



Children's Safeguarding and Social Work

Services and support for care leavers:
policy and practice guidance

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1 Introduction and purpose of policy

Care leavers can face considerable disadvantages and barriers to achievement and stability as they leave care and move into adulthood. Because of their status, they are more likely to move to independence earlier and without the support of family than their peers in the general population. This can mean they have fewer life chances and consequently experience poorer outcomes.

Camden aims to ensure that care leavers get the right kind of support they need as they move to independent living so that they can make the most of their opportunities and experience a smooth transition to adulthood.

This policy sets out what services and support should be provided to young people aged between 18 and 25 who have left care. It sets out the role of personal advisors and the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Service (LACCLS) and the standards of service provision that should be available to all Camden care leavers.

2 Principles and objectives of service

- The welfare of young people will be the paramount consideration of the LACCL Service and all decisions taken will be consistent with their best interests.
- The LACCL Service will seek to act as a “good parent” and every eligible care leaver will have an allocated personal advisor to provide support and ensure access to high quality services based on careful assessment and planning to help them achieve good outcomes and improved life chances.
- Packages of support will be individually tailored for each care leaver based on their assessed needs and their aspirations for the future.
- The LACCL Service will work in partnership with a variety of agencies and organisations to ensure appropriate accommodation, resources and services are available to support successful transitions and meet the assessed needs of care leavers.
- The LACCL Service recognises that care leavers face many difficulties during the transition to adulthood and may need to change direction and goals. This will be incorporated into pathway planning by providing for such contingencies and ensuring plans are flexible.

Supporting care leavers

- Care leavers will be consulted about their future and fully involved in the planning process so that they are able to map out their own life goals and plan how to achieve these. They will also be encouraged to participate in the development of the leaving care service through consultation and young people's forums.
- The LACCL Service will continue to promote the welfare of care leavers through regular review and monitoring, and keep in touch with them whilst they receive services.

3 Eligibility for leaving care services

3.1 Legal framework

Children who have been looked after by a local authority for more than 13 weeks after their 14th birthday will be entitled to a leaving care service in order to support their transition to independence.

Local authority duties to care leavers are set out in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 regulations and guidance and states that local authorities must provide services to care leavers from the age of 18 and up to the age of 25 where requested.

Eligibility for services and a description of the services that should be provided are summarised in appendix 1.

3.2 Disabled young people

Camden's Children and Young People's Disability Service (CYPDS) provide a service for children and young people whose disability substantially affects their every-day lives. The service works with disabled children and young people from 0-25 years.

From the age of 18, the CYPDS Transitions team will work with disabled young people who have been looked after to ensure their smooth transition to adult services and a successful move to independence. These young people will therefore not require a service from the LACCL Service.

However, some care leavers known to the LACCL Service may have mild disabilities or learning difficulties but do not reach the threshold for a service from the CYPDS. Personal advisors may believe that the impact of these disabilities on the young person's welfare could mean that they will require a social care service into adulthood in order to achieve good outcomes.

Supporting care leavers

Where this is the case, personal advisors should consider seeking advice on making a referral to the CYPDS Transitions team. For further information, please refer to the Transitions protocol available at: <..\Children and Young People's disability service\Children and Young People's Disability Service policy.docx>

3.3 Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)

Social workers and personal advisors need to be aware that care leavers who are UASC may be subject to changes in their immigration status that will subsequently affect their entitlement to services and support.

At 18, responsibility for maintaining UASC passes to the National Asylum Support Service but some UASC may find that as their leave to remain in the UK ends they will have no recourse to public funds and Camden may be legally barred from providing support except under certain circumstances.

Personal advisors must refer to the UASC guidance policy for more information on working with UASC care leavers available at: <..\Asylum seeking families and UASC\UASC policy.docx>

3.4 Care leavers in the Criminal Justice System

- Young people who are remanded into the care of a local authority are Looked After Children and if they remain in care for the required period will be entitled to a leaving care service.
- Young people who were subject to a care order prior to receiving a custodial sentence would have remained Looked After whilst in custody and will qualify for a leaving care service as a former relevant child if released after their 18th birthday.
- Young people who were accommodated under section 20 prior to receiving a custodial sentence would have lost their Looked After status. However the young person would qualify for a leaving care service on release if they had been looked after for 13 weeks or more prior to sentence.
- Where a young person qualifies as an **eligible or relevant child** whilst in custody and is released after their 18th birthday, they will qualify as a former relevant child on release.

4 Responsible local authority and care leavers living out of borough

The Children (Leaving Care) Act defines the authority responsible for providing leaving care services as *the last authority to look after the young person*. This is to ensure stability and continuity for the young person and avoid inter-authority disputes regarding provision of services.

Responsibility for care leavers cannot be completely discharged by the responsible authority. However, certain duties can be delegated by agreement to another authority where the young person primarily lives, with funding transferred by the responsible authority where necessary.

The LACCL Service will retain full case responsibility and the young person should have an allocated personal advisor. Negotiations with the host authority as to what tasks will be delegated should be carried out by the Leaving Care manager, but Camden will remain responsible for all pathway planning processes and financial support.

The authority responsible for providing advice and assistance to qualifying young people will be the authority where the young person presents.

