

**Leicester City Council**  
**Children And Young Peoples**  
**Services**

**“READY, WILLING**

**and**

**ABLE”**

**Practice guidance about the preparation  
for young people leaving  
local authority care**

R a i s i n g   S t a n d a r d s   T o g e t h e r



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## READY, WILLING AND ABLE

Young people who are looked after by the local authority and do not return home will 'leave care' at any time between 16 and 18 years old. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 gives authorities specific duties, powers and responsibilities to:

- Look after young people until they are prepared and ready to leave care
- Prepare young people gradually to be ready to leave care, paying attention to practical self-care, and to personal and relationship dimensions
- Provide or enable ongoing personal support
- Enable young people leaving care to fulfil their potential in learning and the workplace
- Involve young people in all assessment, planning, review and decision making for leaving care

For young people leaving care the transition from childhood dependence to young adulthood and independence is inevitably more accelerated and condensed than for their peers who often 'leave home' over many years. Care leavers also very rarely have the opportunity to "come home" if they make mistakes.

It is therefore vital that we, as 'corporate parents', do our best to help young people leaving our care to meet what will be one of the biggest challenges of their young lives. To do that we need to be clear about and to have a shared understanding of just when each young person is ready, willing and able to leave our care.

The following guidance is based on the elements prescribed by the Department for Education and Skills in relation to the statutory Needs Assessment and Pathway Plan required under the Children (Leaving Care) Act.

It has used elements from the Needs Assessment proforma combined with the knowledge and experience of Leaving Care Team staff to describe – using a question-based format – a series of expectations which form a measurable "baseline" for decision making about leaving care. That is, if young people can "answer" these questions, then they have achieved a minimal level of practical skill, factual knowledge, and social/emotional understanding of the challenges facing them as they leave care.

Not all young people will be able to "answer" all the questions, or to demonstrate ability in all the areas. Many will "learn" the most as they make their move. The key is that they will all have been helped and enabled to learn, experiment and understand as much as possible while in care.

This guidance therefore also describes a set of expectations about our work, and the opportunities which we need to offer young people to help and enable them to learn, experiment, and understand. Therefore, wherever young people are looked after we, as carers and/or workers, need to use the resources and opportunities which the care placement – and other sources – can offer to help each young person to develop their independence skills.

Placements and opportunities will vary. Young people are all very different. It is therefore unrealistic to try and describe a “blanket” approach to this task. What this guidance attempts is to manifest how – when we have provided young people with opportunities and resources to learn, experiment, and understand – we can all recognise when each young person is ready, able and willing to start their independent life.

It is the combination of the three dimensions:

READINESS

WILLINGNESS

ABILITY

which, taken together, can demonstrate when it is time for our young people to leave home.

## HEALTH

- Do you know how to register with a Doctor, Dentist or Opticians? And are you aware of the different health checks required e.g. breast self-examination, routine cervical smear tests for women and testicular examination for men?
- Do you know how to find out if you are eligible for discounts on prescriptions and glasses?
- Are you aware of the help you can get about sexual health and sexual relationships i.e. contraception, proper use of emergency contraception, starting a family, sexually transmitted diseases, where to get free condoms, young people's clinics and confidentiality?
- Are you aware of sex and the law (age of consent)?
- Do you know where to get advice/counselling for stress, depression and mental ill health?
- Do you know where to get support and information if you have a learning and or physical disability and relevant information about health?
- What's your understanding of a healthy diet?
- Are you aware of the effects a poor diet can have on you?
- Do you know where to get information and advice about drugs, alcohol and smoking?
- Family health history e.g. Sickle Cell, diabetes
- Any services received which may have been culturally biased? E.g. mental health service?
- If necessary, can mental health services be sourced for specific needs of young people from emerging community/UASC backgrounds? E.g. around posttraumatic stress disorder?
- Issues around religious/cultural values and health care such as contraception/blood transfusions, terminations etc.
- Is young person aware of all medication they are taking?
- Does the young person have a disability issue, which in turn affects their everyday life? E.g. accessibility issues.
- If the young person has a learning disability, is there accessible information on things such as their health needs and their faith?

- Does the young person have access to a healthy diet including culturally appropriate foods?

## **EDUCATION, TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT**

- Do you know what you want to do in the future?
- Have you thought about further education?
- Are you aware of Connexions and how they can help?
- Do you know where to find information about starting an apprenticeship?
- Do you know where to go/look for information/training about your chosen career/job, and where (location) you would like to work?
- If you needed help applying for jobs, completing application forms, putting a CV together or preparing for an interview, would you know who to ask?
- Are you aware of employment and benefit fraud?
- How much do you know about employee rights e.g. minimum wage, contract, holiday and sick pay, notice period, agency work, disciplinary issues etc.
- Do you have a National Insurance Number?
- Do you have an understanding of payslips, tax and national insurance contributions?
- Would you feel confident to deal with problems at work or seek support /help?
- If you got sacked, unfair dismissal etc. Would you know what to do?
- Do you know what paperwork you require if you leave your job (P45)?
- Do you know where to find training, education and employment opportunities if you have a disability?
- Do you have appropriate clothing for work?
- Are you aware how a criminal record can affect your career?
- If you have children, do you know what help you can get if you decide to go to work?

