

# **Southampton City Council**

## **Children and Families**

### **Leaving Care Policy**

#### **August 2019**



# Southampton City Council

## Leaving Care Policy

### July 2019

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<b>Contact</b>	Mary.hardy@southampton.gov.uk	<b>Effective date</b>	08/09/2019

## Purpose

1. This Leaving Care Policy has been developed in order to ensure that there is a clear and shared understanding of how to appropriately support young people leaving care. It will:
  - Set out the statutory guidelines
  - Clarify the processes and standards required
2. This legislation is aimed primarily at social workers and personal advisers. It will help them to ensure that young people are appropriately supported and prepared for independent living and provides the framework by which they can assess the needs of the young people and ensure they are receiving all the advice and guidance to which they are entitled.

## Legislation:

- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010
- Children Act 1989: Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers, 2015
- The Children Act 1989
- The Children (Leaving Care) Act Explanatory Notes
- Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002
- The Children Act 2004
- The White Paper – “Care Matters” Time for Change 2007
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- Transition to Adulthood – Interim Guidance for the Implementation of the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 (“Transition Guidance”)
- Care Leavers’ Charter 2012, a contract between local authorities and young people leaving care, setting out what support care leavers can expect, published by the Department of Education
- The Care Planning and Care Leavers (Amended) Regulations 2014
- Children and Social Work Act (2017)

## Scope

3. The policy will affect personal advisor social workers, because it will clarify the way in which Southampton supports its care leavers and will ensure that all young people receive a high-quality and equitable service which enables them to attain independence in a way which meets their needs.
4. This policy will also affect young people and their families and carers, as it lays out their entitlements and helps them to know what they should be able to expect from Southampton City Council.

## Definitions

- The four categories of care leavers are:
  - Eligible Young Persons
  - Relevant Young Persons
  - Former Relevant Young Persons
  - Young People Qualifying for Advice and Assistance
- Details of the criteria for these categories are outlined in the Care Leavers' Offer.
- **Personal Education Plan (PEP):** is a school based meeting to plan for the education of a child in care. The government have made PEPs a statutory requirement for children in care to help track and promote their achievements.
- **Pathway Plan:** The Pathway Plan is a Care Plan, detailing the services and support needed by young people aged 16 to 21 years and beyond if the young person is disabled or is in full-time education.
- **Care Plan:** A Care Plan sets out how the local authority intends to care for a looked after child and should include details about where they will live, and how their education, health and other aspects of their lives will be provided for. The plan must be reviewed by a judge before a Care Order can be made.
- **Youth Offending Service (YOS):** YOS works with children and young people who get into trouble with the law.
- **Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO):** IROs chair a child's Looked After Review and monitor a child's case on an ongoing basis; they have a duty to identify any areas of poor practice, including general concerns around service delivery. They must be qualified social workers, must not have line management responsibility for the child's case and must have relevant experience of adoption work.

## Policy statement

5. As Corporate Parents, Southampton City Council wants to achieve the same best outcomes for our looked after children as any parent would wish for their children: we want them to be safe, happy, healthy, integrated and able to contribute to their local communities.
6. Like any good parent, we will assist our young people through further and higher education or into employment, training opportunities and apprenticeships, and ensure they have somewhere suitable to live once they leave their care placements. To do this we provide all young people aged between 18 and 21 who qualify for leaving care services with a personal adviser, who will provide support and guidance, and work with other agencies to help the young person gain access to wider support services (under 18s retain their social workers but may also have support from a personal advisor). These may include services from adult social care services and health services for care leavers who

have learning difficulties or mental health problems and meet the eligibility criteria for Adult Services.

7. The objectives of this policy are:

- To enable all the professionals involved in the leaving care process to recognise their corporate and interagency responsibilities for children in care and care leavers
- To deliver high-quality, integrated and effective support and services for care leavers based on sound assessment, preparation and planning
- To continuously improve the life chances and outcomes for care leavers
- To promote social inclusion
- To motivate and assist each young person to reach their potential for education, training and employment so that they can achieve adult independence
- To promote their good health by encouraging healthy physical, mental, emotional and sexual lifestyles
- To facilitate access to, and support them in, suitable accommodation
- To help them maintain positive family and friendship relationships
- To assist them to be financially independent, be able to budget and to save and manage their money
- To provide them with a worker who will undertake the role of personal adviser
- To produce a Pathway Plan and regularly review it at least every six months and more frequently if there is a change in the young person's circumstances
- To encourage each young person to take up opportunities for developing a range of interests, skills, activities and supportive social networks, (see Care Leaver's Offer) including facilitating contact between young people and their Independent Visitor if they have one and wish to remain in contact
- To comply with the key principles in the Care Leavers' Charter (see Appendix A)

8. In line with the Government's Care Leavers' Strategy, Southampton City Council recognises that there are many ways in which it is possible to improve the outcomes of young people leaving care and ensure that our care leavers are in the best possible position to have happy, fulfilling and independent lives.

