

Manual:	Fostering Services Procedures; Foster Carers Handbook
Title:	Young People Moving towards Adulthood (FSP/001)
Last Reviewed:	22/05/2015
Next Review Due:	22/05/2018

Context

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 introduced requirements on Local Authorities to plan for Looked After children as they make their transition to adulthood.

The Children Act 1989, Guidance and Regulations, Volume 3: "Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers 2010 aims to ensure that care leavers are provided with comprehensive personal support so that they achieve their potential as they make their transition to adulthood.

Principles for Transition

As Corporate Parents we should ensure that Looked After children receive the same level of care and support as they grow up and move towards adulthood, that their peers would expect from a reasonable parent. Looked After Children should have no less support or aspirations than any other child. They should be provided with the opportunities and chances needed to help them move successfully to adulthood and achieve their potential.

Research and practice shows that young people who have been looked after will have the best chance of success as adults if those providing transitional care and other support take the following into account:

- If this were my child, would it be good enough for him or her?
- The provision of a second chance if things don't go as expected
- A Pathway Plan that is regularly monitored and reviewed and which is tailored to individual need, particularly if the young person is more vulnerable than others

Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011

Standard 12 of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards state the following and Fostering Social Workers should ensure that foster carers are assisted in supporting children to:

- Establish positive and appropriate social and sexual relationships
- Develop positive self esteem and emotional resilience
- Prepare for the world of work and/or further or higher education
- Prepare for moving into their own accommodation
- Develop practical skills, including shopping, buying, cooking and keeping food, washing clothes, personal self-care, and understanding and taking responsibility for personal health care
- Develop financial capability, knowledge and skills
- Know about entitlements to financial and other support after leaving care, including benefits and support from social care services

In addition, in accordance with the standards Fostering Social Workers should ensure that:

- Foster carers are included in the development, monitoring and review of each young person's care/pathway plan.
- Foster carers can access appropriate training and support

- Foster carers are aware of the Supported Lodgings Service which can enable young people should be able to remain with them into legal adulthood where appropriate

Durham County Council Staying Put Policy

DCC previously had a Staying On Policy which stated that young people who are looked after on a long term basis should be encouraged to remain Looked After until they reach the age of 18 and also remain in the care of their former foster carers post 18 wherever possible. It is a DCC principle that no young person should be made to feel that they need to leave care before they are ready to do so.

In line with the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations and Guidance 2010, Looked After young people must not move from accommodation that is regulated under the Care Standards Act 2000 to other arrangements without a statutory review of their Care/Pathway Plan, chaired by their Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). This review will evaluate the quality of the plan and the young person's readiness for any move and the IRO will ensure that Review considers the young person's views.

The Children and Families Act 2014 places a statutory duty on local authorities to support care leavers who wish to stay with their former foster carers (staying put arrangements) until aged 21. This duty came into force on the May 2014. This allows young people to leave stable and secure homes when they are ready and able to make the transition to independence. It will also help them enter adult life with the same opportunities and life prospects as their peers.

The '*Planning Transitions to Adulthood for Care Leavers Guidance and Regulations*' (revision date 8th August 2014) outlines the duty on local authorities to provide staying put arrangements (young people continuing to live with their former foster carers) for those young people who want it and for those foster carers who are willing and able to continue with such an arrangement. The guidance provides information to local authorities and foster carers regarding how they plan to establish a staying put arrangement. It also covers important areas such as the support foster carers might require and advice and guidance that local authorities should provide to young people. These arrangements for DCC are set out in the Staying Put Policy

The Young People's Service

The Young People's Service (YPS) support young people throughout their transition to adulthood and up to the age of 21 (or 24 if they are in continuing education).

The YPS consists of Young Person Advisors, Social Workers, a Supported Lodgings Service, a Welfare Rights Worker and an Accommodation Co-Coordinator and a dedicated education team which consists of a T2W Co-ordinator, T2W Project Officer and a Connexions Worker.

The Teenagers to Work Project (T2W) has Corporate commitment and provides the opportunity for fostered young people over the age of 14 to experience the world of work through targeted work experience. It is expected that Fostering Social Workers and foster carers will support young people in accessing these opportunities wherever possible. T2W takes place during school holidays and young people receive incentive payments and references through their attendance. These experiences aim to raise young people's skill level, confidence/self esteem, aspirations and employability.

The YPS has worked with partners to develop a range of accommodation provision to support Durham young people leaving care. It also has a Supported Lodgings Service which enables some young people to remain with their foster carers through to young adulthood by converting the foster placement to supported lodgings (See Supported Lodgings Conversion procedure).

In addition The YPS works closely with the Disabled Children and Their Families Team and Adults Service to make sure that care leavers continue to receive effective support and services after they reach the age of 18.

The role of The Fostering Service and Foster carers in Pathway Planning

A Pathway Plan must be in place by the time a young person reaches the age of 16 years and 3 months (irrespective of any other services being provided for them, for example because they are disabled, in custody, or an unaccompanied asylum seeking child).

Fostering Social Workers and foster carers will be members of the young person's care planning team which will meet regularly to monitor and review the Pathway Plan. The care team will work with the young person to plan transitions to adulthood including:

- Encouraging and supporting them in accessing further education, employment or training
- Raising aspirations and helping young person achieve their potential
- Planning accommodation next steps
- Exploring all financial entitlements, for example setting up home allowance and financial supports for further and higher education.
- Accessing adult services, including mental health and disability, when these are needed

Training

A range of training is available to foster carers to enable them to provide effective support and guidance to young people (including alcohol awareness, drug awareness, cook for life, moving towards adulthood, speakeasy, sexual exploitation and risk taking behaviour)

Further Information

Preparation for Adult Life from the Fostering Network

Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

The Children and Families Act 2014

The Children Act 1989, Guidance and Regulations, Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers (revised 2014)

DCC Staying Put Policy