- Do you know how your state benefit could be affected if you go into education, training or employment?
- Does the young person's PEP take into account issues around faith, health, disability, language etc?
- If the young person has disability issues, are they able to access college, work, training?
- Does the education, training, employment setting allow the young person to practice their faith?
- Is the young person able to identify a mentor if necessary who reflects their needs around cultural, gender, sexuality, disability, particularly if they are a young black person in a predominantly white organisation for example? Or are there peers which reflect their identity?
- Is the education, training, employment, environment sensitive to the young person's identity?
- Does the education, training, employment environment provide extra support around language if necessary?
- Has the young person experienced discrimination in education, training, employment? If so do they need support in challenging this?
- Does the young person feel their gender is having an impact on their education, training, employment? E.g. young man wishing to go into care environment or young woman wanting to do into mechanics.

## IDENTITY

*Identity is the meaning and importance that people attach to their life experiences and their background.*

- How do you see yourself?
- How would you describe your own identity?
- Do you have any information about your family tree and life story?
- Do you know why you are in care and on what care order?
- Do you feel you know enough about your ethnic group?
- Have you had the opportunity to talk about your perception of your identity? Do you want to?
- Can you speak another language? If so do you have any contact with people who also speak this language?
- Do you have information/know where to get it about your religion? Are you able to practice, discuss it?
- Do you feel that you are able to relate with people from a similar ethnic and cultural background?
- Do you feel comfortable with your own sexuality? If not do you know where to get information/support?
- Do you know where to gain information/support about any disabilities you may have?
- Does the young person's health impact on identify? E.g. disability issues.
- Is the young person aware of their sexual orientation? Do they need to discuss this and how this may affect their identity?
- Is the young person's accommodation e.g. foster/residential care or hostel having/has has an impact on their identity? E.g. young black person placed in an all white environment.
- Is the young person able to 'celebrate' their identity where they are living e.g. their faith, heritage or sexual orientation or is this having a negative impact on them?
- If the young person is from an emerging community background, how ha the change in culture/surroundings affected their identity?
- Is the young person clear about their heritage? If not, is this having an impact on their identity and in turn their health?

- Would the young person find it useful to seek out groups/clubs to affirm their identity? E.g. faith groups reflecting their sexual orientation or gender.
- Are they comfortable with their identity? Is their view of who they are positive?

## **FAMILY AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS**

- Can you have contact with your family?
- Do you feel you are being encouraged to make contact with your family?
- Are you able to make contact with your family by yourself?
- Can you celebrate festival periods? If so who do you celebrate with?
- Do you have a network of support (family, friends, carers, mentor, and personal advisor)? Have you thought about how you are going to maintain this?
- Do you think you will keep in touch with your carer once you have left care? Have you thought about how?
- Are you a parent? If so do you have parental responsibility?
- If you are a parent, does your child/children live with you? If not do you have contact arrangements?
- Do you feel that you can keep positive and supportive friendships?
- Are you able to take part in organised leisure activities? If not why not?
- Do you have a city leisure pass card?
- Are you aware of the leisure activities available? Do you know how to find out about them?
- Does the young person's faith/religion reflect that of their family? If not does this have an impact on their family relationships?
- Same as above for young people and their carers/accommodation.
- Does the young person perceive that his/her family may struggle if they are gay/bi-sexual?
- If the young person is disabled, does this affect their relationships with family members/wider community?
- If the young person has health issues, e.g. around mental or emotional health, does this affect their interaction with family members, carers or the wider community?
- If the young person is from an emerging community background, do they have contact with other people from similar backgrounds? If not, how can this be facilitated? Additionally, are they aware of where other family members are?

- Does the young person have an understanding of their family make-up? Particularly in relation to heritage especially dual/multiple heritage young people.
- Would the young person prefer to live in an area which reflects their culture/heritage?