## Our Duties Explained:

### Eligible Young Persons

9. We have a duty to support these young people up to the age of 18, wherever they are living, and beyond into independence, if they become former relevant young people. The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 (Volume 2) require that a thorough assessment of the young person's needs is undertaken to inform the actions for achievement in the Pathway Plan, that the Pathway Plan is reviewed, and that a worker is

appointed as personal adviser to the young person. Duties to Eligible Young Persons include to:

- Appoint either a personal adviser who is a qualified social worker, or appoint a personal adviser who will work alongside the social worker
- Undertake a Pathway Plan needs assessment (locally from age of 15 years and 9 months and to be completed before the 16<sup>th</sup> birthday).
- Create a Pathway Plan, which should involve input from the young person and be completed before they are 16 years and 3 months old
- Review the Pathway Plan at a minimum of at least every six months, unless circumstances change.

### **Relevant Young Persons**

There is a duty to support relevant young people up to the age of 18 years, wherever they are living. The Care Leavers Regulations 2010 require the Council to remain in contact with relevant young people, and to undertake the responsibilities outlined above. Duties to Relevant Young Persons include to:

- Keep/ stay in touch with the young person at least every 8 weeks
- Appoint a personal adviser, or appoint a personal adviser who will work alongside the social worker
- Undertake a Pathway Plan needs assessment (if not previously done)
- Create a Pathway Plan, which should involve input from the young person
- Review the Pathway Plan at a minimum at least every six months and more frequently if circumstances change in between reviews
- Safeguard and promote the welfare of the young person
- Provide accommodation and assistance to meet the young person's needs in relation to education, training and employment.

### **Former Relevant Young Persons**

10. The Care Leavers Regulations 2010 make the same requirements of the Council as above. These requirements continue until the young person becomes 21 or up to 25 in some cases. In setting out goals and actions for achievement, the Pathway Plan should also set out timescales for completion so that it is clear when the Plan will expire so leaving care services can lawfully cease.

11. For former relevant young persons aged between 21 and under 25 years of age and wishing to take up an agreed programme of education, the Care Leavers Regulations 2010 make the same requirements of the Council as above. This is to provide appropriate assistance by, for example, contributing to expenses incurred by the young person in living near the place where s/he is receiving education or training; or by making a grant towards meeting the costs and expenses of their course, based\* on the Assessment of Needs for

those returning to education and circumstances and included in the Pathway Plan. Duties to Former Relevant Young Persons include to:

- Take all reasonable steps to keep/ stay in touch with the young person
- Continue providing a personal adviser
- Undertake a Pathway Plan needs assessment (if not previously done), which should involve input from the young person
- Continue with the Pathway Plan up to the age of 25 where appropriate
- Review the Pathway Plan at least every six months, unless circumstances change
- Safeguard and promote the welfare of the young person
- Provide accommodation and assistance to meet the young person's needs in relation to education, training and employment
- Provide financial assistance to enable them to pursue education and training provide a Higher Education Bursary

### Young People Qualifying For Advice and Assistance - Category A Special Guardianship and Category B Looked After Children

12. Advice and assistance is provided to qualifying young persons by their relevant local authority. This is the last local authority in which the young person was a looked after child.
13. For Young People Qualifying for Advice and Assistance, the local authority is required by Section 24(5) of the Children Act 1989 to provide appropriate advice and assistance.

Duties to Qualifying Young People may include:

- Giving assistance "by contributing to expenses incurred by him/her in living near the place where he is or will be employed or seeking employment or receiving education and training"
- Providing assistance with expenses connected with education or training by way of grant, including university tuition fees.

## Support for Care Leavers:

### Education and Training:

14. Enabling young people to reach their potential at school and college is vital to ensuring they are able to lead a satisfying and independent adult life. Therefore, we will:
  - Ensure that, wherever possible, all children looked after are at schools which are at least 'good'
  - Ensure that children's Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are kept up-to-date, and include challenging, but attainable targets