5 Leaving care services in Camden

The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Service (LACCLS) is responsible for delivering all aspects of Camden's leaving care service:

- Social workers will work with looked after young people up to the age of 18 or beyond if necessary (**eligible children**) to begin the pathway planning process and help the young person to prepare for independence.
- Personal advisors based in the LACCL team will work with care leavers (**former relevant children**) aged 18 up to their 25th birthday (and will provide a limited service for **qualifying children**).
- A dedicated Connexions worker based in the LACCL Service will work with all care leavers to provide specialist advice and support on education, training and careers and will sign-post young people to appropriate resources. In particular, the worker will support those young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- A specialist benefits advisor from the Department of Work and Pensions is available on a weekly basis to give benefits advice to care leavers.

Supporting care leavers

- The LACCL Service will operate a duty service during office hours to advise care leavers, colleagues and external agencies on issues such as eligibility and services provided and to provide an emergency service for care leavers in the absence of their allocated personal advisor.

5.2 Duties to care leavers

In order to meet its duties, Camden will:

- provide care leavers with a personal advisor up to their 25th birthday or earlier as requested by the young person
- ensure care leavers have a pathway plan in place that is regularly reviewed
- keep in touch with care leavers.

Camden will no longer be responsible for paying for accommodation costs or maintenance for care leavers who will be responsible for accessing benefits or other sources of income and for paying their housing costs once they are 18. However Camden will still provide the following:

- general assistance
- assistance with education, employment and training expenses based on an assessment of financial need
- a bursary of £3,000 to care leavers (inclusive of the £1000 government bursary) going on to higher education over the course of their degree
- funding for vacation accommodation for care leavers in higher education where they have to leave student accommodation during the academic breaks.

6 Pathway planning for care leavers

Pathway planning for care leavers should reflect their growing independence as they take on more responsibility for their lives and should signal a gradual lessening of the role of the personal advisor as the young person approaches their 21st birthday and up to their 25th birthday if they wish to continue to receive a service.

All care leavers must have a pathway plan in place that is based on an assessment of their needs. Issues to be addressed in the assessment and plan are shown in Appendix 2. All pathway plans should also have a contingency plan in place in case there are any difficulties in implementing the pathway plan.

Supporting care leavers

The views of young people must be at the heart of all pathway planning, and they should be encouraged to participate as far as possible. Personal advisors should keep young people informed of the outcomes of assessments and reviews and ensure they are provided with copies of key documents.

It is essential that pathway planning ensures care leavers are in receipt of mainstream and universal services and benefits and have suitable accommodation (see section 10).

Personal advisors have a duty to co-ordinate the provision of services for care leavers from a number of agencies so it is vital that the professional network is consulted and contributes to the pathway process.

Pathway planning could continue up to the young person's 25th birthday. During this period, planning should focus on transitions to relevant adult resources and independence as required by the young person's assessed needs.

Pathway planning should also incorporate an element of life story work for the young person (sections of the plan such as identify and family and social relationships) so that they have a permanent record of their care experiences and have an understanding as to why they were looked after and their wishes for their future.

7 Review of pathway plans

A pathway plan review should be held at a minimum of every 6 months up to the age of 21 and then agreed timescales following negotiation with the young person up to their 25th birthday. It may be brought forward in the following circumstances:

- where the young person's personal advisor thinks it necessary;
- the young person requests a review to be held;
- a young person moves from supported accommodation to unregulated independent accommodation (these reviews **must be held within 28 days of the move** – please see section 10 for further guidance);
- there are any significant changes to the plan for the young person;
- there is an assessed risk of crisis that may develop in a young person's life, for example:
 - where a young person has been charged with an offence or there is a possibility of them receiving a custodial sentence;

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- where a young person is at risk of losing their accommodation;
- where professionals are concerned about the parenting capacity of a young person, and there is a possibility that their own child may need to become the subject of a multi-agency safeguarding plan.

Please note that for **former relevant young people serving a custodial sentence** a pathway plan review must take place **1 month before release** to ensure that plans are put in place for the young person.

The LACCL senior practitioner is responsible for ensuring that all reviews of pathway plans take place as required.

The young person's personal advisor is responsible for convening the review and carrying out the following tasks:

- seeking the views of all those who were consulted on the needs assessment and pathway plan;
- consulting with the young person with regards to the review;
- presenting the most up to date pathway plan to the review meeting in order to report on progress and agree next steps in implementing the pathway plan.

Young people should be actively encouraged to participate in the review process and should be consulted on who they wish to attend with them. However, all professionals and agencies working with the young person should be consulted and asked to contribute to the review process with permission from the young person.

The young person should also be consulted on how the review meeting should be conducted. Although the personal advisor would normally chair the meeting the young person may wish to take on this role as they become more independent.

The review should be recorded on the MOSAIC pathway plan review record. Following the review meeting, the personal advisor should update the plan and distribute copies to all people who attended the review. Any changes to financial provision must be authorised by the team manager.

8 Support for care leavers up to their 25th birthday

Type of support

Camden has a duty to support care leavers up the age of 25, but young people can choose to end contact with the Leaving Care service at 21 if they wish, and may return to request further support up to their 25th birthday. Support may include an allocated personal advisor, a needs assessment and a pathway plan.

