

THROUGH CARE SERVICE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Responsible Officer:	Nancy Meehan, Divisional Director Children's Social Care
Author:	Eliza Meechan, Consultant & Steve Hart, Consultant
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1. Introduction

London Borough of Tower Hamlets is committed to enabling all young people to make a successful transition to a secure, independent adulthood. We will help young people develop the essential practical and life skills they need. In addition, we will actively encourage and support them to develop their aspirations and to participate in education, employment or training. This revised policy underpins that commitment.

As corporate parents, our aspirations for the future of young people leaving our care, continues well into their adulthood. The Through Care Service offers continuity of support for care leavers from the age of 14 – 25 years. We support them to stay healthy and work with them to build on their strengths while they are in our care to develop their independence into adulthood.

The Through Care Service delivers person centred care and support. All young people are treated as individuals and respected and valued as unique. The Through Care Service is committed to learning from the young people with whom we work. We involve young people fully in the day to day running of the service and actively seek their feedback, using it to directly improve and shape service delivery.

1.1. The Seven Corporate Parenting Principles

The Through Care Service provided in Tower Hamlets is based upon the seven corporate parenting principles set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 which requires us to:

- act in the best interests of young people and promote their health and wellbeing
- encourage young people to express their views, feelings and wishes
- take account of children and young people's views, feelings and wishes
- help children to access and make best use of services provided by councils and relevant partners
- promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for young people
- support children and young people in keeping safe and to have stable home lives, relationships, education or work
- prepare young people for adulthood and independent living

1.2. Changes to Policy and Procedures

This revised policy sets out some significant changes to the way in which the Leaving Care Service and Children Looked After Service is delivered in Tower Hamlets. These changes reflect those made to legislation and those requested by young people, Personal Advisors and social workers throughout consultation. The service will work collaboratively with the Looked After Children team adopting integrated approaches to support young people from the age of 14 (rather than 17 years and nine months); ensuring continuity of support and effective pathway planning. Support will also be offered to all young people leaving care up to the age of 25 years, in line with changes to legislation and according to LBTH's Local Offer.

This commitment to seamless transition from Looked After status to adulthood is also reflected in the use of the term 'Through Care' throughout this document.

1.3. Scope

The policy applies to young people who are or have been in care and are entitled to support after their 16th birthday via The Children Leaving Care Act 2000. Appropriate through care intervention will be considered for all looked after young people from the first Looked After Child (LAC) review after their 14th birthday reflecting an understanding that some young people's level of maturity means that they are ready to begin the process of actively thinking about their mid and longer-term futures. This was a strong argument also made by some care leavers with whom we consulted.

There are three categories of those leaving care all of whom are entitled to support after their 16th birthday. The categories are 'eligible', 'relevant' and 'former relevant'. This policy also refers to qualifying young people who may receive support, advice and assistance after their 16th birthday. (see Section 2 below).

1.4. Related guidance

Care Leavers Charter (DfE) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-leavers-charter>

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers (revised January 2015)

Children and Social Work Act (2017) Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 3

[LBTH Staying Put Procedure](#)

Extending Personal Advisor support to all care leavers to age 25; Statutory guidance for local authorities (February 2018)

[LBTH Children Looked After Remands to Local Authority Accommodation and Youth Detention Accommodation Procedure](#)

2. Definitions

Eligible young person

Aged 16 or 17 and have been Looked After for a total of at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and are still in care. There is a duty to support these young people up to the age of 18, wherever they are living.

The statutory definition and requirements to undertake a needs assessment, prepare a Pathway Plan, keep the Pathway under review and appoint a Personal Advisor are covered by regulations 42,43 and 44 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 (reviewed Jan 2015).

Relevant young person

Aged 16 or 17, have left care and at the point they left care were Eligible children.

If, after leaving care, a young person returns home for a period of 6 months or more to be cared for by a parent and the return home has been formally agreed as successful, s/he will no longer be a 'relevant young person'.

A young person is also 'relevant' if, having been in care for three months or more s/he is then detained after their 16th birthday either in hospital, remand centre, young offenders' institution or secure training centre. There is a duty to support relevant young people up to the age of 18, wherever they are living.

The statutory definition and requirements to stay in touch with the young person, undertake a needs assessment (unless this was done when the young person was 'Eligible'), prepare the Pathway Plan, keep the Pathway Plan under review, appoint a Personal Advisor (unless this was done when the young person was 'Eligible') and provide accommodation and assistance to meet his / her needs in relation to education, training or employment are covered by regulations 4 to 9 of the Care Leavers Regulations (2010).

Former relevant young person

Aged 18- 25 and have left care having previously been either Eligible or Relevant or both. There is a duty to support these young people wherever they are living.

The statutory definition and requirements to stay in touch with the young person, keep the Pathway Plan under review, continue the appointment of a Personal Advisor and provide financial assistance to the extent that the young person's educational or training needs require it, are covered by regulations 4 to 9 of the Care Leavers Regulations (2010).

Where the local authority is supporting a young person through a continuous course of education or training that has been agreed in their Pathway Plan, they remain Former Relevant children until the end of that course.

The 2017 Children and Social Work Act (Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 3) requires local authorities to continue the appointment of a personal advisor for care leavers who request one up until the age of 25, regardless of whether the young person intends to pursue education or training. The local authority also has a duty to carry out an assessment of the young person's needs and to provide the necessary advice and support.

The new duty enables care leavers to request Personal Advisor support at any point after the age of 21, up to the age of 25 even if they had previously ceased receiving support when they reached 21. The Personal Advisor must assess the young person's needs and develop a Pathway Plan setting out what support the local authority will provide.

Qualifying young person

Aged between 16 and 21, or under 25 if in full-time further education or training, who: and have been Looked After or, if disabled, have been Privately Fostered after reaching 16, but do not qualify as Eligible, Relevant or Former Relevant.