- Ensure that children, at age 14, get relevant, independent careers advice to help them in their decision-making and GCSE choices through a Careers Advisor within the Virtual School, available from Year 9 (14+) onwards
- Ensure young people, at age 18, get relevant, independent careers advice to help them make appropriate choices with regard to college/ apprenticeships/ qualifications
- Ensure that, at the age of 18, young people have a personal adviser
- Ensure young people are supported to stay in their foster placements beyond their 18th birthday if the carer and young person agree that plan. This is a Staying Put arrangement which can last until the care leavers become 21, allowing for stability and security as the young person transitions to adulthood.
- Ensure the Pathways Plan:
  - Reflects the young person's ambitions
  - Is regularly maintained
  - Is retained until the age of 25 for those young people who are in education or training
- Provide appropriate support for young people entering work, training or apprenticeships, including:
  - Appropriate support for writing CVs, application forms and interview practice
  - Financial support to buy suits for interviews and work, or specialist clothing required for apprenticeships
  - Appropriate support to help with transport, where required; their PA will usually take them, although requests for fares will also be granted
- Looked after young people aged 16 and 17 will have their care and support needs met through their placement while they are in education, employment or training. Former young people aged 18 or 19 who start a course of education prior to their 19th birthday are able to claim benefits until age 22 and will be supported to claim the appropriate benefits.
- Young people should be supported to claim any discretionary support (e.g. through education providers) available to them. More information on discretionary support is available in the Care Leavers' Offer.
- Provide appropriate support to help young people who wish to go to university.
- Ensuring young people have appropriate support to help with choosing and applying for university, including financial support for attending university open days or the provision of lifts with their PA, as appropriate
- Ensuring young people have access to appropriate holiday accommodation; SCC works closely with universities in this regard
- Ensuring young people are supported to claim all the appropriate loans, grants and bursaries available to them
- Ensure that young people are able to attend their graduation ceremony

- Ensuring that young people receive the Higher Education Bursary of £2,000, paid in four instalments of £500, at the beginning of each academic year and the final payment on completion of the course
- Ensuring young people are actively encouraged to seek work during the holidays to better prepare them for employment post-university
- Care leavers who resume education up to the age of 25 will receive an assessment of need and, wherever possible, we will ensure they are allocated their former personal adviser to ensure continuity of support

## Employment

15. Working is the best possible way for people to become independent and have the opportunity to live well. Whilst we recognise that full-time employment will not be possible for all care leavers, we will encourage our care leavers to be ambitious for their future and aspire to be in work or training wherever possible. Therefore, we will:

- Take an active interest in young people's ambitions and support them to access work experience placements, including through the provision of work experience opportunities at the Council and with our partner organisations
- Ensure young people's ambitions are reflected in their PEPs and Pathway Plans, which will state clear goals and actions for career planning, arrangements for work experience, career mentoring and other support to enable young people to gain apprenticeships and/or other qualifications. This includes voluntary groups which are working with Looked After Young People who are not in employment nor education.
- Personal advisers will provide advice and support to improve employability and work with local employers to ensure there are job opportunities
- Give priority to care leavers, YOS, NEET young people and young people with disabilities when recruiting SCC Apprenticeships with a target of no less than a third of all apprentices coming from these priority groups.

## Housing and Finance

16. As Barnardo's states, safe, stable and decent housing is crucial to ensuring the wellbeing of young people leaving care. We recognise that young people have different housing needs at different times, and may need significant support to enable them to achieve stability. A weekly Housing Panel, comprising managers from Housing, the Leaving Care Service, Homelessness and our providers, gives priority to care leavers. Therefore, we will:

- Ensure young people do not feel under pressure to leave care before they are ready and support them to make the right decision for them in terms of the type of accommodation they choose
- Actively encourage care leavers to 'stay put' in their current accommodation when it is right for them to do so
- Ensure that young people are appropriately supported to learn the key skills they will need to live independently, e.g. cooking, cleaning, shopping and budgeting skills

- Ensure that young people in full-time education have stable accommodation whilst they sit exams
  - Check prospective accommodation to ensure it meets appropriate standards (see Appendix B)
17. The two main forms of accommodation are supported and independent and SCC currently has housing contracts with Two Saints, and YMCA. We also spot purchase other supported housing and with Step by Step for supported lodgings placements as necessary. Information on the types of living arrangements and financial support available to care leavers is outlined in Annex B and the Care Leavers' Offer. Further information about Staying Put and Staying Close can be found in the Staying Put Policy.

## Disability

18. Southampton City Council converts all foster placements for disabled young people into formal adult placements on the young person's 18th birthday.

## Financial Assistance

19. Southampton City Council recognises that care leavers face potentially difficult financial situations since they cannot fall back on family and face the challenge of independent living at a much earlier age than their peers. Furthermore, many of them do not have the appropriate identification to make applications; where this is the case, they will be supported to acquire the necessary ID documents. Overall, we seek to ensure that young people are supported to become financially aware. We will therefore:
- Ensure young people are aware of the benefits and other financial assistance they are entitled to and are supported to make claims in a timely manner, whether they are unemployed or in education. There is a Protocol in place with the local DWP Office to make this process as smooth as possible.
  - Support young people to be ambitious and help them to take the steps needed to become employable and financially independent
  - Support them to develop good budgeting skills and help them to learn how to shop
  - Young people receive a nominal £50 gift on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthdays
  - Young people receive a £2,000 Care Leavers' Grant. This is retained by the authority and spent on them incrementally between the ages of 18-21. It is typically used for rent deposit start-up grants as they move into more independent living. Driving lessons can be match funded – young people are usually required to save up for lessons and the authority will match the amount before a block-booking for lessons is made. The Pathways Plan will discuss how the grant will be used.
20. Finance and housing needs are closely aligned; further details about finance, both for young people and their carers, are available in Appendix B.