The extent to which the Leaving Care service will support care leavers after the age of 21 will depend on their assessed needs and should focus on the specific issues where the young person is in need of support, for example housing, mental health difficulties or accessing education.

Support from the Leaving Care team should include information and advice in relation to education, training and employment and finding (but not providing) suitable accommodation and helping young people to access benefits. The personal advisor should also liaise with any other agency that is providing a service to the young person and signpost young people to relevant services as required.

Decisions on continuing with support

As the young person approaches their 21st birthday, personal advisors should discuss their possible continued need for support with them. The updated assessment carried out in preparation for the pathway review held before the young person's 21st birthday should assess their continued need for support and the pathway review should make a decision about whether the young person will continue to receive a leaving care service after 21 and up to their 25th birthday.

If the young person chooses to continue receiving a leaving care service, their pathway plan will remain in place up to the age of 25.

If the young person chooses to end contact with the Leaving Care service, their case may be closed but they should be advised of their right to return and request services up to their 25th birthday.

The Leaving Care team should ensure that a system is in place for contacting all care leavers aged over 21 who are no longer receiving a service from the team. The contact will be made annually inviting them to contact the team if they require further support.

Young people returning for a service

Young people will be advised that initial contact will be via the Children and Families Contact Service who will screen the referral to ensure the young person is a Camden care leaver and meets the criteria for a service and to find out briefly what services and support are needed. The Contact Service will complete a contact and referral record and pass this on to the Leaving Care team duty via the MOSAIC inbox.

The LACCL duty worker should contact the young person to discuss their needs and following this initial contact a decision will be made on whether to carry out a needs assessment or whether it is more appropriate to signpost the young person on to relevant services depending on their presenting needs.

At the initial meeting it should be made clear to the young person the extent to which the Leaving Care team can offer support and provide services and that any service to be provided will be discretionary based on their assessed needs.

Young people should be made aware that other council services such as Housing are responsible for providing services alongside CSSW and that LACCL may refer them on to other services if this is a better way of meeting their needs. Young people should also be informed that they need to cooperate and provide information as requested for assessment or LACCL may not be able to provide a service.

If a needs assessment will be carried out, the Leaving Care manager should allocate the case to a LACCL worker. If the assessment identifies need, the young person will be allocated a personal advisor and will progress to a pathway plan.

9 Providing personal support to care leavers

9.1 Allocation of a personal advisor

Personal support for care leavers should be provided by their allocated personal advisor who is responsible for carrying out the statutory role. The key responsibilities of personal advisors are:

- providing advice and support;
- participating in the assessment, preparation and review of the pathway plan review;
- liaising with the relevant agencies to implement the pathway plan;
- co-ordinating the provision of services and taking reasonable steps to ensure the young person makes use of services;
- keeping informed about the young person's progress and well-being;

Supporting care leavers

- keeping written records of contacts with the young person.

When the young person is transferred to a personal advisor the relevant LACCL manager should ensure that the social worker has completed all tasks and that:

- an up to date pathway plan is in place;
- the young person has a national insurance number, passport and any other relevant Home Office documents;
- the young person has a bank account;
- any arrangements for the young person to remain with their foster carer under staying put arrangements have been discussed and agreed by a senior manager;
- there has been a consultation with the LACCL Service regarding the young person's eligibility and any practical arrangements for case transfer have been agreed;
- all tasks and documents on the young person's MOSAIC record have been completed, including the closing/transfer summary.

Where possible, it is good practice for the social worker and young person to meet with the personal advisor just prior to the case being transferred so that there is an opportunity to share important information and enable the personal advisor to get to know the young person.

9.2 Providing information and advice

Personal advisors are responsible for making sure young people have the following information and advice:

- information about their rights and entitlements
- how to access services, including sexual health services, housing advice, benefits advice
- how to make complaints and access advocacy services outside of CSSW
- the roles and responsibilities of professionals working with the young person
- how to access emergency help, including help out of hours from the Emergency Duty team
- advice around budgeting
- advice around education, training and employment opportunities
- advice around housing and accommodation issues.

9.3 Keeping in touch

Personal advisors need to keep in touch with care leavers in order to keep informed about their wellbeing and progress in living independently and achieving the goals set out in their pathway plan. It is also important that personal advisors keep accurate, up to date records of contacts with care leavers, including a record of any visits and any communications such as emails or texts sent or received.

Details of the frequency and method of keeping in touch should be recorded on the young person's pathway plan and it is an expectation that personal advisors visit care leavers every 8 weeks up to the age of 21 and that this may be negotiated after that with the young person based on their needs.

If the young person changes accommodation, for example if they move within or move out of the Young Person's Pathway, they should be visited:

- within 7 days of first moving to new accommodation unless the personal advisor has supported the move and been to the accommodation when they moved
- subsequently, within 28 days prior to the first pathway review
- then every 8 weeks.

Outside of these visits, the frequency and method of contact should be appropriate to the young person's levels of maturity and their needs and circumstances, for example higher levels of contact may be needed for young people who need higher levels of personal support. Over time, levels of contact may be more limited to reflect the increasing independence and maturity of the young person and in order to respect their privacy.

