adviser will work alongside the Disabled Children's Team Social Worker/Leaving Care Personal Adviser (who retains case responsibility) (and adult services assessing worker) until the child reaches the age of 18 and ceases to be looked after. From the age of 18 the leaving care responsibility transfers to the Next Steps Leaving Care Personal Adviser and the adult services responsibility transfers to the relevant Adult Services team.