## Health

21. We recognise that many young people in care have lower levels of physical and mental health compared with their peers in the wider population. Young people receive annual health checks until they are 18 and work has taken place with Health to develop a 'Health Passport', summarising their health history, which they will be given when they turn 18. Therefore we will:

- Ensure the Health and Wellbeing Board maintains a focus on the health care needs of children looked after and care leavers
- Ensure young people's health plans are incorporated into their Pathway Plan
- Support young people to take the steps that will enable them to lead healthy adult lives, including encouraging them to maintain regular dentist and optician appointments
- Provide young people with support to actively choose healthy lifestyles, e.g. discuss issues around healthy eating, regular exercise and sexual health needs
- Ensure those young people with mental health needs are supported appropriately as they enter adult health care services
- Provide appropriate support to those young people with substance misuse issues
- Offer young people who have told us that they are going to be parents an opportunity to attend a meeting with professionals who can provide help and support. This will be co-ordinated by the Personal Advisor and should involve health colleagues.

## Youth Justice

22. Southampton acknowledges that young people who have been in care are more vulnerable to being drawn into crime or becoming victims of crime. Southampton YOS has signed a local agreement with Hampshire Constabulary and a regional agreement with other authorities/police forces in the South East in order to prevent unnecessary criminalisation of looked after children. Therefore we will:

- Seek appropriate support for any care leaver who shows signs of being at risk of being drawn into crime. Monthly meetings, known as the Priority Young People Scheme, take place with YOS and other agencies, to monitor serious and/or accelerating offending behaviour to try and reduce re-offending.
- Ensure that the allocated social worker informs YOS as soon as possible if a young person offends, in order to ensure that appropriate support is put into place
- In all cases where both services are involved, the YOS Action Plan and the Care or Pathway Plan should complement each other
- When a young person under the supervision of YOS becomes 18, supervision of any court orders will normally be transferred to the local probation provider, the exception being Detention and Training Orders. Within the remit of the local YOS Transitions Policy, there should be a careful transfer of responsibilities, which should involve both the Children and Families social worker and the Youth

Offending Service supervising officer if the young person is a child looked after or a care leaver

- Southampton has a designated manager to receive reports from the allocated social worker of any looked after child/ care leaver in custody and decide how they will respond to any assessments or recommendations; the reports must be endorsed by the responsible team manager before submission to the designated manager.

23. Please see the Working Protocol to Safeguard Children in the Youth Justice System for further details.

## Leaving Care Processes

### Personal Adviser

24. An eligible child (16 or 17 years) will have a person allocated to them to meet the requirements of a personal adviser as given in the Children Act 1989, Schedule 2, paragraph 19C. The young person's social worker will complete the needs assessment and the Pathway Plan within three months of a young person's 16th birthday. The Pathway Plan replaces the LAC Care Plan at this point. As well as starting to plan for the future, including higher education and career ambitions, the pathway planning process will be an opportunity to establish whether the young person has special needs that ought to be considered as they enter adulthood and to ensure that other services such as Adult Social Care and Housing can begin their planning. Too??? The assessment of needs must address the young person's:

- Health and development
- Education, training and employment including achievements to date, and special needs and career ambitions
- Emotional and behavioural development and any special needs in this area
- Identity including ethnicity, religious persuasion, sexual orientation and any issues arising from being in care
- Family and social arrangements
- Practical and other skills necessary for independent living
- Financial arrangements, including bank account, NI number and savings
- Accommodation – current arrangements and likely future needs
- Contingency planning if goals are not achieved
- Ambitious but achievable goals for achieving adult independence and the actions required of the Corporate Parent, the young person, other agencies, and other significant people including family.

### Pathways Plan

25. The Pathway Plan replaces the Care Plan for young people remaining looked after. The needs assessment and the Pathway Plan are reviewed by a statutory review chaired by the young person's Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) within three months of their 16th

birthday and thereafter at least every six months. The partnership working between social worker, family members, carers, designated teacher, designated LAC nurse, and other relevant professionals is vital if actions and outcomes are to be achieved. If the young person remains placed in non-regulated accommodation, the Pathway Plan should be reviewed within 28 days of that placement, then after three months, and thereafter every six months.

