

## CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD REPORT

17<sup>th</sup> January 2011

<b>Title of paper:</b>	<b>Pathway Plans Children in Care and Care Leavers</b>	
<b>Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):</b>	Ian Curryer, Corporate Director Satinder Gautam, Director Safeguarding	<b>Wards affected: ALL</b>
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<b>Other officers who have provided input:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Andrew High, Insight and Improvement</li> <li>• Elise Darragh, Insight and Improvement</li> <li>• Paulette Thompson-Omenka, Head of Service Children in Care</li> </ul>	
<b>Relevant Council Plan Strategic Priority:</b>		
World Class Nottingham		
Work in Nottingham		
Safer Nottingham		
Neighbourhood Nottingham		
Family Nottingham		
Healthy Nottingham		
Serving Nottingham Better		
<b>Summary of issues (including benefits to customers/service users):</b>		
<p>The report sets out the statutory entitlement for young people in the care of the Local Authority and those leaving care who are 15+ to have a compliant Pathway Plan in line with the Judge Munby 2005 ruling. The report goes on to outline the progress that Nottingham City has made since Judge Munby ruled against Nottingham City Council in 2008.</p> <p>Key planks of the pathway planning process is to ensure that our children in care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• move seamlessly into education, employment or training</li> <li>• supported with financial management and budgeting</li> <li>• have suitable accommodation</li> <li>• smooth transition into adult services</li> </ul> <p>Information on the Munby Ruling has been taken from <i>Mark Burrows DfES Professional Advisor Rainer KeyNotes – from National Leaving Care Advisory Service 2005.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To develop a refreshed process for the identification, development, tracking, monitoring and review of Pathway Plans for children in care to include Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC).</li> <li>• To set timescale for Pathway Plans to be uploaded onto the Carefirst IT system</li> <li>• Refreshed reporting system to provide clear information on the above</li> <li>• To quality assure the Pathway Plans produced and recommend future action/decision</li> <li>• To develop practice guidance and training for all staff involved in the completion of Pathway Plans, Social Workers, Leaving Care Workers, Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs), legal reps and residential staff.</li> </ul>		

<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	
1	<b>The Board are asked to note the report and its contents</b>

# 1 **BACKGROUND**

## **Pathway Plans Children In Care and Care Leavers -**

- 1.1 In July 2005 a landmark ruling from Judge Munby known as the 'Munby Ruling' necessitated the need for Local Authorities to work with young people who were 15+ to complete a compliant Pathway Plan. Commentary on this judgement has concentrated on ambiguities concerning the PA's engagement in assessment activity and in their role as a provider of support and advice to the young person, coordinating the provision of services set out in the pathway plan and ensuring that this plan is kept under review. The Judge was explicit that there is nothing in law that makes it unlawful or undesirable to appoint an employee of the local authority as a leaving-care PA, but it will be important that the PA has a clear understanding of their role.
- 1.2 Guidance to the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 recognises that the pathway plan must build on the care plan. Indeed, it can not be emphasised enough that the care plan for a looked-after child becomes the pathway plan when the young person attains care leaver status. Pathway planning was always intended to be an extension of care planning – the reassessment of needs at 16 and the related development of the pathway plan should be approached with exactly the same thoroughness and attention to detail as care planning. This will not prevent the allocated worker from varying their style of engagement to take account of the young person's circumstances and attitude.
1. There must be adequate management supervision of the assessment and pathway planning process for each care leaver. Research suggests that effective leaving-care services rely on the following:
  2. placement stability
  3. continuity of networks for young people
  4. enabling young people to maintain a sense of family links
  5. someone who takes a special interest in supporting young
  6. people with education or training, and gradual, holistic preparation for leaving care so that young people are enabled to leave care when they feel ready.
- 1.3 The Children Act 1989 sets out the basic obligations of local authorities with regard to young people leaving care. The local authority is the body responsible for the assessment, the resulting pathway plan, and keeping this under review. The authority is obliged to appoint the PA; therefore, it is for the local authority to determine who is best suited to the role. Mindful of the need for the authority to act as a responsible corporate parent for young people in the leaving-care process, it will be important for them to minimise arbitrary administrative changes and, as far as possible, to preserve continuity of services for the young person. Therefore, it would be perfectly consistent for the allocated social workers for a looked-after child to re-assess need and update the care plan so that it develops into the pathway plan for the young person as consideration is given to life beyond care.
- 1.4 The *Caerphilly* judgement highlights issues of good practice in working with young people before, during and after leaving care, as well as focusing attention on the requirements of a leaving-care PA. Local authorities will need to assess their own processes to ensure that these comply with Regulations and Guidance. Assessment must cover every dimension of need so that the resulting pathway plan offers the young person a detailed operational plan with specific information about *what, when, who and why*. Good practice requires care and pathway planning to support placement stability, maintaining as much continuity as possible to allow young people scope to reach their potential. Pathway planning must have young people's needs and views at its centre. After all, the good parent retains commitment to securing the best outcomes possible for young people who remain their responsibility, even if confronted

with apathy or outright rejection.

1.5 Nottingham Performance:

Percentage of Care Leavers with Pathway Plans as of November 2010 – 90% (target 2010-11 is 100%). Performance for all eligible young people as of November 2010 is 76%). The percentage of young people who have Pathway Plans has improved but has remained fairly static in the last 4 months.