Personal Advisor

A Personal Advisor is the person appointed to work with every Looked After young person, on the young person's 16th birthday. The Personal Advisor will provide advice and guidance in relation to practical and emotional support required to make a successful transition to adulthood, either directly or through helping the young person to build a positive social network around them.

The Personal Advisor will hold a pivotal role in the planning and review of services as set out in the relevant Pathway Plan and will coordinate with other agencies as necessary. This includes evaluating the effectiveness, reviewing and implementing the young person's relevant pathway plan.

For more information about the role of the Personal Advisor, please refer to section 5.

Pathway Plan

The Pathway Plan sets out the route to the future for young people leaving care and will state how their needs will be met in their path to independence. The Personal Advisor is responsible for developing the relevant pathway plan with the young person, based upon the assessment of need carried out by the social worker. The plan should be a live document, which the young person (with support from their Personal Advisor) will continue to implement and review at least until they are 21; and up to 25 if in full-time further education or if they request it.

For more information about pathway planning please refer to section 6.

3. Introducing the Through Care Service to Looked After Children

The model for joint working between the Children Looked After team and the Through Care Service has been developed in consultation with professionals within both services and the young people who benefit from them. The model was designed to ensure that young people receive the right support at the right time for them and that this is provided by the most appropriate professionals, given the young person's needs.

The Through Care Service can be available to all looked after children from the age of 14 years. The decision about introducing the service and allocating a Personal Advisor and beginning joint working will be made between the Team Managers of the Through Care Service and Children Looked After Service. If there is a disagreement, the Service Manager will make the final decision. The decision will take into account the views of the young person, his or her emotional maturity, practical self-care and independent living skills and also their ETE status. There will be a conscious effort to avoid overwhelming the young person. The decision will be considered and endorsed on a case by case basis following careful consideration

from the point of the first Looked After Child (LAC) review after the young person's 14th birthday. This should be reviewed at subsequent Looked After Reviews, if the decision is not to refer the young person to the Through Care Service at age 14.

3.1. In Preparation for the LAC Review After the 14th Birthday

In preparation for the LAC review after a young person's 14th birthday, the Social Worker should consider whether referral to the Through Care Service is appropriate. The Social Worker should consult with colleagues in the Through Care Service about the implications of the introduction. Any recommendation to introduce the Through Care Service at this point should be accompanied by evidence of the young person's readiness to be allocated a Personal Advisor in the LAC review report and the Care Plan.

Prior to the LAC review, the IRO will also be required to speak to the young person in private (regulation 36). The purpose of this meeting is to discuss with the young person matters to be considered at the review and for the child to raise any issues. This provides an opportunity for the IRO to discuss the possibility of the introduction of the Through Care Service and to understand the young person's views about whether this would be beneficial.

Once, a recommendation is made at the LAC Review to introduce The Through Care Service to a young person prior to them being 15 years and 9 months old, , the social worker will notify the Through Care Service Team Manager. If the decision to allocate a Personal Advisor is endorsed at the review, the Through Care Team Manager will allocate a Personal Advisor. The Personal Advisor will subsequently commence working in partnership with the Social Worker (lead professional) and the young person.

3.2. Joint working from 14 years

Following agreement at the LAC review that the young person would benefit from a Through Care Service intervention from 14 years, a comprehensive needs assessment will be completed and a Personal Advisor will be allocated. The Personal Advisor will meet with the young person and their social worker to develop a Pathway Plan (see section 6) which complements the care plan. It is anticipated that the Pathway Plan will focus on a few clearly defined areas commensurate with the young person's age and maturity.

The social worker and Personal Advisor will work jointly with the young person providing clearly defined yet complementary roles and responsibilities (see model in section 3.3 below). This joint working will continue until the young person reaches 18 years of age, when the Personal Advisor becomes the lead professional.