## EMOTIONAL & BEHAVIOURAL DEVELOPMENT

- Do you have a clear idea about what's right and wrong for you and other people?
- Do you know how you would like to be treated by others (friends & professionals)?
- Have you had the opportunity to talk about your experiences and feelings of being in care?
- Are you aware of people who can help when you are having problems?
- Are you capable of phoning professionals/agencies to find out information?
- Can you think of three different scenarios that would make you angry? Can you think of ways to deal with the problem without violence or aggression?
- Do you have any contact details for organisations that advise on drugs, debt, education, housing, benefits and depression?
- Do you understand the consequences of anti-social behaviour?
- What help have you received in order to control any emotional or behavioural difficulties?
- Have you thought about loneliness?
- Are you ready to move on?
- Has the young person's concept of identity had an impact on their emotional and behavioural development? E.G. issues around their sexuality or disability.
- If the young person is unclear about their heritage, has this had an impact on their emotional and behavioural development?
- Does the young person's religion/faith/culture have an impact on their emotional and behavioural development? E.g. sexuality issues.
- Can the young person identify how they can/may deal with any emotional and behavioural issues?
- If the young person is from an emerging community background, have they had experiences, which may have affected their emotional and behavioural development? E.g. if they have experienced bereavement, have they had the opportunity to address this?

## SELF CARE SKILLS & SOCIAL PRESENTATION

- Can you draw up two budgets for independent living? One living on £45 a week and the other living on £39 a week.
- Can you write a shopping list (including prices) for food, toiletries and cleaning products, to fit your budget?
- Are you able to shop around and compare prices on essential items?
- Do you know what to do/who to contact if you have any health issues?
- Do you know any ways of reducing bills?
- Can you think of any ways to save money on clothes?
- Can you list three times when you would be expected to dress smartly and what would you wear for each occasion.
- Do you understand washing instructions on a variety of garments?
- Can you take responsibility for washing, ironing and putting away your washing, change and make your bed without prompting?
- Can you keep the bathroom clean and tidy?
- Do you know the risks involved in mixing cleaning products?
- Can you maintain a satisfactory level of personal hygiene and understand the reasons why people use toiletries?
- Can you list the basic items required to keep yourself/your environment clean and how often to use them?
- Do you know the consequences of lack of hygiene, poor food storage/food safety?
- Can you read a bus timetable?
- Do you know how to pre-book a train/coach ticket?
- Do you have any valid forms of identification? (Passport/Birth Certificate). Have you thought about where you will keep them so that they are safe and easy for you to find?
- Does the young person need extra support around this if they have disabilities?
- Does the young person know how to look after his/her skin or skin?

- Does the young person have access to/awareness of culturally appropriate toiletries/products?
- Is the young person encouraged to do this in their current placement?
- Does the young person's religion or beliefs have an effect on their social presentation e.g. dress and if so, are they able to access appropriate clothing? Are they encouraged to do so by their current placement?
- Does the young person's mental health have an impact on their self care skills/social presentation?

## FINANCE/BENEFITS

- Have you ever managed /budgeted your own money before?
- Do you have a bank account and do you know how to open an account (what identification is required)?
- Can you name two types of bank accounts?
- Do you know what bills you have to pay?
- Do you know what different methods you can use to pay for household bills?
- Do you know how to write a cheque?
- Are you confident to go food shopping, making sure you have a varied and healthy diet?
- Can you shop around to get the best price, making sure you make the most of what money you have?
- Do you know what to do, where to go for help, if you get into debt?
- Are you aware of the risks involved with hire purchase and credit?
- How will you deal with financial commitments once you have turned 18 and Leaving Care are no longer financially responsible for you?
- Have you thought about how you will spend your Leaving Care Grant to ensure that you buy all of the essential items to get you started in your first home?
- Can you make a list of all the essential items that you will need for when you move into your first home and price it?
- Does the young person have access to money to fund specific skin/hair products?
- Is a young person with disability/health issues, are they claiming the appropriate benefits available such as DLA?
- If the person is a parent, are they able to access all money they are entitled to?
- Does the young person have enough funds to purchase culturally appropriate clothing, products or literature?
- Does the young person need financial support with transport to attend a community centre, interest group or place of worship?
- Have you heard of the following benefits and do you know when you might be entitled to them?

Job Seekers Allowance (JSA)  
Income Support  
Crisis Loan  
Community Care Grant  
Leaving Care Grant  
Housing Benefit  
Council Tax Benefit  
Education Maintenance Allowance

- Do you know how to make a claim for JSA or Income Support?
- Can you name two different ways that the above benefits can be paid to you?
- Are you able to work and claim state benefit?
- Are you able to study and claim state benefit?
- Do you know how to claim Housing and Council tax benefit?

## SUPPORT

- Do you have contact with someone you respect, who can give you advice?
- Do you have a 'significant other', away from the care system?
- Do you feel able to ask for help when you need it?
- Do you know how your leaving care worker can help you and who else can help now and in the future?
- Are you confident in developing relationships with people outside of the care system?
- Do you have any links with other organisations that offer support (e.g. faith groups, youth clubs, and self-help groups)?
- Are you able to manage conflict within your friendship groups?
- Is there anything else that any professional involved with you could help you with?
- What are the young person's support networks?
- How appropriate are the networks in terms of heritage, language, gender and religion?
- Does she or he have contact with anyone from the same cultural background, religion, and sexuality?
- Does the young person have specific support needs relating to their disability?
- Does the young person have specific support needs around their language?
- Is the young person able to access support regarding their sexuality?

