

Standards

Leaving Care Services in Northern Ireland



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**
www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

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Copies of the Standards can be accessed on the DHSSPSNI website: www.dhsspsni.gov.uk



Introduction

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This document sets out minimum standards for Leaving and Aftercare Services. The standards specify the arrangements, services and procedures that need to be in place and implemented to ensure the delivery of quality services for young people leaving care. These standards apply to HSC Trusts and those other agencies commissioned by a Trust to deliver leaving and after care services. It is expected that Trusts and supporting agencies will strive to exceed these minimum standards. They also establish a framework for best practice in leaving care for voluntary, community and independent sector organisations that work with or have significant involvement with young people leaving care.

Trusts have lead responsibility as Corporate Parents to safeguard and promote the well-being of young people in and leaving care. Collaborative working with other agencies is essential to assist Trusts to fulfil their corporate parent responsibilities in the delivery of high quality services for care leavers. Delivery is contingent upon a cooperative and partnership approach by other Departments and agencies that hold responsibilities for education, housing, careers etc.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act (Northern Ireland) 2002 was implemented in September 2005. The DHSSPS, to facilitate implementation, established a regional implementation project with the purpose of securing consistent standards and practices across Northern Ireland so that all young people leaving care are afforded optimal life chances as they make the transition to independent living.

One of the outcomes of the work of this project is the development of regional standards for leaving care services in Northern Ireland¹. The emphasis of these standards is on achieving:

- a standardised approach to service provision;
- availability of consistent and shared standards of service delivery;
- strengthened basis for partnership working to provide a comprehensive range of leaving care services;
- equity of service provision for all young people; and
- measurable improvements for all care leavers.

A further driver for the development of standards is the requirement on HSC Trusts to comply with clinical and social care governance arrangements.

¹ These Standards may be subject to Policy/Legislative changes.

The Health and Personal Social Services (Quality Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 established the Regulation and Quality, Improvement Authority. This independent body regulates agencies and establishments within the HSC Trusts and the independent sector. Article 38 of the Order confers powers on the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to prepare, publish and review statements of minimum standards applicable to all services including Leaving and Aftercare Services.

HSC Trusts should continue to ensure that they remain compliant with the Looked After Arrangements as laid out in the Children (NI) Order 1995, Departmental Guidance Volumes 3 and 4 of the Children Order series, Volume 8 on Leaving and After Care and relevant HSC Trust Policy and Procedures on Looked After Children and Leaving Care. The standards also need to be considered alongside relevant legislation, policy and procedures governing, for example, Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedures, Cooperating to Protect Children and Safeguarding policy and procedures.

HSC Trusts should adhere to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and Human Rights Act 1998 in upholding their responsibilities to provide special protections to young people in and leaving care and safeguarding and promoting their rights to consistent and equitable services across the region.

The Department has developed minimum standards for Leaving and Aftercare Services. The development of the standards was overseen by a Task Group led by DHSSPS with representation from HSCB, HSC Trusts, RQIA, VOYPIC, CHNI and Fostering Network. A multi agency workstream comprising of representatives from NIHE / Supporting People, DEL / Careers Service, SSA, RQIA, voluntary sector agencies, accommodation providers, service users, and other relevant professionals formulated the main content of the draft standards which were subject to a full public consultation from May 2009 until July 2009. Following an analysis of consultation feedback the draft standards were reviewed by a panel consisting of representatives from DHSSPS, HSCB, HSC Trusts, VOYPIC and RQIA.

The standards statements and associated criteria have been developed from the high level outcome statements contained within OFMDFM's ten year Children and Young People's Strategy for Northern Ireland – Our Children and Young People, Our Pledge. Two additional standard statements have been included to reflect corporate parenting responsibilities and to strengthen preparation and care planning as core requirements of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2002; these are considered crucial to the delivery of high quality effective services.

The standards are set out as follows:

Standard 1: Corporate Parenting Responsibilities

Standard 2: Preparation, Planning and Review

Standard 3: Being Healthy

Standard 4: Enjoying, Learning and Achieving

Standard 5: Living in Safety and with Stability

Standard 6: Economic and Environmental Well Being

Standard 7: Contributing Positively to Community and Society

Standard 8: Living in a Society which Respects their Rights

Action Criteria and **Outcome Measures** underpin each standard statement.