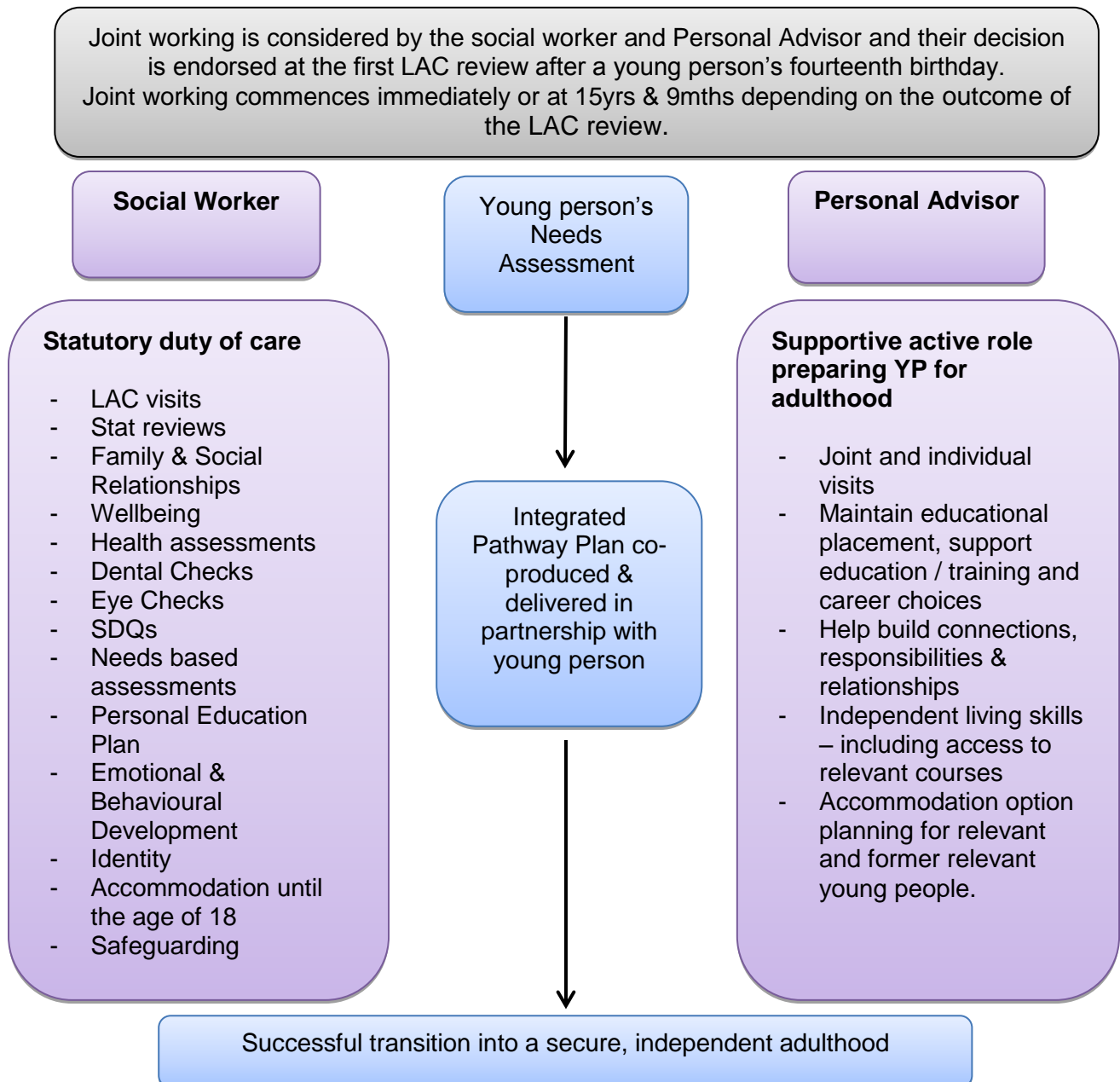
3.3. Joint Working from 16 years

Where it is agreed at the LAC review that the young person would not benefit from the introduction of a Personal Advisor at the age of 14 years, a PA will be allocated from the age of 15 years and 9 months. A joint needs assessment will

be completed, and a Pathway Plan will be co-produced by the Personal Advisor and young person based upon the assessment. The Pathway Plan will replace, but will be informed by, the young person's care plan.

The social worker and Personal Advisor work jointly with the young person until the age of 18 years, when the Personal Advisor becomes the lead professional.

3.4. Joint Working Model



4. Assessment of Need

A multi-agency assessment of need must be completed for all young people who are eligible, relevant and former relevant by the allocated social worker. This must examine the support, advice, assistance and skills they will need when transitioning to the Through Care Service.

The young person's social worker will be responsible for coordinating the needs assessment. The young person's care plan together with information from the most recent assessment should form the basis of the needs assessment and be discussed at every review after their 14th birthday up to age 15 years and 9 months. .

Where it is agreed (at the first review) that the introduction of the Through Care Service should be deferred; the needs assessment will take place as soon as a young person reaches 15 years and 9 months and no more than 2 months after the young person's 16th birthday prior to the transfer of the case to the Through Care Service or after the young person becomes eligible or relevant if this is later. The timetable must take account of any forthcoming exams and avoid disrupting the young person's preparation for them.

The young person's social worker is responsible for recording the assessment information and conclusions as well as the outcome of any meetings held. The young person must be invited to attend any meetings held in connection with the assessment, which will be held at times suitable for the young person. They should be supported to attend if necessary. Should the young person choose to not attend, consideration should be given to encouraging their contribution in other ways e.g. in writing, through an advocate etc.

The needs assessment should take account of the views of the following, but should not be limited to:

- the young person;
- the parents;
- the current carer;
- the school/college and the education service;
- any Independent Visitor;
- any person providing health care or treatment for the young person;
- the Personal Advisor;
- any other relevant person including, in the case of a young person with special needs, a representative from Adult Services.
- Immigration
- Any other vulnerabilities

A decision not to include significant people must be recorded in the young person's framework-I file and the reasons should be explicit.

Young people with particular language or communication needs will be provided with appropriate interpretation, translation or advocacy support throughout the process.

Where the young person chooses not to engage in the assessment process, this should be recorded, together with any actions taken to ascertain the young person's views.

All parties, including the social worker's manager, should sign the completed needs assessment record. The young person should be provided with a copy in a format that is accessible to him or her within 2 weeks. The social worker is responsible for ensuring that the outcome of the assessment is explained to the young person.

The Pathway Plan will commence at age 15 years and 9 months, and it will be informed by the Social Worker's needs assessment and care plan. This will also apply to young people who have been allocated a Personal Advisor from the Through Care Service prior to age 15 years and 9 months.

Where the young person continues to be Looked After, the Placement Plan should describe what arrangements have been made within the placement to support the Pathway Plan.

The needs assessment will examine (but not restricted to):

- the young person's health and development;
- the young person's need for education, training or employment
- the support available to the child from members of their family and other people
- the young person's financial needs
- the extent to which the young person possesses the practical and other skills necessary for independent living
- the young person's needs for care, support and accommodation

5. Personal Advisors

The Personal Advisor and the social worker will work collaboratively to deliver an integrated and as far as possible seamless service for the young person until they reach the age of 18 years, providing distinct but complementary roles. When the young person turns 18, the Personal Advisor will become the lead professional; offering support and intervention up to the age of 25.

The Personal Advisor acts as the young person's principal source of contact in any matter relating to the relevant Pathway Plan, and is accountable for the effective implementation of the Plan. The eligible Pathway Plan (whilst the young person remains looked after) remains the responsibility of the allocated Social Worker.

The Personal Advisor will ensure the coordination of other agencies and individuals identified in the relevant Pathway Plan.