## **FAMILY AND ENVIRONMENT FACTORS & HOUSEHOLD TASKS**

- Have you thought about how you are going to furnish your home and how are you going to maintain it?
- Can you explain what is council tax, what is housing benefit, what is an eviction notice and what is noise pollution?
- Can you explain what the term anti-social behaviour means?
- Are you aware of the responsibilities involved in living independently? e.g. reading the meter, putting the dustbin out, keeping yourself and your home clean & tidy etc.
- Can you do basic DIY? e.g. Changing a fuse in a plug, changing a light bulb, changing a Hoover bag, clearing a blocked sink, measuring a room to fit a carpet etc.
- Do you know what to do in an emergency? e.g. property broken into, a flood, smell of gas, power cut, broken window, burst pipe etc.
- Do you know what to do if you lose your door key?
- Are you aware of the risks when using candles in the property?
- Do you know how to get rid of ants/slugs/mice?
- Do you know where to get telephone numbers for gas/water/electric companies?
- Do you know where to get household contents insurance companies' telephone numbers from?
- Do you know who to contact with your new address?

As well as the lists of useful contacts, it is a good idea to get a box and start collecting the following items now as you will find them very useful when you first move into your own flat.

- 2 Screwdrivers (one flat, one "Phillips" crossed screwdriver)
- A Tape Measure
- A Hammer and some nails
- A Diary (for remembering meetings/appointments etc)
- A Folder for storing important documents
- Some old sheets (for putting up at windows until you get curtains and for protecting furniture when you start decorating)
- A Tin Opener
- A Saucepan

- A Kettle
- A Wooden Spoon
- Some dry foods – e.g. baked beans, pasta/rice, tinned sauces, pot noodle, tea bags/coffee etc
- Basic cleaning products – bleach, scourers, washing up liquid etc.
- Basic toiletries – toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, soap, flannel, towels, shampoo & conditioner. etc. Some nice bubble bath/shower gel for you first bath/shower in your new home
- A packet of condoms
- Underwear
- A small sewing kit
- A Winter coat
- Waterproof shoes
- Comfortable shoes
- A set of smart clothes, including shoes – for interviews or special occasions
- A simple household manual
- Put your favourite photo into a photo frame
- Collect three little objects/ornaments that mean something to you and will make you smile when you are on your own
- It is a good idea to start putting photos, letters and other valuable possessions into photo albums instead of leaving them loose in boxes. When you move you will be less likely to lose them
- Think about the first thing you would like to do in your own place e.g. make a cup of tea, put new bedding on your bed, paint a room etc. Put anything you think you will need into this box

When you leave care, you will be living on £45 per week. This is for everything – bills, food, toiletries, cleaning products, bus fare, clothes, going out, birthday presents etc. Many young people find it very hard to cope with money when they move into their own home, so it is a good idea to do the following:

- Try to start putting money aside for emergencies.
- Work out how much spending money you might have when you leave care and practise trying to live off this amount of money.
- Ask your Carer if you can put any spare money into a bank account so it will be available, when you leave care.
- Start talking to your carer now about how you plan to keep in touch when you move out – how often you would like to visit/like your carer to visit you, when you first move out.

## ACCOMMODATION

- Are you aware of the types of accommodation available to care leavers? E.g. Supported accommodation, shared accommodation, independent accommodation etc.
- Do you know where to get a Housing Application form?
- Are you clear about what type of accommodation you want, and when you want to move?
- Do you know where to go for housing advice?
- Do you know what an introductory tenancy is?
- Do you know and understand what a tenancy agreement is?
- Are you aware of what happens if you break the rules of a tenancy agreement?
- Do you know the difference between council, housing association and private tenancies?
- What responsibilities do you have as a tenant?
- Do you know what housing benefit is and how to apply for it?
- Have you thought about where you want to live and who you would want to live with?
- Have you thought about the good and bad points of having your own tenancy/accommodation?
- Would you know what to do and where to go if you were made homeless?
- Is the young person's accommodation in an area which reflects their heritage?
- Are the young person's religious needs met by their accommodation? E.g. are they able to access their place of worship easily?
- If the young person has a disability or health issues, will they need assistance with access arrangements or a carer when they get their own tenancy?
- Does the young person need/want accommodation, which specifically reflects their gender or heritage? E.g. an all female hostel.
- Does the young person need accommodation for parents and children?