Action Criteria provide further detail of the areas to be considered in the application of the standard to professional practice, service provision, governance and workforce issues. They set out what HSC Trusts are required to have in place to deliver against the overarching standard statement.

The Outcome Measure is evidence that will be used to determine whether or not the standard has been achieved.

The standards will be measured through self-assessment, monitoring and inspection. The RQIA will evidence that the standards are being met through:

- discussions with Senior Trust Managers including Managers of 16 Plus Services and their staff, social workers and personal advisers;
- young people who either use the service or are being prepared to use the service;
- an examination of records including young people's files maintained by the Trusts relating to the service;
- an inspection of written policies, procedures and interagency and regional protocols underpinning service delivery;² and
- discussion and consultation with other stakeholders who contribute to service delivery.

The implementation of the standards will assist the planning, delivery, audit, review and inspection of leaving care services across the region and provide the foundation for informing practice and improving services to young people, their families and supportive adults.

² Administrative Systems, Recording Policy, Standards and Criteria (HSS(OSSPOL/RIT) 2-2008) issued in April 2008 can be accessed through: <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/ssi/oss-childrens-services.htm>

Article 38 of the Health and Personal Social Services (Quality Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 gives powers to the DHSSPS to publish minimum standards that the RQIA must take into account in the regulation of agencies. Standards serve as a guide to providers of services, service users and the wider public on the quality of services that should be provided and expected. The regulations and minimum standards for Leaving and Aftercare Services focus on ensuring that young people using these services are safeguarded and that their care and support are quality assured.

Compliance with the regulations is mandatory; non-compliance with some specific regulations is considered an offence. The RQIA must take into account the extent to which the minimum standards have been met in determining whether or not a service maintains its registration or has its registration cancelled, or whether action is required due to any of breach of regulations. The standards are the minimum provision below which a Trust is expected not to operate.

The management and practice of staff delivering Leaving and After Care Services to young people should be conducted in a caring manner where young people feel listened to and feel valued. Young people's rights and entitlements should be upheld and their cultural and religious beliefs respected. Young people in receipt of these services should find it to be a positive and beneficial experience, which should improve their outcomes and enhance their life chances as they move towards adulthood. These standards are underpinned by the following values and principles which build on the inspection standards to further reflect the paramountcy principle of the Children Order, the rights of children under UNCRC and the philosophy of "Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge".

The Children (NI) Order 1995 established the overriding principle of the paramountcy of the child which must direct the work of each HSC Trust in its general duty to "safeguard and promote the welfare of children within its area who are in need". The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2002 enhanced and strengthened HSC Trusts duties to young people leaving care and in after care, including a continued obligation to provide continuing support until aged 21 years and in certain circumstances until aged 24.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a set of non-negotiable and legally binding minimum standards and obligations in respect of all aspects of children's lives which the Government has ratified and it is the minimum that children and young people should be afforded in terms of their rights by Government. All of the principles of the Convention are relevant to any discussion on a set of Regional Standards for Leaving Care Services in Northern Ireland. As looked after children and young people they have the right to non-discrimination (Article 2), have their best interests protected (Article 3), maximum survival and development (Article 6), to be heard and have their views given due weight in matters which concern them (Article 12). Article 20 of the UNCRC deals specifically with children and young people without a family and it states that,

- "1. A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State.*
- 2. States Parties shall in accordance with their national laws ensure alternative care for such a child.*
- 3. Such care could include, inter alia, foster placement, kafalah of Islamic law, adoption or if necessary placement in suitable institutions for the care of children. When considering solutions, due regard shall be paid to the desirability*

of continuity in a child's upbringing and to the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background.”

The Northern Ireland ten year strategy, Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge, published in 2006 reflects these rights and identifies six high level outcomes to be promoted and achieved for all children, including the most vulnerable in Northern Ireland over the period of the strategy. It identifies “living in safety and with stability” as a key outcome to be promoted and achieved for all children.