Methods of contact can include telephone calls, texts or emails, but there must be face to face contact every 8 weeks to enable personal advisors to assess the young person's wellbeing as this could be a crucial time in their transition when problems in coping begin to arise as support gradually decreases. The personal advisor should visit them at their accommodation at least once between pathway plan reviews.

The pathway plan should include what actions the LACCL team will take where contact with the care leaver is lost after a specified period of time and where this happens the personal advisor must take all reasonable steps to re-establish contact with the young person. This may include enquiring with friends and family as to their possible whereabouts, and if the young person is thought to be in potential danger, they should be reported to the police as a missing person.

10 Accommodation

10.1 Young Person's Pathway

Camden has commissioned the Camden Young Person's Pathway as supported accommodation for care leavers. Camden care leavers are prioritised to ensure they have access to suitable accommodation where they can develop vital skills for independence. For additional information, please refer to the Camden Pathways Working Protocol.

10.2 Steps to independence assessment

The Steps to Independence assessment is a tool designed to be used with the young person once they are 16 but should continue to be used post 18 until it is thought that the young person is ready for independence. The assessment focuses on helping young people to develop the specific skills, attributes and resources they will need to live independently, such as cooking and budgeting.

The Steps to Independence assessment is an on-going assessment used to measure the progress a young person is making towards developing skills for independent living. The assessment is carried out with the young person by the young person's foster carer or key worker from the age of 16 and reviewed by the IRO, social worker or personal advisor as part of visits. As an outcome of any progress the young person is awarded housing points towards the allocation of social housing.

The assessment should continue past 18 where this is necessary for the young person to continue to develop independent living skills and to accumulate enough points. When personal advisors believe that a young person is ready for an independent tenancy and has enough points to bid for properties, they should refer them on to the Pathways Move on team.

10.3 Moving to independent accommodation

The timescale for moving on to independent accommodation will be different for each young person, and it is important that personal advisors are able to assess the young person's increasing ability to cope alone before agreeing to any move towards more independent living.

A decision on moving on should be based on the outcome of their "Steps to Independence" assessment. This must demonstrate that the young person:

Supporting care leavers

- is ready to cope alone;
- is ready to manage their own tenancy;
- agrees with the on-going services and support offered by the LACCL Service;
- understands and agrees to be bound by the conditions of the tenancy;
- is prepared to work jointly with the LACCL Service and Housing to ensure the tenancy is successful.

When personal advisors believe that young people are ready to move on and this can be evidenced in writing, and the young person has accumulated enough points they will be referred to the Move on team to be nominated for an independent tenancy. The final referral should be a joint decision between the keyworker and the personal advisor if both are working with a young person.

All Camden care leavers will be allocated points that enable them to bid for studio properties in Camden. Care leavers with special needs, for example those who are vulnerable through disability or young parents, will be allocated extra points.

A pathway plan review must take place as soon as is practical within 28 days after any move to independent accommodation. The review should look at:

- whether the accommodation is suitable (see section 10.4);
- how the young person is coping and whether they need more support;
- whether it will be necessary to hold the subsequent review after three months or whether a review at six months is more appropriate.

As the risk of the young person losing their tenancy may be high, a plan should be in place detailing the level of support the young person may need in order to prevent any difficulties during the probationary period of the tenancy. This may include support from the Floating Support team, additional contact from the personal advisor or additional contact from the key worker etc.

10.4 Test of suitability for independent accommodation

Statutory guidance states that care leavers should be living in suitable accommodation,
which is defined as accommodation that:

- meets the young person's needs
- is provided by a landlord of suitable character
- complies with health and safety requirements for rented property
- has been chosen having taken into account the young person's wishes and feelings and their education, training and employment needs.

Supporting care leavers

As far as possible personal advisors should take reasonable steps to ensure care leavers are living in suitable accommodation.

10.5 Private tenancies

Most care leavers will remain in supported housing until they are assessed as ready to take on their own tenancy, which will generally be a social housing tenancy. However, some young people may choose to obtain a tenancy with a private landlord either because the pathways project does not meet their needs or because they have chosen to live outside of Camden and are not eligible for housing in that area.

Where possible and if Camden is in support of this arrangement, the personal advisor must be satisfied that the landlord is of good character and that the accommodation is safe and suitable for the young person (see section 10.2). The LACCL Service will support the young person to enter into an agreement with the landlord to secure the tenancy and agree any additional support the young person may need. The LACCL Service may also consider assisting with the deposit in advance. However this would be paid directly to the landlord if satisfied with the tenancy agreement.

Personal advisors will need to visit the property to check on all aspects of suitability and discuss the matter with the young person and their manager or senior if there are any issues of concern.

When considering suitability, personal advisors should consider:

- the facilities and services provided
- state of repair
- safety
- location
- support
- tenancy status
- financial commitments and affordability for the young person.

10.6 Young people living outside Camden

If a young person chooses to live outside Camden but is not ready for an independent tenancy, then efforts will be undertaken to identify a supported housing provider in the local area and quality checked to ensure they can offer the level of support the young person needs. However, Camden cannot guarantee that a provider will be available in the area chosen by the young person and supported accommodation will be offered to the young person as available.