### Transitional Plan

26. If a young person has been assessed to have additional/complex needs, for example, mental health needs requiring additional support, their case will be referred to the Transitional Operational Group (TOG) to assess their needs against the criteria for access to Adult Social Care. This takes place when the young person is 16-17 years old, and if eligibility is agreed, the services will co-work until the young person is transferred at the age of 18. This situation may change if they are allocated a worker earlier.
27. For former relevant care leavers (young people who have left care and are aged over 18 years), the personal adviser will organise and arrange a review meeting for the Pathway Plan to be updated within the statutory timescale or sooner if appropriate and necessary. There may be occasions whereby the personal adviser may be the most appropriate person to chair the Pathway Plan review meeting, in so far as by doing so the role of the personal adviser as the Chair does not conflict or compromise the personal adviser's role as a negotiator on behalf of the care leaver with the local authority, but this is a role that can be exercised by the care leaver. The update of the Pathway Plan will take into account the personal adviser's close understanding of the needs of the care leaver and of developments in that young adult's life and circumstances.
- 28-29 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced a new duty on Local Authorities to provide personal advisor support to all care leavers up to age 25, if they want it irrespective of whether they are engaged in EET. This includes care leavers who return to the Local Authority at any point, often after the age of 21 up to 25 and request personal advisor support. These new duties introduced through the Children and Social Work Act, to access care leaver's needs and develop and keep under review a Pathway Plan apply only where the young person specifically requests support. This effectively enables us to respond positively to requests for support from care leavers aged 21-25 who may be continuing to struggle with the transition to adult life.

### Ongoing Support

30. Young people who leave care are uniquely in need of support and guidance. Many young people do not have families to turn to for support and may wish to have a trusted adult to whom they can turn in times of need, as well as the reassurance of regular contact with someone who knows them well. Therefore we will:
  - a. Ensure we stay in touch with young people regularly until they are 21 or until they leave care, although we will respect the right of young people to withdraw from the process if they would like to
  - b. Ensure that young people have access to accurate and high-quality support from adults they trust
  - c. Ensure they have flexibility to leave care at a time when they are ready

- d. Ensure that all care leavers are given all relevant information they need, e.g. health passports, photos, identity documents and other important documentation
- e. Provide young people with the support they need to get a passport and take driving lessons, via a cash-matching agreement
- f. Try to ensure that care leavers have a support network of people they can talk to at times when staff are not normally around, e.g. evenings, weekends, Christmas

## Transfer to the 14+ and Care Leavers Service

### Transfer to the Leaving Care Service

31. The Pathways team works with LAC aged 14+ and care leavers. Early planning and joint work between case handling social workers and personal advisors ensures young people are advised of the support available to them ahead of the transition to becoming a care leaver, this is also supported by the young person's statutory reviews, so they better understand what is happening. Essential documents for the young person will be identified at the first statutory review following their 16th birthday to ensure they are available, including:
- a. Birth certificate (with copy on file) or Home Office/age assessment documentation in case of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)
  - b. Passport (if eligible)
  - c. National Insurance Number (if eligible).
  - d. Housing registration number
  - e. Needs Assessment
  - f. Pathway Plan (inclusive of their Personal Education Plan and Health Plan).

### Transfer to Adult Social Care Services

32. Those young people who may be eligible for support from Adult Services will be referred by their social worker to the TOG at the age of 16-17 to ensure transitional services for young persons with disabilities and/or mental health needs are provided in collaboration with Adult Services in a timely manner. The young person's Pathway Plan will specify what support is required from adult services, and who has responsibility for ensuring partnership working and coordinated delivery.

## Management Oversight

33. Non-compliance with this policy will be identified in a number of ways:
- a. Through supervision
  - b. Through regular audits of children's files as part of the rolling programme of audits undertaken by practitioners and managers across the service and where reviewed at the Performance Group.

- c. Through data analysis, including of test and exam results, apprenticeship figures, NEET figures and college/apprenticeship take-up
  - d. Through challenge at the Health and Wellbeing Board and Corporate Parenting Meetings
  - e. By way of formal Alerts being raised by the IRO for Case and Planning Reviews
34. Once non-compliance has been identified, senior managers will investigate the case in order to discover the extent of the issue, both with the individual child and with the wider cohort. Remedial activities may include coaching, for individual social workers, or team training.

## Governance

35. The council's Principal Social Worker, senior managers and the Council Members, particularly those involved in the Corporate Parenting Board, will be responsible for overseeing this policy.
36. Team managers are responsible for implementing it, and senior managers are to take responsibility for responding to specific problems arising which would lead any parent to challenge provision as not being good enough for their child.
37. The Children and Families Management Team will be accountable to the Council Management Team and the Corporate Parenting Board.
38. Governance Forums additionally exist within the Children and Families Scrutiny Panel, led by members, and the monthly Performance Review Group, led by senior managers within the service.
39. The policy will be reviewed annually.



## Appendix A – Care Leavers’ Charter

A Charter is a set of principles and promises. This Charter sets out promises care leavers want the central and local government to make. Promises and principles help in decision making and do not replace laws; they give guidance to show how laws are designed to be interpreted.

The key principles in this Charter will remain constant through any changes in Legislation, Regulation and Guidance. Care leavers urge local authorities to use these principles when they make decisions about young people’s lives. The Charter for Care Leavers is designed to raise expectation, aspiration and understanding of what care leavers need and what the government and local authorities should do to be good Corporate Parents.