It is the role of the Personal Advisor to keep in touch with the young person and to remain informed about the young person's progress. The Personal Advisor must maintain a written record of their contact with the young person, monitoring the effectiveness and impact of services in preparing the young person for a time when they will move to greater independence.

When a young person moves into new accommodation, the Personal Advisor must see them at that accommodation within 7 days of the move.

On each visit the Personal Advisor must consider whether the young person's living arrangement continues to be suitable for their needs.

The Personal Advisor is responsible for initiating relevant Pathway Plan reviews and for recording the outcomes.

Where possible and appropriate, Tower Hamlets' Through Care Service maintains the same Personal Advisor for a young person throughout their leaving care journey. Where this is not possible the transfer of the Personal Advisor will be undertaken in a planned and managed way.

6. Pathway Planning

All young people will have an eligible Pathway Plan by their 16th birthday or when they become eligible. Transition to adulthood for Looked After Children should be integral to the care planning process. Reviews of the eligible Pathway Plan will be chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer. .

From the age of 16 a young person's eligible Pathway Plan will replace; but will be informed by a young person's Care Plan and the needs based assessment.

The young person plays a significant role in co-producing their own Pathway Plan with support from their Social Worker (for all eligible young people) and/or their Personal Advisor. They will work together to set goals, identify how the local authority will help meet them, including any services being provided in respect of the young person's disability, needs arising from being in custody or as a result of entering the country as an unaccompanied asylum seeker. The young person's particular language or communication needs will be considered throughout the process, with relevant interpretation, translation or advocacy support provided as required.

The Pathway Plan must be SMART and it must clearly identify the roles of each person who has a part to play in supporting the care leaver.

The Pathway Plan should include:

- the nature and level of contact and personal support to be provided, and by whom, to the young person
- a detailed plan for education or training of the young person when s/he ceases to be Looked After
- how the London Borough of Tower Hamlets will support the young person in obtaining employment or other purposeful activity or occupation, taking into account his / her aspirations, skills and educational potential
- the financial support to be provided to enable the young person to meet accommodation and maintenance costs; taking into account his / her financial

capabilities and money management capacity, along with strategies to develop skills in this area

- details of the accommodation the young person is to occupy. This should include an assessment of its suitability in the light of the young person's needs and the details of the considerations taken into account in assessing that suitability
- details of the arrangements made by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets to meet the young person's needs in relation to his or her identity, with particular regard to their religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background.
- a programme to develop the practical and other skills necessary for the young person to live independently;
- details of the young person's health needs, including any mental health needs, and how they are to be met;
- citizenship needs including a young person's rights and responsibilities
- contingency plans for action to be taken by the responsible authority should the pathway plan for any reason cease to be effective.

Under each section of the plan, the contributions of the young person will be recorded.

A financial summary should be attached to the plan. This must be submitted to the Through Care Service Business Manager within 24 hours of completion to be logged on the service financial forecast document and so that the necessary weekly payments can be processed.

Where a transfer from Children's to Adult Services will be required, the lead professional should ensure that Adult Services are notified. This will allow them to ensure a seamless and timely transition.

The plan should be approved and signed off by a Through Care Service Team Manager.

A copy of the plan will be shared with the young person, who will influence through their contribution, decisions about with whom the plan will be shared.

7. Review of Pathways plans

The Pathway Plan must be reviewed at least every 6 months. Reviews should take place more often if requested by the young person or the Personal Advisor or where there has been a significant change in circumstances.

<i>Scheduling of first review of pathway plan</i>	
<i>Eligible young person</i>	To coincide with the next Looked After Review after the pathway plan is drawn up
<i>Relevant young person</i>	Set at the last Looked After Review before the young person ceases to be looked after or within 6 months of becoming Relevant
<i>Former Relevant young person</i>	Within 6 months of the young person's 18 th birthday

The purpose of the review is to reflect upon and evaluate the progress and impact of the Pathway Plan and to assess whether the milestones are still appropriate and are being achieved.

Decisions about which other professionals will be invited to attend the review will be led by the young person. Invitations should be extended to those with contributions to make, but care should be taken not to overwhelm the young person.

The Personal Advisor will usually visit the young person in their accommodation to complete the review. However, reviews may take place exceptionally by email or over the phone if agreed in advance by the young person, the chairperson and the Personal Advisor. The rules to be applied in this circumstance will be that

- the young person wants it to happen without a face to face review
- there is no impediment to the process of assuring that the statutory responsibilities will be fulfilled in entirety
- the needs of the young person can be properly explored.

Where contact is lost with the young person, the emphasis of the Pathway Plan Review will switch to make plans and record attempts to re-establish contact using all available means to establish their whereabouts. A route back for the young person to seek support in the future should be kept open and communicated; for example, by sending birthday cards and appropriate festive greetings and ensuring that the young person receives any circulated information about services or events in which they may have an interest.

Where a Pathway Plan is amended as a result of a review, the Personal Advisor will update the plan assuring that the spirit of co-production with the young person is assured. Any necessary approval to amended financial arrangements will be sought from the Team Manager or Service Manager depending on the amount and duration of the extra cost. Once the changes are approved, the Personal Advisor will send a copy of the amended plan to the young person, the Chairperson, the Team Manager, Service Manager and Framework-I will be immediately updated.

7.1. The role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

For all care leavers aged 16 or 17, the IRO will offer to arrange for up to three further independent reviews of the young person's Pathway Plan following them ceasing to be looked after. The decision to continue the independent oversight of the Pathway Plan will be led by the young person.

If the young person decides not to proceed with the arrangement, the IRO will inform the Social Worker and/or Personal Advisor of this decision. The Pathway Plan will then be reviewed by the lead professional.