10.7 Staying put

A staying put arrangement is when a child who is living with a foster family at the age of 17 stays on living with that family after their 18th birthday. Local authorities have a duty to advise, assist and support such arrangements where a young person and their foster carer has expressed an interest in entering such an arrangement and where this would be consistent with the young person's welfare.

Some young people may chose to remain living with their foster carer and a staying put arrangement will be arranged by the LACCL service as part of the process for preparing the young person to leave care. Personal advisors should refer to the "Staying put" policy for further information on the nature of the arrangements and their role in supporting this. [Staying put policy.docx](#)

Young people living in staying put arrangements will still be subject to a Steps to Independence assessment to evidence readiness for their own independent tenancy and foster carers will be responsible for carrying out this assessment with the young person.

10.8 Adult Pathway

Some young people may have extra needs making them more vulnerable and unable to develop essential skills for independent living. The young person may not be engaging with their personal advisor and may have a chaotic lifestyle that will require on-going social care support past their 18th birthday. When their needs can no longer be met in the Young People's Pathway, the Adult Pathway will be considered.

Where this is the case, the young person would be referred to the Adult Pathway by the Young People's Pathway Co-ordinator. The young person will continue to be supported and helped to develop independence skills and will continue to accumulate housing points up to the age of 25.

11 Education, training and employment

11.1 Objectives

To ensure care leavers have opportunities to achieve their potential and fulfil their aspirations, the LACCL Service will:

- build on the foundations of young people's previous achievements and assessed strengths as set out in their pathway plan;

Supporting care leavers

- provide high quality advice and guidance on accessing higher and further education and progressing plans for training and employment opportunities so that young people are aware of their options and can make informed choices about their future career options;
- actively encourage and support young people to engage in education, vocational training and apprenticeships;
- ensure each young person has a pathway plan that supports them in achieving their goals and which sets out the support they will receive;
- continually review the young person's progress at pathway plan reviews to ensure they remain engaged and that adequate support is being provided to enable them to pursue their goals;
- provide a gateway to lifelong learning for those young people who wish to return to education at a later date by linking in with the Connexions Service and the Virtual School to provide learning and training opportunities.

11.2 Role of personal advisors

Personal advisors have a duty to fulfil the role of a good corporate parent by ensuring that all care leavers recognise the importance of planning for their future careers and making the most of education and training opportunities.

In particular personal advisors should recognise the additional barriers to achievement faced by care leavers and help them to have high aspirations and to build on their strengths whilst recognising their weaknesses and needs.

Where possible, care leavers should be encouraged to remain in education in order to make them better prepared for independence and to improve their opportunities for future employment.

Personal advisors should ensure that issues around education, training and employment are addressed in the pathway planning process and that the young person's pathway plan provides a package of support that promotes attainment, such as stable living environments and financial, practical and emotional support. The plan should also include details of any vacation accommodation during university breaks to be provided to care leavers in higher education.

Personal advisors should liaise with the designated person within the care leaver's college in order to plan how to support the young person to engage with their course.

Supporting care leavers

This is particularly important where a care leaver is attending a college outside Camden.

If a young person is at college outside Camden, their personal advisor should liaise with the home local authority to look at what support can be provided to the young person.

11.3 Role of the Connexions advisor

The Connexions worker based in the LACCL Service should provide targeted services for care leavers to ensure a smooth transition from the young person's PEP to their pathway plan in terms of their education, employment and training opportunities.

The Connexions advisor will provide young people with encouragement to engage in education and training and helping them to access voluntary work experience so that they can improve their skills and become more employable. The advisor can also help young people access grants and funding to support their long-term plans.

Personal advisors should involve the Connexions advisor in all aspects of planning for the young person's future in terms of their education, training and future careers. Young people should be referred to the Connexions advisor so that they have an opportunity to receive expert advice and guidance, particularly if they are NEET (see below).

11.4 Role of the Post 16 education, training and employment manager

Personal advisors should liaise with the Post 16 education, training and employment manager based in the Virtual School in order to access advice and information about educational opportunities and accessing higher education bursaries for care leavers.

The manager can also provide advice on:

- the best education and training provision for individual young people based on their academic ability, including recommendations for possible courses;
- referring the young person onto an apprenticeship scheme, either Camden's or the national programme;
- provision to help care leavers who are NEET or facing specific barriers to learning (for example those with mental health or emotional difficulties) to prepare for and re-engage with learning, for example through mentoring schemes or life coaching;

11.5 Young people who are NEET

Young people who are not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET) are more likely to fail to achieve their potential and are at a higher risk of becoming socially excluded in the future.

Where a personal advisor is aware that a young person under the age of 20 that they are working with is NEET, they should refer the young person to the Connexions advisor. For any young person who is not in education, training or employment, the allocated worker will make a referral on to the NEET Panel.

The panel consists of representatives from Camden's virtual school, the Connexions service, LACCL team managers and the LACCL Head of Service and/or service manager, a representative from Drive Forward and the Access to Benefits advisor.

The panel will consider what actions have worked and what actions have not been successful in the past to help the young person to engage and explore other education, training and employment opportunities available to the young person. The panel will also devise a NEET Action Plan and put a strategy in place to support the implementation of this plan, which will be monitored and implemented by the social worker or personal advisor.