We Promise:

### **To respect and honour your identity**

We will support you to discover and to be who you are and honour your unique identity. We will help you develop your own personal beliefs and values and accept your culture and heritage. We will celebrate your identity as an individual, as a member of identity groups and as a valued member of your community. We will value and support important relationships, and help you manage changing relationships or come to terms with loss, trauma or other significant life events. We will support you to express your identity positively to others.

### **To believe in you**

We will value your strengths, gifts and talents and encourage your aspirations. We will hold a belief in your potential and a vision for your future even if you have lost sight of these yourself. We will help you push aside limiting barriers and encourage and support you to pursue your goals in whatever ways we can. We will believe in you, celebrate you and affirm you.

### **To listen to you**

We will take time to listen to you, respect, and strive to understand your point of view. We will place your needs, thoughts and feelings at the heart of all decisions about you, negotiate with you, and show how we have taken these into account. If we don’t agree with you we will fully explain why. We will provide easy access to complaint and appeals processes and promote and encourage access to independent advocacy whenever you need it.

### **To inform you**

We will give you information that you need at every point in your journey, from care to adulthood, presented in a way that you want including information on legal entitlements and the service you can expect to receive from us at different stages in the journey. We will keep information up to date and accurate. We will ensure you know where to get current information once you are no longer in regular touch with leaving care services. We will make clear to you what information about yourself and your time in care you are entitled to see. We will support you to access this when you want it, to manage any feelings that you might have about the information, and to put on record any disagreement with factual content.

### **To support you**

We will provide any support set out in current Regulations and Guidance and will not unreasonably withhold advice when you are no longer legally entitled to this service. As well

as information, advice, practical and financial help we will provide emotional support. We will make sure you do not have to fight for support you are entitled to and we will fight for you if other agencies let you down. We will not punish you if you change your mind about what you want to do. We will continue to care about you even when we are no longer caring for you. We will make it our responsibility to understand your needs. If we can't meet those needs we will try and help you find a service that can. We will help you learn from your mistakes; we will not judge you and we will be here for you no matter how many times you come back for support.

### **To find you a home**

We will work alongside you to prepare you for your move into independent living only when you are ready. We will help you think about the choices available and to find accommodation that is right for you. We will do everything we can to ensure you are happy and feel safe when you move to independent living. We recognise that at different times you may need to take a step back and start over again. We will do our best to support you until you are settled in your independent life; we will not judge you for your mistakes or refuse to advise you because you did not listen to us before. We will work proactively with other agencies to help you sustain your home.

### **To be a lifelong champion**

We will do our best to help you break down barriers encountered when dealing with other agencies. We will work together with the services you need, including housing, benefits, colleges and universities, employment providers and health services to help you establish yourself as an independent individual. We will treat you with courtesy and humanity whatever your age when you return to us for advice or support. We will help you to be the driver of your life and not the passenger. We will point you in a positive direction and journey alongside you at your pace. We will trust and respect you. We will not forget about you. We will remain your supporters in whatever way we can, even when our formal relationship with you has ended.

(Department of Education, 2012).

## Appendix B – Types of Housing

### Types of supported accommodation

The range of supported accommodation provided to Care Leavers includes the following types:

- **Shared housing:** these offer temporary or permanent accommodation and care leavers have their own room but share bathroom, kitchen and communal areas with other young adults. It is similar to a hall of residence at university. Support is delivered by support workers who may have an office in the property or visit on a regular basis.
- **Self-contained flats:** care leavers have their own flat or a studio flat. The provider may manage a block of flats, or may provide single unit flats in buildings across the locality. Support is provided by support workers who may have an office in the block or offer a visiting service.
- **Hostel:** accommodation is temporary and intended to provide a high level of support; care leavers have their own bedrooms and share communal areas with other young adults. Unlike shared housing meals are provided and cleaning services. Support from workers is provided on a 24-hour basis, seven days a week, every week of the year. This is a transitional arrangement leading to greater independence.
- **Foyers for young people (i.e. the YMCA hostel in Cranbury Place):** Foyers offer temporary accommodation for young people (usually 17–25 years of age) with support and access to employment, training and education. The accommodation may be shared or self-contained. Support is provided by support workers who are usually based on site and may be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- **Training flats:** care leavers who are planning to go for Higher Education are offered accommodation in self-contained flats for a short period of time to give them a chance to see what it would be like to live on their own. Workers then assess any needs for future support / skills development.
- **Supported Lodgings:** are families provided after referral and they provide the care leaver with a family environment, but one in which the care leaver is expected to exercise a degree of adult independence and responsibility. The care leaver can stay with this family under this arrangement until he / she is ready for independent living.
- **Mother and baby units:** provide temporary shared accommodation for care leavers who are young parents or about to become parents, who need some extra support with their new born until they are settled and independent. There is 24 hour key work support available in these units to teach them child care and life skills.
- **Shared Lives arrangement for care leavers with a disability:** are arrangements for care leavers with disabilities to stay with an adult carer and these arrangements are made through the Adults Disabilities Team.

