



How Good is Your Throughcare & Aftercare Service?

**Quality indicators for best practice
to support young people who are or have been looked after**



**Scottish Throughcare
& Aftercare Forum**

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ISBN: 978-0-9554049-0-0

ISBN: 0-9554049-0-8

Published by Scottish Throughcare & Aftercare Forum
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Ministerial foreword

The Scottish Executive has consistently pledged its commitment to working in partnership with stakeholders to improve outcomes for looked after children and young people. Scottish Ministers recognise the importance of ensuring that all looked after children and young people can access the same opportunities as their peers and are supported to develop to their full potential. Scotland needs all of its young people to succeed and we need to be ambitious and aspirational for each and every one of them.

Our vision for every child and young person in Scotland is that in order to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens, all Scotland's children need to be safe, nurtured, active, healthy, achieving, included, respected and responsible. For looked after children and young people the role of the Corporate Parent is central to enabling this vision to become a reality.

The Executive has provided detailed guidance, which supports local planning partnerships to identify the needs of all children in their area, establish priorities; allocate resources and set targets for measuring success. Further support has been provided to partnerships by the recent publication of the Quality Improvement Framework for Integrated Services for Children and Young People. If we can achieve success in the measures it outlines, we really can make a difference to the lives and future opportunities of looked after children.

But of course, achieving real, sustained progress and success in improving looked after children's lives requires detailed and thorough planning and monitoring. It involves consideration by practitioners of both whether their work with children and young people is effective and whether their local partnerships are working well enough to deliver the best possible results for looked after children.

This early guidance provides a useful toolkit for service providers to use when evaluating their services. Further development is underway to make sure it fits well with the overarching approach to evaluation and inspection for children's services, led by the multi-agency, joint inspection team for services for children; together with other work such as the PIF (Performance Improvement Framework) for children and families social work services developed by the Performance Improvement subgroup of the 21st Century social work review and the Social Work Inspection Agency's (SWIA) PIM (Performance Inspection Model).

I welcome the timely production of this early good practice guide and self assessment tool and encourage all service providers to make use of it.

I commend the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum for their proactive approach in developing these materials.

Peter J Peacock MSP
Minister for Education and Young People

Messages of support

This is a very practical document. It takes agencies through simple steps to help them assess and reflect on their own practice. It acts as a bridge between law and guidance, which is clearly indicated throughout the document, and its impact on young people.

If we really want to improve the experience of young people, it is no good just ticking the high level boxes; agencies have to be sure that what they are doing is experienced and perceived by young people as helpful. That is why it is so significant that the indicators and outcomes are informed by what young people have said.

The 1924 Declaration of the Rights of the Child pronounced, “Mankind owes to the Child the best that it has to give.” Young people in or leaving care, for whom the state has a special responsibility, can lay a special claim to the best. They deserve best practice. This document will help agencies deliver on that promise.

Kathleen Marshall, Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People

‘How Good is Your Throughcare and Aftercare Service?’ for the first time makes explicit quality indicators for best practice across nine key dimensions and skilfully links these with best practice outcomes.

In doing so, this publication succeeds in bringing together the views of young people, the wisdom of practitioners and managers, as well as the messages from a body of research findings on young people living in and leaving care.

It is also a very well presented, engaging and highly accessible publication providing good practice examples and links with law, policy and relevant supporting information. It deserves to be widely used. Most important of all, it has the potential to contribute to significant developments in the quality of throughcare and aftercare services, and thus improve the life chances of this highly vulnerable group of young people.

Professor Mike Stein, University of York

Acknowledgements

The Scottish Throughcare & Aftercare Forum would like to thank the following individuals and organisations for their support in producing 'How Good is Your Throughcare & Aftercare Service?'

Lynda Murray, City of Edinburgh Council and Alison Caulfield, Scottish Throughcare & Aftercare Forum for co-ordinating the production of this publication.

The Advisory Team: Matt Elton (Scottish Council for Single Homeless), Anne Ramsay (North Lanarkshire Council), Gary Stopford (Stirling Council) and Nicola Twine (Barnardos 16+ Glasgow) and the Forum's Hub members for their involvement in discussing and revising several drafts.

The Work Group facilitators and delegates at the Forum's Annual Conference 2005 for coming up with the initial framework of indicators, which ensured input from practitioners. Special thanks also go to all the young people who participated and gave their valued feedback at the conference.

Representatives from the Scottish Executive's Looked After Children and Youth Work Division, the Social Work Inspection Agency and the Care Commission for their valuable advice and support.

All the individuals and organisations that took the time to participate during the consultation period and gave vital feedback and suggestions that contributed to the final publication.