12 Health

At 18 the LAC health service will end involvement with the young person and will provide them with their "health passport", a discharge summary giving details of their medical history including immunisations and outstanding health issues.

It is an expectation that the young person will then take responsibility for their own health as an adult. However personal advisors should still continue to support the young person to do this, and pathway planning should ensure that the young person's health needs are addressed and the following are promoted:

- management of any on-going health issues
- healthy lifestyles
- sexual health
- emotional wellbeing and good mental health
- sports and leisure activities.

Care leavers should be encouraged to register with GPs and dentists and to take up any available services. The personal advisor should liaise with health professionals to ensure that the young person is taking up necessary health services and that appropriate referrals for services are being made.

Supporting care leavers

Personal advisors should also make care leavers aware of their rights and entitlements with regard to health care and ensure they know how to access health services. At 18 care leavers will need to pay for some NHS charges such as prescriptions but personal advisors should check whether they qualify for any exemptions.

13 Financial support

At 18, Camden will no longer be responsible for maintaining care leavers financially or paying for their accommodation and young people will need to ensure they have an income either from receipt of relevant benefits, student grants or bursaries or wages.

However, Camden will provide some financial support to implement the pathway plan and details of this are available in the “Financial support for care leavers” policy available at: [Financial support for care leavers 2018-2019.docx](#)

14 Young parents

Personal advisors should provide support to care leavers who are parents or pregnant and should encourage them to engage with ante-natal and post-natal health services to ensure the child’s health needs are met. Social workers and personal advisors should also help parents’ access information and advice on relevant benefits and consider whether their current housing is sufficient. Professionals who work with the care leaver in respect of their child should be included in pathway planning.

If personal advisors have concerns about the parenting capacity of a care leaver who is pregnant or a parent, they should make a referral on behalf of the child to the MASH team.

If the care leaver is resident in another local authority, referral should be made to the children’s social care department of that authority. Please note that an automatic referral should not be made simply because of the young person’s status as a care leaver but only because the personal advisor or other professionals have concerns about the (unborn) child’s welfare.

Staff should refer to the London Safeguarding Children Board child protection procedures for further information on procedures.

[I:\Children Schools & Families \(Social Care\)\Children and Families\Children & Families Policy\Child protection policies\Link to pan London 3rd edition.doc](#)

15 Participation

The Children Act 1989 emphasises the need for all Looked After Children to participate in planning for their future in order to ensure that their voice is heard and that their wishes and feelings are taken into account.

For care leavers, this is particularly important as they move towards independence. They should be given every opportunity to become involved in their pathway planning and review and the delivery of services so that they are able to map their pathway to adulthood.

Enabling care leavers to participate in the pathway planning process gives them more control over their lives, helps them to make informed choices about their future and prepares them for adulthood.

Participation also enables care leavers to become involved in shaping Camden's services by getting involved in decision making processes via consultation forums, workshops and projects.

These also provide a valuable social network of peer support for care leavers and give young people the confidence, skills and experience that will enable them to improve their employment prospects.

Camden has a strong record on participation, and Looked After Children in Camden have a dedicated Participation Officer who co-ordinates and leads on various projects, for example:

- carrying out inspections of services
- being involved in the selection of senior Council officers
- delivering training to social workers.

For details on promoting participatory work with young people, please refer to the division's "Direct work with children" Participation policy. Personal advisors should encourage young people to get involved with participation activities, and may refer them to the Children and Young People's Forum via the Participation Officer.

[..\Participation and service user involvement\Participation_policy.docx](#)

16 Complaints and representation

Camden operates a specialist system of complaints for children and young people but the LACCL Service is committed to early resolution of issues within 14 calendar days, which can be extended if appropriate. Where a young person is unhappy with

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the service they have received, they should discuss the matter with their allocated worker who will try to find a solution.

If not, the young person's social worker should give them information leaflets on Camden's children's complaints procedure and support them in contacting the complaints department and pursuing their complaint.

Camden also operates an advocacy service in partnership with Voice should the young person need extra support or specialist advocacy in order to pursue the complaint. Personal advisors should be aware of how to help young people access both the complaints system and the advocacy service and provide information leaflets on advocacy services.

17 Accessing records

Many care leavers will be anxious to find out about their pre-care lives and the reasons why they became looked after. They may also wish to have information about their care experiences in order to make sense of their lives. The Data Protection Act 1998 gives care leavers a right to access their social care record subject to certain rules of disclosure.

Personal advisors should support young people to take up the right to access their social care record and should provide them with a copy of the division's "Your information, your rights" leaflet available at: <..\Information sharing\information sharing leaflet for parents interactive.pdf>

Personal advisors should refer to the division's "Access to records" policy for further information available at: <..\Case management, recording and access\Access to records practice guidance.doc>

Allocated workers should support young people when they are requesting to read their files and they should be present with them, if the young person wants to, while they do this to provide context and to answer any questions they may have. If the allocated worker is not available arrangements should be made for another member of staff to support them and the allocated worker should be available afterwards if the young person needs additional support. Young people can also be encouraged to seek additional support such as counselling and allocated workers can signpost them to a suitable resource.