In order to achieve this Trust Managers and staff should have these values firmly embedded into their practice and service provision.

Dignity and Respect

The uniqueness and intrinsic value of individuals is acknowledged and each young person is treated with respect.

Independence

Young people have as much control as possible over decisions which affect their lives whilst being safeguarded against unacceptable risks.

Rights

Young people’s individual human rights are safeguarded and actively promoted within the context of services provided by HSC Trusts.

Equality and Diversity

All young people are treated equally regardless of their legal status, disability, gender, sexual preference, race, cultural and religious identity. All services delivered by HSC Trusts are within a framework of equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice.

Choice

Young people are offered the opportunity to select independently from a range of options based on information contained within their Pathway Plan, which is clear and accurate.

Fulfilment

Young people are enabled to lead full and purposeful lives in order that their ability and potential can be realised.

Safeguarding

Young people are safeguarded and have stability in all aspects of the services which are being delivered to them and feel free from exploitation, neglect and / or abuse.

Privacy

Young people have the right to privacy and should be free from unnecessary intrusion into their affairs and there is a balance struck between the considerations of the young person’s safety and that of others.

Confidentiality

Young people know that information about them is managed appropriately and will only be disclosed to others when it is assessed as being in the best interests of the young person's welfare or for the protection of others. Everyone involved in the delivery of the service respects confidential matters.

Partnership

Young people are central to informing and shaping the type and range of services that are available to them and are fully engaged in decision making processes about their care and support packages.

Collaboration

Young people have their assessed needs met through access to comprehensive leaving care services which are developed and provided through collaborative working with a range of other statutory, voluntary, community and independent agencies.

STANDARD 1**CORPORATE PARENTING RESPONSIBILITIES**

Structures and processes are in place to ensure that the Trust in partnership with other relevant agencies within the statutory and independent/community sectors deliver services in the manner of a good corporate parent to meet the holistic needs of young people.

ACTION CRITERIA

- 1.1 The Trust has a corporate parenting policy and strategy which defines the whole organisation's responsibilities to act as a good parent in ensuring best outcomes for children and young people who are looked after or care experienced.
- 1.2 This policy identifies and explains the contribution of partner agencies to assess and meet the needs of young people in keeping with Article 46 of the Children (NI) Order 1995 and integrated children's services planning which are supported by appropriate protocols and agreements.
- 1.3 The Trust ensures that the policy is underpinned by sound principles which promote continuity of care and stability of support for young people.
- 1.4 The Trust has a range of services in place to meet the requirements under the Children (Leaving Care) Act (NI) 2002 and the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.
- 1.5 The Trust has in place arrangements to ensure that it keeps in touch with all eligible, relevant, former relevant and qualifying young people, providing regular contact and practical and financial support, as appropriate, to meet their assessed needs, taking appropriate account of their wishes and preferences.
- 1.6 The Trust ensures that all young people with an entitlement have a named worker appointed and that young people are supported to develop an adequate network of support.

ACTION CRITERIA

- 1.7 The Trust ensures that it has the appropriate complement of staff and carers who are appropriately trained, qualified and supported to undertake their role as a good parent to ensure that young people are supported into adult life.³
- 1.8 The Trust has in place effective governance arrangements.⁴

OUTCOME CRITERIA

- 1.9 Evidence is available on the Trust's implementation of its corporate parenting policy and strategy in terms of partnership working, the delivery of integrated services and better outcomes for young people.
- 1.10 Evidence is available to demonstrate that young people and their carers access 16 Plus services and leaving care entitlements in keeping with statutory timescales specified in the Leaving Care Guidance and Regulations, Volume 8 and regional policy and procedures for leaving care.
- 1.11 Evidence is available to demonstrate that appropriate arrangements are in place for supervision, training and professional development of staff with primary responsibility on behalf of the Trust for the delivery of leaving care services.
- 1.12 Evidence is available that the Trust is appropriately monitoring delivery of delegated statutory functions, adherence to standards and promotion of improved outcomes for young people.