The Scottish Throughcare & Aftercare Forum was established in 1998 as a national body to represent the interests of young people leaving care and those who support them. The Forum has been actively involved in influencing and taking forward a range of policy and practice developments.

Mission statement

The Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum is committed to raising awareness and promoting good throughcare and aftercare practice for young people leaving care.

By consulting with and including the views of young people, practitioners and service providers, we will be able to identify and take forward relevant issues and influence positive developments.

Our vision is to achieve the best possible outcomes for all young people leaving care.

The Forum aims:

1. To prevent young people experiencing poverty, disadvantage and exclusion by improving support when leaving care.
2. To promote good practice in every aspect of throughcare and aftercare support for young people.
3. To promote opportunities for networking between those who are involved or have an interest in supporting young people who are leaving care.
4. To ensure that the best interests of young people leaving care are represented in the development of national and local policies.
5. To ensure that the views of young people leaving care and those who support them are reflected within the Forum.
6. To be representative of the geographical areas of Scotland, the voluntary, statutory and independent sectors, and the various settings which are relevant to young people leaving care, such as, education, training, employment, health, housing, social work and welfare benefits etc.

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How Good is Your Throughcare & Aftercare Service?

Improving support for young people leaving care depends on co-operation and ownership from all departments and agencies.

Successful transitions to more independent, adult living for young people who are looked after depend on on-going, effective and consistent support. The Scottish Throughcare & Aftercare Forum believes that positive outcomes depend on good quality services that promote the utmost standards of best practice.

To ensure a safe and positive transition for all young people, support services must strive to achieve the best possible outcomes for young people who have been looked after.

We want all organisations to use 'How Good is Your Throughcare & Aftercare Service?' to measure how effective your throughcare & aftercare service is. You may be a local authority that has responsibilities to ensure the welfare of looked after young people or you may be an organisation that provides specific support to these young people. By assessing the quality and extent of the service you provide, you can then identify areas for future development and improvement.

Core principles of best practice

- Looked after young people are fully supported into adulthood and not worse off than their peers.
- All agencies recognise and address their corporate parenting responsibilities for young people who are or have been looked after.
- Young people's active participation and their views are central to all aspects of the throughcare & aftercare process.
- A young person's needs and welfare are at the heart of all decision-making and planning processes.
- All information is presented in clear and young person friendly language, which is age and culturally appropriate.

How to use these quality indicators for best practice

- These indicators should be applied to the range of practice and support services for looked after young people, across the whole of your organisation.
- It is a self-assessment tool to measure the extent and quality of your services.
- It can be used to establish a benchmark from which the development of services can be measured against in the future.
- From this self-assessment, you should identify opportunities to improve and develop services for looked after young people.
- You can establish action plans for each area which set out targets and priority areas to be addressed.
- This publication can be used to raise awareness of the needs of young people leaving care and to widely promote corporate parenting responsibilities.
- You should read this publication in conjunction with the Regulations & Guidance for throughcare & aftercare services.

Background and key messages

Background to ‘How Good is Your Throughcare & Aftercare Service?’

In 2000, the Scottish Throughcare & Aftercare Forum published the Key to Success, which was an initial framework for throughcare & aftercare standards. There has since been a need to build upon this publication, given the extent of subsequent policy and practice developments.

The Forum decided to focus on developing best practice indicators at its Annual Conference in 2005. Nine work groups came up with a set of best practice guidelines under each area that impacts on the lives of young people who are looked after.

The information from the conference was worked on and developed by an Advisory Team during 2006. A draft document was circulated for national consultation and a variety of feedback and comments were received which resulted in the final publication.

The national context

‘How Good is Your Throughcare & Aftercare Service?’ reflects the principles set out in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and in other relevant pieces of legislation, the fundamental principle being that the welfare of the child or young person is the paramount consideration. The duties under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 state that young people must be prepared for the time that they are no longer looked after and aftercare advice, guidance and assistance must be provided as the young person’s welfare requires.

In 2004, the Regulations & Guidance for throughcare & aftercare services reinforced the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 by introducing additional requirements that include specific duties for assessing needs, planning, reviewing, seeking young people’s views and financial support.

This best practice is not just for Social Work. Everyone has to get on board and be involved if we’re really going to help these young people.

'How Good is Your Throughcare & Aftercare Service?' reinforces and adds to the expectations in the Regulations and Guidance. These best practice indicators are aimed at improving the quality and level of services provided by local authorities and other agencies.

Research consistently tells us that the outcomes for young people who have been looked after need to be improved upon. Young people leaving care often face accelerated and compressed transitions to independent living, as compared to their peers. Research by the University of York, published in 2002, illustrated that provision and access to services across Scotland varied greatly. Better outcomes for young people and improved service delivery were required.