### Types of independent accommodation

- **Local Authority Housing:** the long waiting list for social housing makes it extremely difficult for care leavers to obtain a council accommodation, unless they are vulnerable and have complex social and housing needs.
- **Housing Associations:** again demand for this accommodation is high and young adults are not a priority but there are a few care leavers who have been provided a Housing Association accommodation.
- **Private rented sector accommodation (PRS):** this can be studio flats or a 2-3 bedroom house that is shared by care leavers (and only by care leavers), the properties are checked and registered with the council to obtain the legally required House of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) license.
- **Staying Put Arrangement:** the White Paper guidance issued in 2013 became legislation with the Children and Families Act 2014 and provides the framework for care leavers remaining with their former foster carers as a Staying Put arrangement. The Council's Staying Put Policy should be read in conjunction with this policy.
- **Family and Friends:** some care leavers choose to stay with their family members or relatives or friends. The arrangement is monitored by the Leaving Care Service.
- **Emergency accommodation:** the last resort when the care leaver's current accommodation has broken down and eviction has been served. This accommodation might be a hostel provided by the Council's housing department or an emergency Homeless Shelter.
- **Homes of Multiple Occupancy (HMO)**

The majority of Private Rented Sector properties for the care leaver age group are likely to be in shared arrangements with other young people. These arrangements are called Homes of Multiple Occupancy. Although HMOs may occasionally be used to house young people in an emergency, SCC avoids using such premises when at all possible. The council has a statutory duty to monitor and register these arrangements. The landlord is required to obtain a license from the Council if the property is occupied by three or more persons. The license is required so that Council can control and monitor standards. The Council makes monitors the standards of:

- Safety
- Good repair
- Smoke detectors
- Fire exits
- Sinks, cookers, baths and toilets for the tenants.

The Council will only provide a license if they are satisfied that:

- The property is suitable for occupation by the number of people expected
- The license holder is a 'fit and proper person'
- The property manager, if there is one, is a 'fit and proper person'
- The property management arrangements are satisfactory
- The financial stability of the provider is evident.
- The license is normally given for five years, and the HMO officer conducts regular visits to the property to ensure the property is of the required standard.

## **The judgment of suitability of accommodation**

There are two elements to the judgement of suitability of accommodation. The first element is based on the assessed needs of the young person by the social worker including the wishes and views of the young person. The social workers in the Leaving Care Services of the Looked after Children Service discuss each case at the weekly Housing Panel. The Housing Panel agrees a Housing Plan for the care leaver depending on his / her needs. The housing plan is taken forward by the allocated social worker and the accommodation is put in place as required. Once the case is transferred to the Leaving Care Team, the personal adviser or the social worker follows up on this plan based on the needs of the care leavers. Accommodation is identified according to the following criteria:

1. Distance from education establishment
2. Local connections
3. Care leaver's personal preference
4. Availability of accommodation.

The second element to the judgement of suitability is the statutory standards. This is set out in Regulation 6, 7, & 9 and Schedule 2 of the Planning Transition to Adulthood Guidance, which includes the Care Leavers Regulations (England) 2010.

For quality assurance of the accommodation the Leaving Care Service meets with all our providers to enforce the above criteria. The service ensures that there is an HMO license and safety certificates for any HMO and the service only uses known landlords of good reputation. The allocated worker visits the accommodation prior to the care leaver moving in and then immediately afterwards. They also conduct regular two to six monthly visits to check the well-being of the care leavers and the on-going suitability of accommodation. The care leavers contact their workers if there are issues in the property, such as repairs needed, and the workers liaise directly with the landlord.

## Appendix C

### FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR CARE LEAVERS

#### Financial Support to Care Leavers

##### Background

Each young person will have a different set of needs and different capacity to manage money. Some may have sources of income of their own, such as employment. In each case, Southampton must agree, with the young person, a personal support package and how it is to be managed, with the details recorded in the young person's Pathway Plan.

##### Definitions

Reference should be made to the relevant Regulations currently in force and Guidance for the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 (and Children Act 1989 as a starting point) for detailed information of the legal and policy framework. Below is a guide to categories under the Act. It is important to establish which category a young person falls into as the first stage of assessing need for financial support.

##### Eligible Young Persons

These are young persons aged 16 or 17 years who have been looked after for a period or periods totalling at least 13 weeks starting from their 14th birthday and are still looked after children, except for young persons with a disability who have had a series of short term pre-planned respite care placements lasting up to four weeks.