³ Northern Ireland Social Care Council Induction Standards NI. Available through http://www.niscc.info/induction_standards.109.asp

⁴ The Quality Standards for Health and Social Care. Supporting Good Governance and Best Practice in the HPSS 2006. Available through http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/qpi_quality_standards_for_health_social_care.pdf

STANDARD 2

PREPARATION, PLANNING AND REVIEW

Every young person is prepared for adult life throughout their care experience in a manner that is in keeping with their individual needs and abilities.

ACTION CRITERIA

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| 2.1 | The Trust has a comprehensive policy outlining how it will fulfil its statutory duties in respect of assessing need and care/pathway planning. | Care/pathway plan that, where applicable, recognises their care status. Plans are reviewed and updated to assess and meet their needs for ongoing support during their custody and in preparation for discharge and resettlement. |
| 2.2 | The policy covers the transition planning arrangements for those young people requiring access to adult mental health and disability services. | 2.6 Care/pathway plans for unaccompanied asylum seeking care leavers reflect their status and where known the outcome of their asylum application. |
| 2.3 | Young people have a care/pathway plan that complies with the Children (NI) Order 1995 Order Guidance and Regulations, Volume 8 and plans are implemented and regularly reviewed. | 2.7 Care/pathway plans are young person centred, and comprehensively address the holistic needs of young people including needs in relation to finances, spiritual well-being, health, leisure, personal support, training, education, employment, life and social skills, family and social relationships and must include planning for contingencies. |
| 2.4 | Care/pathway plans include a section on the young person's relationship with their birth family and, where this is in the best interests of the young person, how the young person will be supported to maintain, re-establish or repair these relationships through the use of family group conferencing, family work, family support and/or mediation. | 2.8 The completion of care / pathway plans is undertaken in partnership with the young person, carers, relevant professionals, family and representatives from other agencies and disciplines, as appropriate. |
| 2.5 | Young people in custody continue to have regular contact with a named worker and have a | |

OUTCOME CRITERIA

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| 2.9 | Evidence is available to show that all prescribed areas of the needs assessment and Care/Pathway Plan are completed in respect of each individual young person in line with required timescales. | 2.12 | Evidence is available to show that young people are satisfied with the planning and review processes and service which they receive in preparing them for making a successful transition into adulthood. |
| 2.10 | Evidence is available that all reviews of Care / Pathway Plans take place within statutory timescales. | 2.13 | Evidence is available to show that case closure arrangements are effectively managed and planned. |
| 2.11 | Evidence is available of person centred planning which involve young people, their carers, family and significant others in care / pathway planning and decision making. | 2.14 | Evidence is available to show that where young people need continued support into adult life transition planning has included adult service providers to ensure continuity of adequate support. |

STANDARD 3
BEING HEALTHY

Every young person is assisted to attain and maintain the highest levels of physical, mental/emotional and sexual health and well being.

ACTION CRITERIA

- 3.1 The Trust has clear written policy and procedures to protect and promote the health of looked after young people. This complies with DHSSPS strategies, initiatives and guidance on promoting the health of children and young people, which includes their physical, mental and emotional health needs as well as general well being and life style.
- 3.2 Young people's care / pathway plans and reviews are informed by a comprehensive assessment of their health needs (including other assessments relating to learning difficulties, disability and sensory impairment) and record how these needs will be met.
- 3.3 Young people are given clear guidance about their health, lifestyle choices and sexual health and information about local health services. Carers, families, staff and lead professionals are supported to promote the health of young people i.e. physical, emotional, lifestyle and sexual.
- 3.4 Every young person is registered with a GP and a dentist. Attention is also given to any assistance they require from other professionals such as optometrists.
- 3.5 All young people have access to youth friendly health advice and information.
- 3.6 Young people, who are parents, or prospective parents, are given appropriate information and access to health care for themselves and their children.
- 3.7 Young people, who are parents, or prospective parents are encouraged and assisted to maintain and access support from their families and from family support services within the statutory, independent and community sectors.
- 3.8 Young people involved in substance and alcohol misuse have access to appropriate advice, treatment and support.
- 3.9 Young people are assisted to access all sources of financial entitlements to meet their health care needs including ophthalmic and dental services and, where necessary, receive assistance from the responsible Trust to meet assessed need.
- 3.10 Young people have access to CAMHS and other therapeutic/counselling services based on established working arrangements with a range of specialist targeted services.
- 3.11 Services include improved leisure and lifestyle outcomes through collaborative working with local leisure centres and councils which include arrangements for gym membership and health promotion.