Consultation with young people who have been looked after also shows that young people can often be left feeling 'pushed out' or made to leave care when they do not feel ready. Young people's views and experiences from across Scotland vary greatly, with some young people feeling that they were well supported and could achieve their aspirations, whereas others felt that they could have been supported for a longer time or could have had more choices made available to them.

The need for quality indicators for best practice

'How Good is Your Throughcare & Aftercare Service?' is not coming out of a vacuum. It builds on existing work that has taken place and been promoted during the last 8 years.

This best practice publication is aimed at service providers, practitioners, carers and policy makers across the range of services and agencies. Young adults who have been looked after should also know about 'How Good is Your Throughcare & Aftercare Service?' so that they can understand and be fully aware of the levels of support to which they are entitled.

We recognise that there is a diversity of practice across Scotland, which often results in young people receiving varying levels of support, depending where they live. No matter where a young person lives, there should be equality in terms of their entitlement to good quality support. By implementing best practice across the whole of Scotland, there should be improved consistency and equity of throughcare & aftercare support.

Supporting young people who have been looked after is a shared responsibility

It doesn't take a lot to be a good parent – it's care, attention and help.

There is a collective responsibility to provide for young people who have been looked after, as any other parent should. Looked after young people should not be worse off than their peers and they should be fully supported into adulthood.

'How Good is Your Throughcare & Aftercare Service?' has been produced by reflecting current opinion on what constitutes best throughcare & aftercare practice. Supporting young people is a shared responsibility and should be reflected with an ethos of good corporate parenting. The Scottish Throughcare & Aftercare Forum continually strives to promote the Corporate Parenting responsibilities of local authorities and key agencies across Scotland.

No one agency or team should have sole responsibility to provide for the needs of looked after young people. Agencies must effectively work together in the best interests of every young person in order to achieve the best possible life chances.

We need to know what it means to be a good corporate parent. Would the services you provide be good enough for your own children?

We need a culture of good corporate parenting

Local authorities and partner agencies need to closely examine how they meet their on-going responsibilities for children and young people who have been looked after. Agencies need to ask themselves how far do we fully recognise and apply good corporate parenting in practice. The ultimate aim is to create and sustain a positive culture of good corporate parenting throughout the organisation.

Shifting the culture is about thinking what can I do with other departments and agencies to make this person's life better. It's about moving from 'we can't do this' to 'how can we do it?'

Creating a corporate parenting culture:

- Local authorities and key agencies provide young people who have been looked after with **on-going support** into adulthood, as any other responsible parent would for their children.
- All local authority departments recognise that they have **responsibilities** to ensure the welfare of looked after and formerly looked after children and young people.
- All agencies **work together** to play their part in meeting the wide range of young people's needs.
- Local authorities have a corporate parenting group or committee and a named senior person in each department to be **accountable** for ensuring that corporate parenting responsibilities are fulfilled.
- Every local authority has a **statement of intent** on how they will fulfil their corporate parenting responsibilities for all looked after and formerly looked after children and young people.
- Striving to ensure that looked after young people can achieve the **best possible** positive outcomes in life.

Potential future developments

The Scottish Throughcare & Aftercare Forum is aware that there will be areas of work to be addressed as a result of publishing 'How Good is Your Throughcare & Aftercare Service?'. We now have a tool that can be used to promote and influence positive service developments.

The Forum wants to see 'How Good is Your Throughcare & Aftercare Service?' promoted and subsequently implemented across the whole of Scotland. We believe that this is an important next step in improving the quality of throughcare & aftercare support for young people who are looked after. We would particularly like to emphasise the particular needs of young people who have specific health, accommodation, support and learning needs or those who are affected by disability.

By forging links with other key agencies, we hope that all who are delivering, developing and seeking to improve services will embrace 'How Good is Your Throughcare & Aftercare Service?' and strive to provide the best quality services. This will be in the spirit of good corporate parenting to safeguard the current and future welfare of all looked after young people. They deserve no less.

Next steps...

The Scottish Throughcare & Aftercare Forum will encourage local authorities, voluntary organisations and other key agencies to pledge their commitment to using 'How Good is Your Throughcare & Aftercare Service?'

To enable positive service developments, the following steps should be taken:

- Promote 'How Good is Your Throughcare & Aftercare Service?' across all local authorities, voluntary organisations, independent providers and other key agencies.
- Actively encourage organisations to use 'How Good is Your Throughcare & Aftercare Service?' as a self-assessment tool.
- Identify 'How Good is Your Throughcare & Aftercare Service?' as a best practice guide and a means of measuring and evidencing service development.
- Organise information sharing and training opportunities based on the quality indicators and best practice outcomes.
- Review the progress of how organisations are using 'How Good is Your Throughcare & Aftercare Service?' in practice.