18 Mental capacity

Part of the process of preparing care leavers for independence is to help them take increasing responsibility for their lives and to make their own decisions. However, social workers, personal advisors and keyworkers may sometimes work with young people whom they believe do not have the mental capacity to make decisions.

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 states that anyone over the age of 16 years has a legal right to make their own decisions. However, a person may lack capacity because of an impairment of the mind that may be temporary or permanent. This may be due to illness, lack of consciousness at the time or because of the effects of drink or drugs, mental ill health or learning disability. The person does not have to be unable to make any decisions for the Mental Capacity Act to apply, but to make a specific decision at a particular time.

People working with LAC and care leavers aged 16 and over who may sometimes lack capacity to make decisions may make the decision for that person as long as the following principles are followed;

- The starting point is to presume that a person has the capacity to make decisions unless it is established that this is not the case.
- Those working with the young person should take every opportunity to help them make a decision before it is established that they do not have the capacity to do so.
- A young person is not incapable of making a decision simply because they are making a poor decision.
- When making decisions or taking action on behalf of a young person who lacks capacity, workers must act in the young person's best interests.
- Any action taken must be the least restrictive of the young person's rights.

Where the young person is judged to lack capacity to make a decision, it will fall to the person taking the action to make a decision for them (for example a social worker, personal advisor, carer or key worker).

The test for capacity is:

- Can the young person take in and understand the information?
- Can the young person retain it (long enough to make a judgement on it)
- Can they weigh up the information in order to make a decision?
- Can they communicate their decision?

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It is the responsibility of the professional working with the young person, for example the social worker, personal advisor or keyworker, to make this assessment on whether or not the young person has capacity and make a decision on their behalf where they are lacking in capacity.

Any decision made on the young person's behalf must comply with the Mental Capacity Act principles set out above, and the following must be recorded on the MOSAIC case record:

- what decision needed to be made
- why it was believed the young person lacked capacity to make that decision (evidence)
- what decision was made and/or action taken
- why this was in the young person's best interests and was the least restrictive action necessary to achieve the aim.

19 Adult safeguarding

Personal advisors and keyworkers should be aware that once a young person reaches 18, safeguarding and child protection systems under the Children Act 1989 will no longer apply where there are concerns about the welfare of the young person.

Instead, safeguarding issues should be dealt with under the adult safeguarding procedures set out in the Care Act 2014 which places a duty on local authorities to safeguard adults who are vulnerable because they require care and support and are otherwise unable to protect themselves from abuse and neglect.

Further information and definitions of abuse and neglect can be found at:

[Camden Council: Safeguarding adults \(adult protection\)](#)

Personal advisors and key workers can contact Camden's adult social care safeguarding service on 020 7974 4000 (option 1) to get advice on what action can be taken and whether adult safeguarding procedures should be followed. Each case will be considered on an individual basis.

20 Storing care leaver's belongings

Where CSSW are paying to store the belongings of care leavers, the following rules will apply:

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- Agreement to pay for storing a care leaver's belongings needs to be made by the leaving care manager as part of their pathway plan following a change of circumstances or placement move. An inventory of the items being stored should be written down and agreed with the young person prior to storage and reviewed if storage is still needed; a copy of the inventory should be uploaded onto the young person's MOSAIC case record.
- When making this decision the personal advisor and supervisor should consider the value of what is being stored, the reason why it is being stored and the likelihood of the young person returning to claim their belongings if they are no longer in the placement.
- If a decision is made to end paying for storage, the young person (and their family where appropriate) should be notified giving the timescale in which they should reclaim their belongings before CSSW instructs the storage facility that these costs will no longer be covered. If an arrangement is not reached, the young person's belongings will be discarded and letter be sent to the young person advising them of this.
- If the young person has moved into their own permanent accommodation there is an expectation that they will claim their belongings; the personal advisor should write to the young person giving them one month to make arrangements to reclaim their belongings before they are discarded.
- If the young person is over 18 and no longer lives in pathway or other semi-independent accommodation the personal advisor should write to the young person and their parents giving them one month to make arrangements to reclaim the belongings before they are discarded.
- If the young person has "disappeared" from pathway or semi-independent accommodation and has not been in contact with their personal advisor for more than 3 months, the personal advisor should make contact with the young person and their parents giving one month to make arrangements to reclaim the belongings before they are discarded.
- If the young person is detained in custody but is likely to be released before their 21st birthday, continues to be visited by their personal advisor and will return to Camden for a leaving care service on release their belongings should continue to be stored and the costs paid by CSSW.

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- If the young person is detained in custody and is unlikely to be released before their 25th birthday and may not be eligible for a leaving care service on release, the personal advisor should meet with the young person and discuss what they would like to happen with their belongings, having completed an inventory prior to this meeting. The young person should be supported to make decisions around which items they would like to keep up until their release. If there is family available, then discussions should take place with the young person's family, giving them 3 months to make arrangements to reclaim the belongings before they are discarded.
- If the young person is an unaccompanied asylum seeking child who has been detained by the Home Office and will imminently be returned home CSSW should make arrangements to return the young person's belongings to them from storage. The personal advisor should keep in touch with the young person, their solicitor and the Home Office regarding their status.
- If the young person has been detained under the Mental Health Act CSSW should continue to store the young person's belongings until they return to the community when a decision should be made about continuing to pay for storage.