- 3.12 Evidence is available of young people's active involvement in the development and review of their health plans reflecting that they have an understanding of their health needs, their rights to health services and their own responsibilities for maintaining their health and well-being.
- 3.13 Evidence is available to show that young people and their children have their health needs addressed and met in a timely and appropriate manner in line with agency's policy and procedures.

- 3.14 There is evidence available to show that young people are registered with the appropriate health care professional and receive relevant health services.
- 3.15 Evidence is available of effective collaboration by the Trust with a range of health services from preventive / promotion to therapeutic / specialist which provides access by young people to a continuum of health support.

STANDARD 4
ENJOYING LEARNING AND
ACHIEVING

Every young person is assisted to attain the highest educational level consistent with their ability and to enjoy a range of leisure and recreational activities.

ACTION CRITERIA

- 4.1 Each Trust has a written education, training and leisure policy for young people that meets its duties as a corporate parent and complies with the requirements of the Children (NI) Order 1995 to promote the education of looked after children and those young people in receipt of leaving and after care services.
- 4.2 Young people's education, training and leisure activities are based on an assessment of their needs which is recorded in detail in their care / pathway plans. These plans build upon previously assessed educational needs.
- 4.3 The Trust has in place an agreement with Careers Service, Northern Ireland that ensures that young people receive appropriate careers advice and guidance up to the age of 21 and in certain circumstances up to age 24.
- 4.4 The Trust has in place working arrangements for partnership working with schools, colleges and educational support services to ensure that young people have access to education, training and prevocational opportunities that meet their abilities, needs, preferences and potential.
- 4.5 The Trust ensures that young people have access to a range of opportunities for out of school educational, cultural and leisure opportunities through collaborative working by the Trust with local Councils and other agencies.
- 4.6 Young people are financially supported to pursue further and higher education, training and employment and are offered a range of incentives and support to encourage their participation.
- 4.7 Young people have written and explicit information about their financial entitlements, which incorporates the Trust's arrangements for financial support to enable young people to pursue special interests, hobbies and appropriate community activities. Financial support is updated in line with inflation.

- 4.8 Evidence is available to show that young people are provided with education, training and leisure / recreational opportunities that meet their needs and preferences.
- 4.9 Evidence is available to show that young people are satisfied with the careers advice, information and guidance and the leisure / recreational opportunities afforded to them.
- 4.10 Evidence is available which demonstrates that guidance and opportunities offered to young people improves their choice of, and access to, education, training, employment and leisure opportunities.
- 4.11 Evidence is available to show that young people are satisfied with the incentives and support they receive to pursue further and higher education.
- 4.12 Evidence is available to show that young people are satisfied with the support they receive to engage in and actively participate in leisure and recreational activities and that this improves their choice of and involvement in leisure and recreational activities in the community.
- 4.13 Evidence is available to show that outcomes for young people in relation to education, training, employment and involvement in leisure activities are improving year on year.

STANDARD 5
LIVING IN SAFETY & WITH STABILITY

Every young person lives in suitable, affordable accommodation and they are enabled to keep themselves safe.