7.2. 'Unregulated' accommodation

If the Relevant Young Person moves to 'unregulated' accommodation (i.e. accommodation that is not regulated/inspected by OFSTED), Children's Placement Team (CPT) will notify the Personal Advisor who must:

- arrange a pathway plan review within 28 days (or as soon as practicable thereafter) from the time the accommodation is provided; and
- determine at what intervals (not exceeding six months) subsequent reviews must be carried out;
- take action to bring forward reviews when there is an assessed risk that a crisis may develop in a young person's life, for example when:
 - a young person has been charged with an offence and there is a possibility of a custodial sentence which inevitably risks the young person's living arrangements
 - a young person is at risk of being evicted from his or her accommodation or otherwise threatened with homelessness
 - professionals are concerned about the parenting capacity of a 'Relevant' or 'Former Relevant' young person in circumstances where their own child may need to be the subject of a multi-agency child protection plan;
 - a young person requests a review.

Matters to which the Personal Advisor is to have regard in determining suitability of accommodation (under Schedule 2 to the Care Leavers Regulations 2010 and Schedule 6 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010):

In respect of the accommodation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilities and services provided; • The state of repair; • The safety; • The location; • The support; • The tenancy status; and • The financial commitments involved for the relevant young person and their affordability
In respect of the young person:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His or her views about the accommodation; • His or her understanding of their rights and responsibilities in relation to the accommodation; and • His or her understanding of funding arrangements.

A review is required within 28 days of any change in the care leaver's living arrangements.

Note: Bed and Breakfast Accommodation is not considered as suitable accommodation other than in exceptional circumstances. On such occasions:

- the placement must be limited to two working days and any exception to this requirement must be notified immediately to the service manager and Divisional Director and their agreement sought;
- the Local Authority provides appropriate supervision and contact with the young person.

7.3. Reviews where a young person enters custody

Where a Relevant or Former Relevant young person enters custody, pathway planning must continue and review should be held within 28 days of the young person becoming incarcerated. The young person must be visited on a regular basis

and it is good practice for the first visit to take place within ten working days. The role must not be fulfilled by a Youth Offending Service (YOS) worker. The Personal Advisor must liaise with the YOS, Probation Provider or Offender Manager to support the young person emotionally, practically and financially while in custody. A review of the Pathway Plan should be carried out at least six weeks before the young person's release to give sufficient time to plan for his or her resettlement. This includes ensuring that the young person is able to move into suitable accommodation, with the right kind of timely support on release from custody. Arrangements to collect the young person from custody must be made and sources of support for their return to their community must be specified and fully understood by the young person.

For full details of the steps required to ensure that care leavers can access suitable accommodation on release from custody, refer to section [6.43 of The Children Act 1989: guidance and regulations, volume 3](#).

8. Accommodation Pathway

The accommodation needs of all young people entitled to Through Care Services will be considered as part of their individual needs assessment and Pathway Plan. When an ongoing accommodation need is established, the Personal Advisor / lead professional will work with the Through Care Housing Support Officer and other professionals involved with the case (e.g. key workers, foster carers etc) to explore accommodation options which meet the young person's identified needs. The case will then be presented to the Independent Placement Overview Panel (IPOP) to seek consent to identify and commission a placement. The point at which the case is presented to the IPOP will depend upon the individual's needs and circumstance, but must take place before they reach the age of 16 years and 6 months. All placements are reviewed at regular intervals by the IPOP to ensure that they continue to meet the young person's needs.

It is important to note that no direct discussions with any accommodation provider will take place prior to a case being presented to the IPOP.

8.1. Presenting to the Independent Placement Overview Panel (IPOP)

All decisions relating to new placements or changes in placements are made by the IPOP, which is chaired by the Divisional Director for Children's Social Care and meets fortnightly. In exceptional emergency situations, where an accommodation decision is required before the next IPOP meeting, a decision will be made by two Service Managers and will be presented to the next IPOP for scrutiny and /or endorsement.

In preparation for the IPOP, the allocated Personal Advisor / lead professional should consult with the Through Care Housing Support Officer for advice about possible housing options. This should include producing a statement of expected costs (including rent and service charges). The Personal Advisor / the Lead Professional will work with the young person and other relevant professionals to develop a costed support package which complements the housing options and takes into account the young person's or care leaver's needs, their independent

living skills and their long term accommodation plans. Payments that are made for services to meet the particular needs of a young person can be made but will always be reviewed. In exceptional circumstances, additional short-term payments may be made to manage a crisis in a young person's life. The decision to do so will always require the agreement of two service managers and such payments can only be made for 6 weeks in the first instance and any extension will require IPOP approval. The proposed housing option and support package will be presented to the IPOP using the IPOP referral form. This must also include a costed contingency plan for consideration; the Housing Support Officer will need to provide the costings.

Following agreement by the IPOP, the Through Care Housing Support Officer will source the placement and notify the commissioning team of the requirements so that the accommodation can be secured via the Borough's block or spot purchase commissioning agreements.

8.2. Accommodation options

Accommodation options for care leavers range from high to low support. IPOP decisions about which option is most appropriate will be based upon the comprehensive needs assessment.

Housing and Support Options for Care Leavers			
Short Stay / Emergency	High Support	Medium Support	Low Support
Spot purchased high support accommodation from specialist providers	Small high support units	Supported accommodation offering medium levels / floating support	Shared housing with floating support
Short breaks	Specialist supported accommodation		Self-contained accommodation with floating support
Emergency assessment bed	Adult placements for those with specific physical or mental health requirements		University placement (including provision outside of term time)
			Family placement
			Private rented
 <p>The housing and support options may be stepped up or down as and when required in accordance with changes in the young person's needs and circumstance. Any decision to change the housing and support option must be presented to the IPOP.</p>			

a) Spot Purchased High Support Accommodation

High support accommodation may be spot purchased from specialist providers for a period set by the IPOP to respond to the specific needs of a young person. Although the borough is strengthening its commissioning arrangements to reduce the use of spot purchasing arrangements, it is recognised that there may be instances where this is the only available option. In these circumstances, high support accommodation will only be commissioned from providers who meet the quality assurance standards required by the Tower Hamlets Commissioning Team (include standards as appendix).