1.6 Comparator information:

There is no national indicator for Pathway Plans and therefore, no formal comparator information is available. From contacts with “statistical neighbour” local authorities, it is apparent that practice around Pathway Planning for children in care and care leavers and monitoring of this differs quite considerably. Hull, Birmingham, Salford and Manchester City Councils were consulted for comparable data.

1.7 Generally, it is apparent that Pathway Planning practice and performance varies between authorities. Plans are started at different points in a young persons care, responsibility for the Plan can reside with different teams/services and plan completion and quality are monitored differently by different authorities. Nationally, Pathway Planning practice and performance is identified as an issue requiring significant attention in a “National Care Advisory Service” report requested by the Coalition Government and due to be published in 2011.

1.8 Nationally, an average of 62% of former care leavers were in education, employment or training. This is year-on-year reduction of 1%. A review of the national picture shows that there has been no step change or discernable pattern of improvement or deterioration over the past 5 years. Nottingham’s statistical neighbour group recorded an average of 64% of former care leavers as being in education, employment or training. This is a year-on-year increase of 5.5%. Nottingham recorded 73% of care leavers as being in education, employment or training. This is above the national average and results show that performance has improved by 3%, but as the cohort is relatively small (approximately 60 care leavers) percentage fluctuations can be misleading. Performance so far for 2010/11 show is 63% against an ambitious year end target of 95%.

1.9 *The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review.*

At the point at which a young person becomes an eligible child and it is envisaged that s/he will be leaving care, the pathway plan must be prepared which must include the child’s care plan. This is in order to capture the actions which will be necessary from the responsible authority, the young person’s carer, young person, parent and other identified parties in order for the young person to make a successful transition from care.

1.10 An ‘eligible child’ (defined in paragraph 19B of Schedule 2 to the 1989 Act, and in regulation 40 of the 2010 Regulations) is a looked after child aged 16 or 17, who has been looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks which began after s/he reached the age of 14, and ends after s/he reaches the age of 16;

1.11 The responsible authority must establish the young person’s views about the suitability of any accommodation [Schedule 6, paragraph (2)]. Young people should be familiar with how their needs have been assessed and how this assessment has informed the provision of services and support set out in their care and pathway plan. Discussions between the young person and his/her social worker about this extremely important issue must make sure that the young person appreciates the implications of his/her tenancy and recognises what is expected of them. S/he must be offered sufficient information, support and advice so that s/he understands any financial commitments and expectations that fall to him/her. The responsible authority must make sure that the young person knows what s/he should do if his/ her financial circumstances

change or if there is an increase in the costs of the accommodation. This essential information must be recorded in the young person's pathway plan. Nationally, an average of 90% of former care leavers were housed in suitable accommodation. This is an increase of 0.7% and is the highest score recorded in six years. Nottingham's statistical neighbours recorded an average of 90% of care leavers as being housed in suitable accommodation; this constitutes a 1% decline. Nottingham recorded 91% of former care leavers being housed in suitable accommodation, meaning that 9% of care leavers were housed in unsuitable accommodation. The authority still outperforms the majority of its statistical neighbours and is 1% above the national average. It should be noted that the cohort has almost doubled over the last year, but remains relatively small (approximately 60 care leavers), therefore percentage fluctuations can be misleading. Performance so far for 2010/11 show is 85% against a year end target of 100%.

## **2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)**

2.1 The current Pathway Plans for Nottingham's eligible young people are recorded on the Castle Document Management IT system. Work is underway to ensure that from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 Pathway Plans will be completed using the Carefirst IT system in line with all other key plans for young people. This will ensure that all Plans are accessible to all Carefirst users, will allow for Insight and Improvement to pull data off the system at any point and ensure easier case file auditing. This system has worked well in Hull City one of NCC's statistical neighbours.

2.2 Procedures for young people, fieldwork staff and leaving care workers to feedback, allows for greater workforce participation and empowerment. This will address areas of best practice, or any issues of concern. By having a clearer picture of how Pathway Plans are functioning, the authority is better placed to ensure better outcomes for our children in care.

2.3 A refreshed policy and procedure protocol document will be produced by Tri.X by the end of the financial year and uploaded onto the NCC website. The new protocol will form part of the wider Safeguarding Policy and Procedures manual.

## **3 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS**

None

## **4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING VALUE FOR MONEY)**

4.1 There are no financial implications for completing Pathway Plans. The statutory duty of ensuring that Pathway Plans are completed resides with the named Social Worker.

## **5 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES (INCLUDING LEGAL IMPLICATIONS, CRIME AND DISORDER ACT IMPLICATIONS AND EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS)**

5.1 Failure to complete compliant Pathway Plans will result in the Local Authority failing in its statutory duty. Pathway Plans will be initiated at the Looked After Child Reviews (LACR) and reviewed 6 monthly with the young person prior to the LACR.

## **6 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION**

6.1 *Mark Burrows DfES Professional Advisor, Rainer KeyNotes – from National Leaving Care*

*Advisory Service 2005, Judge Munby Ruling.*

## **7 PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT**

7.1 The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2