Appendix 1: Leaving care services, eligibility and service description

Leaving care status		Description of services to be provided
<p>Eligible children (16-18 who are still Looked After by Camden)</p>	<p>These are young people who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are aged 16 or 17 • are currently looked after • have been looked after for at least 13 weeks (or for periods totalling 13 weeks) since the age of 14 and after the age of 16. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all the provisions of the Looked After Children system • allocated social worker • needs assessment • pathway plan and review
<p>Relevant children (16-18 who are no longer Looked After)</p>	<p>These are young people who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are aged 16 or 17 • are not currently looked after • have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and up to their 16th birthday and have since left care <p>or:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are aged 16 or 17 • are not currently looked after • were detained in custody or admitted to hospital on attaining 16 and immediately prior to this had been looked after for 13 weeks since the age of 14 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal advisor • needs assessment • pathway plan and review • accommodation and maintenance • assistance to achieve their goals (ie: education) as set out in their pathway plan the responsible authority must keep in touch
<p>Former relevant children 18-21 18 and over who were eligible or relevant children prior to reaching 18 and up to the age of 21</p>	<p>These are young people who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are aged 18 or above • were an eligible child but have since left care • were a relevant child but have since reached the age of 18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the responsible authority must keep in touch • personal advisor • pathway plan and review • assistance with education, training or employment • financial assistance where needed vacation accommodation for higher education or residential further education if needed
<p>Former relevant children</p>	<p>These are young people who:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal advisor

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<p>21-25 Aged 21-25 who choose to continue to receive leaving care support or who return to request support up to the age of 25</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are aged between 21 and 25 • have been a former relevant child • at 21 choose to continue to receive a leaving care service • end contact with leaving care services at 21 but return to request further leaving care support before their 25th birthday. • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • needs assessment • pathway plan and review • financial assistance to support education or training
<p>Qualifying children (16-21 who were looked after for a short period but who are not eligible, relevant or former relevant children)</p>	<p>These are young people who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are aged 16-21 • are entitled to advice and assistance because they were accommodated between the ages of 16 and 18 in a variety of settings, including schools and hospitals or were privately fostered, but are not eligible or relevant children <p>or:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are aged between 16 and 21 • if under 18, are subject to a special guardianship order • if aged over 18, were subject to a special guardianship order • were looked after prior to the special guardianship order being granted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advice, assistance and befriending • financial assistance with education, training or employment • assistance in general <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vacation accommodation for higher education • residential further education if needed

Appendix 2: Content of needs assessments and pathway plans for relevant and former relevant children

Needs	Information to be included in pathway plan
Health and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of primary healthcare services • Arrangements for the young person’s medical and dental care according to their needs making a reference in the health plan established within the care plan in place when the young person was looked after. • Access to specialist health and therapeutic services. • Arrangements so that the young person understands the actions they can take to maintain a healthy lifestyle. • Opportunities to enjoy and achieve and take part in positive leisure activities.
Education, training and employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of the young person’s aspirations and career ambitions and actions and support to achieve this. • Access to careers advice. • Education objectives and support – continue to use the young person’s Personal Education Plan. • Arrangements to support the young person in further education and/or higher education. • Support to enable suitably qualified young people to enter apprenticeships, make applications to university or gain necessary qualifications. • Arrangements for work experience, career mentoring or pathways into employment etc.
Emotional and behavioural development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the authority will assist the young person to develop self esteem and maintain positive attachments. • Does the young person display self esteem, resilience and confidence? • Assessment of their capacity to empathise with others, reason and take appropriate responsibility for their own actions. • Capacity to make attachments and appropriate relationships, show appropriate emotion, adapt to change, manage stress and show self control and appropriate self awareness.
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the authority intends to meet any of the young person’s needs arising from their ethnicity, religious persuasion, sexual orientation. • How does the young person understand their identity stemming from being a child in care and a care leaver? • How the authority will assist the young person to obtain key documents linked to confirming their age and identity.

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Family and social relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of the young person's relationship with their parents and wider family. • Contact with family – carried across from care plan. • Young person's relationships with peers, friendship network and significant adults. Strategy to improve any negative features of these relationships. • How all these relationships will contribute to the young person making a successful transition to adulthood and how they will assist with integration into the community that they identify with.
Practical and other skills necessary for independent living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The young person is adequately prepared with the full range of practical skills they will need to manage the next planned move towards greater independence. • The young person is prepared for taking greater responsibility as they are expected to manage more independently.
Financial arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of care leaver's financial needs and their financial capacity. Does the young person have a bank account, national insurance number and appreciate the value of regular saving etc? Do they have access to financial support and adequate income to meet necessary expenses? • Pathway plan must include a statement of how the authority proposes to maintain a relevant child, the arrangements in place for the young person to receive financial support and contingency plans. • Statement of financial assistance to be provided to a former relevant child.
(Suitability of) accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ~An assessment of the quality of accommodation where the young person is living/any accommodation under consideration for them to live in. • How far is this suitable for the young person's needs? • What steps might be taken to improve it?