b) Supported Housing

Tower Hamlets commissions a range of placements in supported housing providing low, medium and high support depending on the young person's need. The block contract for this housing is managed by the Commissioning Team. Where the IPOP confirms that supported housing is required for a young person, the Through Care Housing Support Officer will identify a suitable placement which will be secured by the Commissioning Team through the contract.

c) Self-Contained Accommodation

Self-contained accommodation placements are commissioned via the block contract managed by the Commissioning Team. Floating support is provided to assist care leavers to settle into their accommodation and their local community. Where the IPOP decides that self-contained accommodation is required, the Through Care Housing Support Officer will identify a suitable placement which will be secured by the Commissioning Team through the contract.

d) Shared Housing

The Commissioning Team is currently developing a Service Level Agreement with approved landlords to provide shared housing for young people who are nearly ready for independent living. Moving into shared housing is an important step for care leavers, offering a balance of independence with the security of 'light touch' floating support as and when required. Where shared housing is the option approved by the IPOP, the Through Care Housing Support Officer will identify a suitable placement which will be secured by the Commissioning Team through the Service Level Agreement.

e) University Accommodation

When a care leaver plans to go to university, the personal Advisor and / or Social Worker should make a referral to IPOP at the earliest opportunity to ensure that an approved plan is in place, should the care leaver's university application be successful. It is acknowledged that because of the university clearing house system that some IPOP presentations will be at unavoidably short notice. University accommodation is usually funded by accessing the maximum available maintenance loan, topped up by local authority funding.

In addition to determining how the placement will be funded, the plan will need to consider the care leaver's accommodation and support needs during the summer break. Following discussion at the IPOP, the Through Care Housing Support Officer will identify a suitable living arrangement that will be secured by the Commissioning Team through the block contract.

f) Family reunification

Some care leavers decide to return to the family home. In these circumstances floating support is usually provided in addition to the support from a personal Advisor. Although the IPOP will not be responsible for making the

accommodation decision here, it is essential that a clear contingency plan is presented to the panel, which can be implemented at short notice should reunification be unsuccessful.

g) Private Rented Accommodation

Some care leavers decide to rent privately as they do not accept or otherwise take up the arrangements proposed by the Local Authority. The Through Care Service does not endorse such placements but will provide advice and guidance as required and agreed in the Pathway Plan.

h) 'Staying Put'

A staying put arrangement is where a young person who has been living in foster care remains, by agreement, in the former foster home after they reach the age of 18.

The decision to recommend that a foster placement should become a Staying Put arrangement will usually be made at an eligible Pathway Plan review meeting which is chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer. This will be a joint decision between the social worker, young person, foster carer, supervising social worker and young person's Personal Advisor.

The formal arrangement to move to a 'staying put' accommodation must conclude at least six months before the young person's 18th birthday but exceptionally can take place later (such as for children who come into care at a very late stage). The discussions should commence prior to the young person transitioning to the Through Care Service.

The allocated social worker will be responsible for the work leading to the recommendation, which will be incorporated into the young person's Pathway Plan and the Staying Put recommendation must be submitted to the IPOP for approval.

The Pathway Plan will outline the foster carer and the young person's responsibilities for undertaking specific independent living skills tasks. The Staying Put arrangements will be reviewed regularly through the Pathway Plan Review process to ensure that they still meet the assessed need of the young person, and that plans are being progressed for a transition to independence or appropriate adult services.

For further information, please refer to [LBTH Staying Put Procedure](#)

i) Permanent Tenancy

The decision to apply for a Permanent Local authority tenancy in the Borough will only be taken after the Personal Advisor has assessed the young person as competent to take up a tenancy and ready for independent living via the independent living skills assessment checklist.

All applications for permanent tenancy must be made via the Through Care Housing Officer to ensure that they are given priority status by the Housing Department. The young person must not have any rent arrears at the point of application and he/she will have completed all relevant programmes, such as MYBNK money management course and any available tenancy sustainability courses.

The young person will be able to apply for properties that are advertised and that interest them under the choice-based lettings scheme. The Personal Advisor and the Through Care Housing Officer will assist with the process of making a suitable application for a property.

8.3. Placement Reviews

All living arrangements will be reviewed at regular intervals by the IPOP, the exact timescale being determined by the young person's circumstance. This will include examining whether the placement continues to meet the needs of the young person and whether it offers value for money. It will also assist the process of forward financial planning.

Any planned decisions to change placements will be made by the IPOP. Any emergency moves that are endorsed by two Service Manager, will need to be returned to IPOP to be reviewed.

9. Education, Training and Employment

The primary responsibility for matters relating to individual student's education, training and employment options from year 11 onwards remains with the allocated Social Worker. This includes organising the Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings in year 12 and year 13

9.1. Planning for Education, Training and Careers

As part of the commitment to encourage care leavers to aspire to success and achievement, they must be provided with access to high quality information, advice and guidance to inform their plans in order to progress into continuing education, training or employment. Their Pathway Plans should detail the actions they are to be taken and the support they are to receive to achieve their aims. They should be offered work experience and other opportunities to allow them to test their career aspirations and needs. Career planning tools should be used to inform Pathway Plans.

The local authority will make every effort not to disrupt a young person's education during their key stage 4 years, both in terms of their school and care placement unless the circumstances clearly require this. This will need to be approved by the Divisional Director.

Young people considering attending university will be actively encouraged and the Through Care Service is committed to supporting the application. Term time and vacation living arrangements will be agreed in advance and every effort will be made to avoid unnecessary disruption of these arrangements.

In relation to the young people who are Appeal Rights Exhausted (ARE), the Through Care Service will explore voluntary skill training to engage them in meaningful day time activity.