ACTION CRITERIA

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| 5.1 | The Trust engages the young people in a range of life skills programmes including self protection and keeping themselves safe. | | of the young person and the home's Statement of Purpose where it is deemed appropriate. |
| 5.2 | Trust must ensure when appropriate that all safeguarding procedures are initiated to safeguard and protect the young person. ⁵ | 5.6 | The Trust ensures that young people are supported to remain with their foster carers post 18 years. |
| 5.3 | The Trust has a clear written policy and procedures about how it will arrange suitable accommodation for young people which will assist in a planned, supported and coordinated transition from care towards supported or independent living arrangements. | 5.7 | The Trust has written protocols with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and other agencies, to provide housing and appropriate support to assist young people leaving care to move to suitable living arrangements in the community in keeping with their assessed needs. These arrangements are regularly reviewed and take account of and reflect changes to legislation, personnel and/or practice. |
| 5.4 | The Trust has a clear policy in place which seeks to ensure that young people remain in their care placement until they are 18, where possible. Where there are move on arrangements in advance of their 18 th birthday the Trust must seek the consent of the young person and the young person's care / pathway plan clearly demonstrate how this is in their best interests. | 5.8 | Structures and processes are in place to ensure that the accommodation to which young people move to is safe and suitable and where applicable complies with relevant regulations and standards. |
| 5.5 | The Trust extends the residential care placement beyond 18 years in keeping with the best interests | 5.9 | Every pathway plan incorporates a contingency plan in the event that the identified agreed accommodation is no longer suitable or available. Contingency plans ensure that young people have access to suitable |

⁵ *Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Regional Policy and Procedures. 2006 Available through www.nhssb.n-i.nhs.uk/publications/social_services/Safeguarding_Vulnerable_Adults.pdf*

ACTION CRITERIA

- emergency, or respite, accommodation whenever this is required.
- 5.10 Trusts work in collaboration with Housing agencies to develop strategies that will provide a range of suitable accommodation which reflects the varied and needs of care leavers. Future accommodation needs are identified and service development planned to meet these needs are incorporated within the regional children's services plan.
- 5.11 Where young people choose to return to live with family, care/pathway plans clearly incorporate arrangements for continued support to enable the young person and his / her family achieve and maintain stability and continuity of care.
- 5.12 Young people in education have access to or are provided with the financial support to access vacation accommodation by the Trust.
- 5.13 Young people moving into permanent accommodation receive guidance and support to obtain and maintain accommodation and to live in the community of their choice where it is deemed safe to do so.

OUTCOME CRITERIA

- 5.14 Trusts evidence work undertaken with young people to enable them to keep themselves safe and free from harm.
- 5.15 Evidence exists within in the young person's case file that the Trust has taken action to address safeguarding issues.
- 5.16 Evidence is available to show that young people have a range of suitable accommodation options, which may include a return to family, positive significant adults, continued placement with foster carers, supported accommodation, vacation options and tenancies with / without support. Appropriate respite and retrieval arrangements are in place to support young people whenever there are placement breakdowns.
- 5.17 There is evidence to show that Trusts work in partnership with NIHE and other relevant stakeholder agencies to create a range of safe, suitable and affordable accommodation options for young people based on assessed needs.
- 5.18 Evidence is available showing the effective use of emergency / crisis accommodation in response to demand.
- 5.19 There is evidence of a continued increase in the number of young people who remain in their care placements up to and beyond 18 years of age in keeping with assessed needs and care / pathway plans.

5.20 Evidence is available to show that young people are supported practically and financially with any move or change of accommodation/ living arrangements including in any emergency / crisis.

5.21 There is evidence that Trusts ensure that where young people aged under 18 years are living in supported accommodation it is compliant with any standards governing supported accommodation for vulnerable young people.

5.22 Evidence is available to demonstrate a reduction in the number of unplanned accommodation moves for young people.

STANDARD 6

EXPERIENCING ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL WELLBEING

Every young person is encouraged and supported to achieve economic wellbeing through employment.

