

GET READY FOR ADULT LIFE

Children (Leaving Care) 2000 Procedures and Guidance West Midlands Child Care Consortium

No. 5 - Inter-Authority Protocols for Providing Services to Care Leavers

1. SCOPE

- 1.1 This protocol relates to all local authorities within the West Midlands Region namely: Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Herefordshire, Sandwell, Shropshire, Solihull, Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Telford & Wrekin, Walsall, Warwickshire, Wolverhampton and Worcestershire.
- 1.2 The aim of the protocol is to ensure safe and speedy response to all care leavers who move from the local authority where they were looked after (the responsible authority) into another local authority from whom they seek assistance (the host authority) under the provisions of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.
- 1.3 The protocol will be used to support rather than replace local arrangements for managing services to care leavers.
- 1.4 Local authorities will ensure that the content of the protocol is integrated into local service arrangements. Where services are contracted out or provided in partnership with another agency, it will be the responsibility of the local authority to secure the compliance of the partner agency with the terms of the protocol.

2. NAMED OFFICERS

- 2.1 Each local authority will identify a Manager as the named officer for the care leaver's service. She/he will be responsible for ensuring that all enquiries are referred appropriately for assistance, for determining level of support pending review and for responding to areas of inter-authority conflict.
- 2.2 The name and contact details of the named officer will be maintained on the Local Authority's web-site.

3. PREPARATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE FOR LEAVING CARE

- 3.1** Whenever possible, plans for movement of care leavers outside local authority boundaries will be discussed and level of service provision agreed by the authorities concerned prior to a move taking place.
- 3.2** All care leavers will receive advice from the responsible authority on how to access care leaver's services if they move outside the area of their responsible authority and need assistance .
- 3.3** The advice will be provided in written form. It will reflect a 24 hour need for service. The minimum written advice to care leavers will state: Young Person to contact the local Social Care Office, or if outside office hours, the Emergency Duty/Out of Hours Team and tell them that she/he is a care leaver and is in need of assistance. Where access to Emergency Duty/Out of Hours Team is restricted or unknown, the local police should be contacted and requested to contact the Emergency Duty Team on behalf of the Young Person.

4. PROVIDING IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE TO YOUNG PEOPLE IN NEED

- 4.1** Local authorities will establish and document local agreement with Police and Emergency Duty/Out of Hours Team, for response to out of hours request for service that complies with this protocol.
- 4.2** The minimum response from Police will be to refer a care leaver to the local Emergency Duty/Out of Hours Team without delay.
- 4.3** The minimum response from Emergency Duty/Out of Hours Teams will be to:
- Provide appropriate level of immediate assistance to ensure that the Young Person has adequate overnight accommodation and financial support;
- And
- Refer the Young Person to relevant local team on the next working day.
- 4.4** Where there is a need for immediate assistance , the host authority will provide appropriate support until the status of the Young Person is verified.

5. INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS PENDING REVIEW OF PATHWAY PLAN

- 5.1** All care leavers will be provided with advice and assistance when they are in need and outside the area of their responsible authority .
- 5.2** The named officer in the responsible authority will be notified by the host authority within one working day of a care leaver seeking assistance .

- 5.3 Requests for checks for eligibility for care leavers services will be responded to within agreed time scales:
- For Young People aged 16 -17, within 1 working day.
 - For Young People aged 18 -24, within 5 working days.
- 5.4 The host authority should obtain the written consent of the Young Person to a sharing of information between the authorities in order to provide an appropriate level of support.
- 5.5 The minimum information shared between local authorities will include:
- Name, date of birth, ethnicity, legal status;
 - Dates when Young Person was looked after;
 - Details of family members- including next of kin;
 - Any health or child protection concerns;
 - Relevant Pathway Plan;
 - Name and contact details of Young Person's adviser; and
 - Date of next review of Pathway Plan.

6. ONGOING SUPPORT TO CARE LEAVERS

- 6.1 A Manager or Officer with delegated responsibility from the host authority will secure an agreement from a Manager or Officer with delegated authority from the responsible authority on the level of on-going support required by the Care Leaver.
- 6.2 Allocation of service will take account of any eligibility criteria and waiting lists operating in the area of the host authority.
- 6.3 Where there is an existing Pathway Plan, the responsible authority will arrange a review within 28 days. The review will include contributions from the responsible and host authorities and will agree revisions to the plan including identification of Young Person's adviser.
- 6.4 Where there is no Pathway Plan, the responsible authority will negotiate the terms of an assessment and development of Pathway Plan with the host authority and arrange an initial review within 28 days, to be held within the host authority. The review will include contribution from the responsible and host authorities and will agree the Pathway Plan and identification of the Young Person's adviser.
- 6.5 Levels of service provision will meet the standards laid down by legislation. The responsible authority will commission services at a level consistent with the service standards of the host authority.

7. COSTS

7.1 All service level agreements will be supported by the written agreement of the responsible authority to meet the cost of services provided. The time scales will be:

- **Immediate assistance provided out of hours by the host authority:**
The responsible authority will meet all costs incurred by the host authority.
- **Interim service provision pending review of Pathway Plan:**
Written agreement to meet costs identified by the host authority will be provided by the named officer of the responsible authority within 5 working days of notification .
- **Ongoing service provision agreed at the review of the Pathway Plan:**
Written agreement to meet costs of services identified within the Pathway Plan will be provided by the authorised officer of the responsible authority within 5 working days of the review.

7.2 Costs charged by the host authority will be transparent and consistent with the terms of the funding arrangements for care leaver's services. The responsible authority may elect to provide the service directly if the costs of the host authority are considered to be prohibitive.

7.3 Local authorities will recoup payments at agreed frequency of 3 months.

8. CONFLICT RESOLUTION

8.1 Where there is a delay in provision of service arising from a conflict in policy between authorities , the named officers in the responsible and host authorities will refer the issue to the respective senior managers for resolution within 28 days. In all cases, the minimum standard of service should be maintained to the Young Person whilst a resolution is sought.

8.2 Where a care leaver has a complaint about the service , the matter will be referred to the responsible authority for resolution in accordance with the complaint policy and procedure of the responsible authority.

9. REVIEW

9.1 The Protocol will be reviewed by the West Midlands Child Care consortium within 12 months of implementation .

10. OTHER MATTERS

10.1 This Protocol covers the West Midland Region but it is anticipated it will eventually cover all Authorities in England. Until this is so, existing relationships and arrangements will continue with Authorities outside the West Midlands.

10.2 Any Costs incurred by the Warwickshire Emergency Duty Team in sessional work time will be recharged to the Responsible Authority. Social work time will not.