9.2. Care Leavers Continuing in Education

Where young people are continuing with an education or training course beyond their 21st birthday, the practical and financial support being provided must continue to be set out in their Pathway Plan.

Pathway Plans must also set out accommodation arrangements, including financial arrangements during term time, short vacations and the long summer vacation.

9.3. The 16-19 Bursary Fund and Higher Education Bursary

The 16-19 Bursary Fund helps young people continue in further education, when otherwise they might face financial barriers to participation such as the cost of transport, food or equipment. Young people in the defined group include those in care and care leavers and the Through Care service will actively encourage applications to be made. See the [Department for Education website/The 16-19 Bursary Fund](#).

All Young people in education will also be further supported to access the Tower Hamlets Education Maintenance Allowance (TH- EMA) put in place by the Mayor. See the [Tower Hamlets website student finance section](#).

9.4. The Role of the Virtual School

The Through Care Service is committed to ensuring that all young people avoid becoming disengaged from education, employment and training (EET). As part of its drive to ensure that young people maximise their potential, the Virtual School will support Personal Advisors in developing, with young people, an understanding of their educational goals and aspirations. Virtual School staff, Personal Advisor and the allocated Social Worker will work together to support young people transitioning from 11-16 schooling and in developing joint Personal Education Plans (PEPs).

Specifically, the virtual school offer will be extended to provide services for care leavers aged 16+ years and young people under 16 will have access to 'aspirational' activities such as holiday work experience, knowledge of apprenticeships and options for appropriate vocational courses to widen their options and aspirations into adulthood.

The Electronic PEP (EPEP) system will also be extended to offer a coherent education plan that is based upon a young person's full educational journey. EPEP will bring forward all previous PEP's to ensure that planning is based upon a full understanding of the young person's prior attainment. This will mean the quality of support for young people aged between 16 and 19 years will be consistent, challenging and realistic as it builds on previous achievements while addressing areas of learning that are still outstanding. For example many of our children finish KS4 without Level 2 qualifications in English, Mathematics or both which are essential for progression. This change will ensure, subject to the consent of young people aged 18+ that Pathway Plans incorporate young people's full educational records and are realistic while supporting high aspiration.

The Virtual School will provide a full training programme for PEP completion by the Through Care Service. The Virtual School as educational experts will moderate all PEP's for quality and provide training for the process of PEP creation; attendance monitoring; using the PEP in a pathway plan and education specific quality. The key outcome of this will be plans based on prior learning that are challenging and supportive to prevent children becoming NEET.

The Virtual School will offer 1.5 members of staff to track and support students with careers, university and college applications. Specific packages of educational support, in formal subjects such as English and Maths can be available and others will be able to take advantage of careers advice, study support and mentoring

10.Children with disabilities

The transitional pathway into Adult Services for children with specific needs arising from physical, sensory, learning or cognitive disabilities or impairments begins at the age of 14. The Children with Disabilities Team will provide accessible information about the services available and will work with the young person to develop a clear pathway plan into Adult Services. Once the young person has been transferred to Adults Services, a Through Care Service Personal Advisor will advocate for the young person to ensure that they receives all services to which they are entitled.

11.Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) are undoubtedly 'Children in Need': they have no one to look after them, they often have little or no English and they have no means of supporting themselves. Under section 17(1) of the Children Act 1989, Local Authorities have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need. Local authorities have a duty to conduct a Section 17 assessment of a child's needs within 45 days of a child being referred for assessment. In the case of UASC, these referrals are most likely to be made by the Home Office.

When considering duties towards UASC, the Hillingdon Judgement and Local Authority Circular (2003) 13 should be followed. In summary this means:

- All UASC should, on arrival, be supported under S20 of the Children Act 1989, until an assessment of need has been completed;
- Based on assessed need, most UASC including 16 and 17 year olds who require accommodation should be provided with S20 support;
- The majority of UASC will be entitled to leaving care services;
- S17 can be used to support UASC in exceptional circumstances where an assessment of needs identified that to become looked after would not be in the UASC's best interests - for example if the young person strongly expresses aversion to becoming looked after. The reasons for the decision should be accurately recorded in Children's Services records.

In some instances, where there is significant reason to doubt the age of a UASC, it may also be necessary to complete an age assessment. The Through Care Service will complete this using the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) 2015 guidance¹. This guidance stresses the importance of ensuring that the social worker is clear what the 'significant reason' is to doubt the young person's age and that this is conveyed to the young person before completing the assessment.

Unaccompanied children from overseas can be at particular risk of becoming isolated on leaving care due to a lack of established social networks and / or access to members of their extended family. When planning for transition, the Through Care Service will ensure that language or cultural factors are taken into account to reduce this risk. A victim of trafficking may still be at risk of exploitation on leaving care. This risk will be considered by the Through Care Service, particularly with regard to arranging accommodation in accordance with statutory guidance²

The Through Care Service needs to plan for three possible outcomes for UASC turning 18. As their asylum status will determine their right to public services as adults. This is known as triple planning and should be part of the statutory planning through the care plan, pathway plan and review process. Planning for three possible outcomes at 18 includes:

1. Equipping the UASC to have a future in the UK if they receive Leave to Remain in the UK past their 18th birthday, via Pathway Planning;
2. Preparing the UASC to be returned to their country of origin if they are refused Leave to Remain in the UK and are under instruction to return to their country of origin (with appeals pending); or if they decide to return of their own volition;
3. Supporting UASC who are refused Leave to Remain in the UK and who have exhausted all legal appeals in respect of their application for Leave to Remain in the UK, but have not yet been returned to their country of origin. These UASC are often referred to as "end of line" or Appeal Rights Exhausted (ARE).