ACTION CRITERIA

- 6.1 Each Trust has a written employability policy that details the support arrangements in place to enable and encourage young people to attain employment. This specifies the support available from the Trust and other relevant agencies to assist young people to avail of education, training, volunteering, pre-vocational and personal development opportunities to help them achieve the goal of employment.
- 6.2 The Trust provides young people with opportunities for work experience, training and employment within its own organisation and promotes tailored access to training and employment opportunities with local employers and businesses.
- 6.3 The Trust has an agreement in place with Careers Services which ensures that young people receive appropriate and timely careers advice and guidance.
- 6.4 Needs assessments and care / pathway plans include a comprehensive assessment of financial needs and how these needs will be met including arrangements for timely payments to young people.
- 6.5 The Trust has in place written policy and procedures on available financial assistance and a schedule of amounts for young people which detail other potential sources of funding to which young care leavers may be entitled. This policy includes joint working arrangements with the Social Security Agency to ensure that the financial entitlements of young people provided for by both agencies are clear.
- 6.6 Young people receive increased financial support based on assessed needs to enable them to pursue education, training and employment.
- 6.7 Young People defined as qualifying under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2002 receive an assessment of their financial needs and a plan is put in place to meet them.
- 6.8 Young people receive a setting up home allowance to assist them in equipping their home adequately. .
- 6.9 Young people and carers receive an up-to-date copy of the financial assistance and support available from the Trust in a user friendly format.

- 6.10 Evidence is available to show that young people are offered work experience, training, employment, pre-vocational and volunteering opportunities that meet their needs and preferences.
- 6.11 The Trust has protocols in place with voluntary and community schemes and other agencies to assist young people to access appropriate training or employment and that all young people are afforded equal access to these opportunities regardless of their care placement/living arrangements.
- 6.12 Evidence shows that young people receive the financial assistance they need and to which they are entitled and that these arrangements are recorded in their care / pathway plans.
- 6.13 There is evidence that the Trust has flexible arrangements in place to assist young people with fuel and other utility bills in the event of sudden unplanned increases.
- 6.14 There is evidence that the Trust ensures that young people are not living below minimum income levels and have access to incentive payments and / or assistance to meet additional expenses when young people are engaged in work.
- 6.15 There is evidence that the living arrangements adequately meet the assessed needs of the young person and these are economically sustainable on case closure.

STANDARD 7

CONTRIBUTING POSITIVELY TO COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY

Every young person is encouraged and supported to make a positive contribution in their roles as care leavers and as citizens living within the wider community.

ACTION CRITERIA

7.1 The Trust has a written policy and strategy for young people's involvement in the development of policies and services they receive, including an implementation plan that is developed and regularly reviewed and evaluated with input from young people.

7.2 The Trust ensures that efforts are made to train and support young people to participate in policy development, service planning and delivery, monitoring and evaluation.

7.3 The Trust ensures that young people are given clear information about the range of services and support available to them within their local communities. This information should include how young people can access these services and supports and informs them about their rights, entitlements and responsibilities as citizens.

7.4 The Trust has a written protocol in place with the Youth Justice Agency, Probation and the PSNI to prevent youth offending and details joint working arrangements to support young people to make positive choices, prevent re-offending and / or entry into the criminal justice system.

7.5 The Trust encourages and supports young people to participate in volunteering and other opportunities within their local community.

7.6 The Trust ensures that there are mechanisms in place to enable young people as part of their transition from care to establish networks within the community into which they are moving.

OUTCOME CRITERIA

7.7 Evidence exists that the views and experiences of young people influence the development and the delivery of the services they use and receive.

7.8 Evidence is available to show that the support and assistance young people receive to advocate for themselves helps them to make positive changes in their lives.

7.9 Evidence exists that young people are satisfied with the information they are given about services and with the quality of accommodation and the emotional, social, financial and educational, training and employment support they receive.

7.10 Evidence exists that young people are offered opportunities to volunteer, including mentoring and peer education within the Trust and local community.

7.11 Evidence is available to show that there is a reduction in the number of young people who have been cautioned, offended, re-offended or entered the juvenile justice system and that diversionary / restorative practice is part of early intervention response.

STANDARD 8

LIVING IN A SOCIETY WHICH RESPECTS THEIR RIGHTS

Every young person is assisted to acquire the highest levels of confidence and self esteem to enable them to attain and exercise their rights to services and entitlements as young people and as care leavers.