##### Relevant Young Persons

These are young persons aged 16 or 17 who have already left care but were previously looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks from the age of 14, and at some time during their 16th or 17th year. This does not apply to a young person who has returned to their home from care and this has been successfully maintained for a period of 6 months or more. A young person is also relevant if, having been looked after for three months or more, he or she is then detained after their 16th birthday either in a hospital, remand centre, young offenders' institution or in a secure training centre.

##### Former Relevant Young Persons

These are young persons aged 18 to 21 years (or up to 25 years if attending an agreed course in further or higher education specified in their Pathway Plan) who have been eligible and/or relevant and was placed in care subject to a Care Order, or remanded into care, or accommodated by voluntary agreement.

##### Young People Qualifying For Advice and Assistance

###### a) Category A Special Guardianship

These young people are those young persons aged between 16 and 21 who are not eligible, relevant or former relevant young persons, but qualify for advice and assistance because they are or were subject to a Special Guardianship Order prior to their 18th birthday, or who had been looked after immediately prior to their becoming subject to a Special Guardianship Order or who were looked after children when over the age of 16 years but for less than a

total of 13 weeks after their 14th birthday. These qualifying young persons are known as "category A".

**b) Category B Looked After Children**

These are young persons aged under 21 years of age who were looked after for a period in total of less than 13 weeks after their 16th birthday (starting from their 14th birthday).

**Disqualification from benefits**

Under Section 6 of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 (C(LC)Act) eligible and relevant children are not entitled to Income Support (IS), Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) or Housing Benefit (HB). Relevant lone parents and young disabled people, however, continue to be eligible for benefits, including IS, JSA and any other benefits due to them because of their disability or parental status, but not HB. Independent advice from a welfare-rights specialist should be sought to assist in potential benefits claims. "Lone parent" is defined by s.2 Income Support (General) Regulations 1987 as "a person who has no partner and who is responsible for, and a member of the same household as, a child or young person."

Those defined as disabled include someone who:

- is entitled to statutory sick pay
- is incapable of work because of incapacity
- has appealed against a decision that they are not incapable of work
- is registered as blind
- is in work but because of a physical/mental incapacity their hours or earnings are 75% or less than that of a person without that disability in the same job
- is in non-advanced education and because of a severe disability they would be unlikely to get a job in the next 12 months (sch.18 of the IS (General) Regulations 1987)
- Receipt of benefits will be taken into account when assessing young person's needs and drawing up their Pathway Plans.

**Other 16 and 17-year-old care leavers who remain entitled to benefits**

Young people aged 16 and 17 who are looked after and qualify under s24 Children Act 1989 (that is, they do not meet the period for eligible or relevant young people) remain entitled to benefits. In addition to benefits, Southampton may provide young people who qualify under s24 with financial assistance, in kind, or, in exceptional circumstances, in cash [s24A] to meet their particular needs. They may also provide assistance in relation to education, training or employment up to the age of 24. Southampton must also assist care leavers who had been looked after by the local authority and are in residential Further Education or Higher Education by providing vacation accommodation, if needed.

**Benefit Rates**

Relevant 16 and 17-year-old care leavers will receive up to the equivalent of the Job Seekers' Allowance single higher rate for 16 to 17-year-olds. Income Support Premiums rates apply to lone parents and those with a disability.

### **Former relevant young people**

Southampton does not have the financial support responsibility for this group of young people. It is expected that the young person's income should be derived from the same sources as the young person's peers i.e. employment, benefit entitlement, student loans, etc. The local authority has duties to former relevant young people to:

- provide general assistance (s23C(4)(c))
- provide assistance with expenses incurred by the young person living near the place where s/he is (or will be) employed or seeking employment (s23C(4)(a))
- provide assistance with expenses associated with education and training
- provide vacation accommodation or funds to secure it for care leavers in Higher Education (s23B (5))
- provide a bursary to care leavers in Higher Education
- arrange suitable accommodation to the extent that the young person's welfare requires it

It is expected that the young person's income should be derived from the same sources as the young person's peers i.e. employment, benefit entitlement, student loans, etc. in the absence of which the Council would assess responsibility in a needs assessment and a Pathway Plan under leaving care responsibilities.

### **The assessment of financial need and Pathway Planning**

The Children Act 1989 places the assessment of financial needs within a wide range of considerations, including the young person's:

- health and development
- needs for education, training or employment
- support available from family and others
- practical and independent living skills
- need for care, support and accommodation

### **Local discretion and transparency**

Information will be provided to young people setting out what payments will normally be provided.

### **Financial Support – Principles and Standards**

#### **Principles**

- Financial support should not provide any incentive for young people to leave care prematurely.
- Financial support should link payment levels to young people with the national income maintenance system, i.e. JSA, Income Support and Housing Benefit.
- Financial support should be sensitive to the needs of young people with disabilities and disadvantaged groups.
- Young people should have increasing control of their personal finance prior to leaving care.