¹ http://adcs.org.uk/assets/documentation/Age_Assessment_Guidance_2015_Final.pdf

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/656429/UASC_Statutory_Guidance_2017.pdf

In all instances, the UASC's immigration status and implications post 18 need to be recorded comprehensively in the Pathway Plan, with contingencies should the immigration status change. The law relating to asylum seekers who no longer have Leave to Remain can be complex and terminology can cause confusion and so advice to all UASC should be to seek professional legal advice in relation to any leave application or appeal in respect of their asylum claim.

If young person becomes Appeal Rights Exhausted (ARE), but the Home Office has not issued a removal notice, the Through Care Service will undertake Human Rights Assessments (HRA) to determine whether Local Authority support should continue to avoid a breach of the young person's Convention rights (ECHR). Human Rights Assessments (HRA) provide the opportunity for failed asylum seekers and over stayers to have a review of their current circumstances with the view to identifying and recommending relevant support based on their immigration status.

12. When Care Leavers live or move to a different Local Authority area

Where a care leaver resides in a different Local Authority area, the Through Care Service, in conjunction with (where relevant) the LBTH Children's Commissioning service, will aim to ensure that a service is provided that is consistent with that which s/he would receive if s/he had remained resident in Tower Hamlets.

Whenever possible, plans for movement of care leavers to a different local authority area must be discussed, and the level of service provision agreed, with the host authority concerned prior to the move taking place. Wherever possible, a joint meeting will take place between the Through Care teams which will also desirably involve the young person to confirm the arrangements. The outcomes will be confirmed in writing and will ensure that the young person is fully aware about how to access care leavers' services in their new area if they need assistance.

13. Finance

The Through Care Service Business Manager is responsible for ensuring that necessary action is taken to ensure that finance colleagues can make timely and accurate payments. The post holder will bring together details of the payments to be made, broken down into accommodation and support costs together with the necessary approvals. In addition, the Business Manager is accountable for maintaining a formal record of all financial support provided to young people leaving care.

For the financial arrangements to be secure, the following requirements will apply:

- Payments can only be made when the young person's details are included in Framework-I. The record will incorporate details of the young person's financial package, their legal status, assessment, pathway plan and reviews.
- All requests for payment must be consistent with the young person's Pathway Plan.
- Payments will only be made once the finance team has received the necessary authorisations for payment from the Through Care Service

Business Manager. (it is to be noted that this function will shortly be incorporated into work of the Children's Placement Team)

- All accommodation requests must be approved by IPOP. In circumstances when packages of additional support are requested or where 'high support' accommodation are requested, needs-based evidence to support the request must be incorporated into the papers submitted to IPOP. All additional support packages will be subject to regular review and evidence of continuing need
- No accommodation arrangements, with the exception of 'staying put' agreements, can be commissioned without the involvement and agreement of the Children's Commissioning Team in accordance with the block and spot purchase arrangements
- All payments for accommodation and additional support costs will almost always be authorised in planned ways and in advance of the young person taking up the accommodation following presentation at IPOP
- Exceptionally, short-term financial arrangements to support young people in securing accommodation and additional support costs can be authorised in emergency situations subject to them being endorsed by two service managers acting on behalf of the Divisional Director. Every emergency arrangement to pay accommodation costs and associated support packages must be presented to the next IPOP meeting to formalise the arrangement. In emergency situations, young people can receive short-term additional financial support to enable them to manage crisis situations, subject to the expenditure being initially approved by two service managers. These support costs can only be authorised for a maximum of six weeks after which approval will need to be sought from IPOP.
- The Personal Advisor will notify the Through Care Service Business Manager and the finance team of any changes to end dates, accommodation addresses, accommodation supplier or level of support, so that the finance log can be kept up to date.
- In the absence of the Framework-I financial module being 'live', finance team colleagues will maintain an audit trail of all expenditure and types of expenditure on their existing Excel Spreadsheet based system for all care leavers.

14. Exit Planning / Ending Through Care support

Careful and considered exit planning from the Through Care Service is essential to ensure that young people are fully equipped for independent living. The emotional and practical impact of the ending of a formal relationship with through care services will be more pronounced for some young people than others. It is therefore important that consideration is given to ensuring a proportionate response to needs so that each young person is supported to make the necessary adjustments and where appropriate helped to build relationships with key people who can assist them in making a successful transition. For example, it will be an expectation that all young people will be in a position to benefit from secure living arrangements. Personal Advisors will be instrumental in ensuring that young people are prepared with the information required to enable them to take up these arrangements. This is particularly relevant to those whose financial support for accommodation will come to

an end on their 21st birthday. The planning for this eventuality will commence as soon as possible after the young person's 20th birthday.

All young people will be given the opportunity to attend a closure meeting with their Personal Advisor to reflect on their through care experience and to ensure that they have access to all the information they require. The young person will be provided with a leaving pack, the contents of which will be confirmed at the final Pathway Plan review, but will include, as a minimum:

- contact details for any services the young person intends to continue to access
- details of local community groups
- information on how to maintain contact with a network of their Through Care peers
- information on how to access their records

15. Complaints

Should a young person feel that the service they received falls short of what they are entitled to, the Through Care Service actively encourages them to make a complaint. Young people in care or care leavers can make a complaint via the Children's Society, who will put them in touch with an advocate who can help them to have their say.

An online complaints form is available at

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgn/council_and_democracy/complaints/complaints.aspx

16. Access to records

Over the course of their lifetime, people who have spent all or part of their childhood and adolescence in local authority care may want to access information about this period in their lives. There can be a range of reasons why people who have left care want to do this, including curiosity about why they came into care; what happened and when; a need to make sense of difficult memories and life events; to clarify disparate explanations; a desire to trace family members; seeking medical information in reference to hereditary illness/disease and also to obtain photos/certificates.

The Through Care Service will actively support care leavers to make a request for access to their records via the Council's Information Team. Full details of the process and the information required can be accessed here

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgn/council_and_democracy/data_protection_freedom_of_data_protection_act.aspx