ACTION CRITERIA

- 8.1 The Trust has a written policy detailing the arrangements for young people's participation in the decision making process about their care / pathway plans and review arrangements in compliance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act.
- 8.2 The Trust has a written complaints and representations policy which is available in written and other appropriate format for young people which complies with the Children Order Representation Procedures and Leaving and Aftercare Guidance and Regulations, Volume 8, 2005.
- 8.3 Leaving care policy and procedures include a statement that displays a commitment to fairness and diversity in the treatment of young people, the provision of services and in the recruitment and training of staff.
- 8.4 Specific personal development programmes are in place to assist young people acquire and develop the life, social and interpersonal skills to enable them to participate as active citizens, support them to engage with services and inform them of their rights and responsibilities.
- 8.5 All staff delivering 16 plus services inform young people about their rights and entitlements in a manner that is easily understood; this information includes their responsibilities as citizens.
- 8.6 The Trust has in place clear links with advocacy and mentoring services so that young people are assisted to make representation where they feel their needs and entitlements are not being met.
- 8.7 The Trust has in place a policy of partnership working with other agencies which promotes the rights and entitlements of young people to education, housing, health, training, employment, policing, justice and finances.
- 8.8 The Trust has in place written policy and robust systems on the management of records, information sharing and how confidentiality is to be respected and protected.⁶

⁶Agreed Regional Guidance, Standards and Criteria for Information Sharing between Agencies working with Families and Children is being developed and at the time of publication of these standards is near finalisation. It is intended that the guidance will be published in 2012.

- 8.9 Evidence exists that young people participate in their decision making processes. Actions are taken by the Trust which evidences that young people's views are fully considered, including those with communications difficulties arising from disability or race.
- 8.10 Evidence exists that young people participate in service planning and improvement and shows that their views have been acted upon and impacted on service changes and development appropriately.
- 8.11 Evidence exists that the Trust maintains records of all complaints and representations made to them about any aspect of the service offered to the young people and the outcome is also recorded.
- 8.12 Evidence exists that all young people leaving care have received information about advocacy support and services and have written information on their leaving care entitlements..
- 8.13 Evidence exists that feedback systems are in place between Trusts and advocacy services to monitor advocacy issues and ensure their effective resolution.
- 8.14 Evidence exists that young people are familiar with the information that is held about them, who it has been shared with and how they can access their own information records.

Abuse

Action or inaction that causes actual or likely harm to a young person. Harm may be physical, emotional or sexual, or neglect of the young person.

Advocate

A person with whom there is an arrangement to assist a young person to put forward views or assist in making a case on his /her behalf.

Assessment

Collection and measurement of data to determine a young person's need for personal, social care and support services, undertaken with the young person, his/her representatives and relevant professionals.

Holistic Care

Comprehensive care that addresses the social, psychological, emotional, physical and spiritual needs of the individual.

Outcome

The end result of the care provided to an individual. Evaluation of the outcomes of the care or pathway plan can be used to measure the effectiveness of the service.

Care Plan

A formal written plan of arrangements for looking after a young person and for meeting that young person's future needs which is made by the placing Trust in keeping with the requirements of the Children (NI) Order 1995.

Case Review

A case review refers to a statutory review of a young person's care plan as required by the Review of the Children's Case Regulations 1996.

Child Protection

Actions and interventions directed at taking reasonable measures to reduce the risk of significant harm to a young person whether through physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, neglect or exploitation. Developing systems and supports that enable young people to report concerns about actual or potential abuse or significant harm, and that help them to respond appropriately to any occurrence that threatens their safety.

Leaving and Aftercare

A service provided by a HSC Trust to help a young person make the transition from being looked after through increasing self reliance to independence and adulthood.

Pathway Plan

A plan developed for and with input from the young person who is looked after, based on a detailed assessment of the young person's strengths, needs, risks and aspirations. It is drawn up when the young person approaches the age of 16 years of age and sets goals for a five year period to assist and support the young person to achieve his/her full potential and secure the best possible outcomes. The Pathway Plan is subject to regular review.

Personal Advisers

A person appointed to ensure that a pathway plan is implemented and to support and encourage the young person to reach his/her goals.

Placement

The agreement and arrangement for a young person who is looked after to live at a particular place e.g. a supported living project.

Representations

Complaints, concerns or major issues raised within a care placement / living arrangement or a placing authority by or on behalf of the child about their care or welfare



Self Assessment Framework

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