Quality indicators for best practice

1. Young people's involvement

Preparation will take place with young people to enable meaningful involvement at all levels. Service providers and decision makers will actively ensure young people have a voice.

2. Throughcare preparation

Preparation for adulthood will be a long-term, continuous process. All those involved with the young person will help them to prepare to reach their potential in all areas of their lives.

3. Assessment, planning & reviewing

A comprehensive assessment will be carried out by a suitably skilled person; plans will be made and independently reviewed as an on-going process. Young people will be actively involved and their views will be sought at each stage.

4. Health & well-being

Young people will be supported to be healthy and well in all aspects of their life. Accessible arrangements will be in place to meet the health and well-being needs of young people as they engage with the throughcare & aftercare process.

5. Accommodation

Suitable accommodation options and appropriate support will be provided to meet young people's individual needs. The provision of accommodation and support will be provided to a quality and in a manner that reflects the values of a responsible parent.

6. Financial support

Local Authorities will provide financial support to young people during the transition from the looked after system to independence, as set out in a clear, transparent, young person friendly policy.

7. Education, training & employment

Young people will be supported to achieve positive educational outcomes. Supported and achievable routes into further & higher education, training and employment will be provided.

8. Management of risk

Procedures and arrangements will be in place for the assessment, support, reviewing and monitoring of young people who are or may be a potential risk to themselves or others and may or may not be convicted offenders.

9. Quality assurance & development of services

Key partners contribute to an integrated system for evaluating, ensuring and improving the quality of services for young people who are or have been looked after. This should be in accordance with national standards for the range of relevant support services.

1. Young people's involvement

Preparation will take place with young people to enable meaningful involvement at all levels. Service providers and decision makers will actively ensure young people have a voice.

Quality indicators for best practice

- 1.1 For involvement to be meaningful, young people should be enabled to build the confidence and ability to be involved and must receive feedback on the actual outcomes of their involvement.
- 1.2 Quality time needs to be dedicated to developing positive relationships with young people, to enable involvement.
- 1.3 A young person's involvement will reflect their views and take into account their particular needs.
- 1.4 Young people need to be prepared, prior to meetings and decisions being made, for meaningful involvement in their own planning.
- 1.5 Appropriate learning opportunities will be organised and will focus on how to develop skills to engage and communicate with others, in all areas of a young person's life.
- 1.6 A young person's interests will be at the centre of any decision made and they should contribute to the process in a way in which they feel comfortable.
- 1.7 Information about rights and responsibilities will be made available in an appropriate format for the individual young person.
- 1.8 Support will be given to young people so they can assert their rights and exercise these responsibilities.
- 1.9 Young people will be supported to actively have their voice heard.
- 1.10 Young people must have access to advocacy services and will be offered the opportunity to have a Young Person's Supporter.
- 1.11 Young people's participation in local and national consultations is recognised and will contribute to service development and policy making.

Legislation & policy links:

- Throughcare & Aftercare Regulation 3
- Children (Scotland) Act 1995 Section 16
- UN Convention on Rights of the Child – Article 12

Supporting Information:

- Who Cares? Scotland publications.
- Children in Scotland's Participation Network
- Save the Children's 'Participation: Spice it Up'
- SCSH Service User Involvement Study

Best practice outcomes

- (a) There is regular reflection amongst workers and young people regarding young people's participation and involvement.
- (b) There is time set aside before meetings to prepare with a young person and rehearse what they would like to say.
- (c) There are informal debriefs after meetings to see whether involvement has been meaningful.
- (d) Young people are involved in decision making about their day-to-day care.
- (e) Young people are involved in the on-going development of services.
- (f) Young people are involved in the recruitment and training of staff.
- (g) Where possible, young people are involved in discussions and decision making regarding budgets, both at an individual level and at a wider service delivery or project level.
- (h) Young people are playing an active role in their assessment of needs and in their own planning.
- (i) Young people are offered a supporter, advocate or mentor to support their participation and involvement and improve their confidence.
- (j) When young people are consulted, they always receive concrete feedback on the outcomes of that consultation, including relevant reports or publications.
- (k) Appropriate accreditation, certificates, gifts, vouchers or financial payment are offered as recognition for participation in consultations.
- (l) Young people are supported to give feedback on the quality of the services they receive.

Sometimes we forget to ask what young people actually want. We should listen more and not always assume that we know best.

Practitioner/Carer

It's not just listening – it's hearing, so we can keep young people at the heart of things. Young Person

Good practice examples:

Barnardos 16+ Aberdeenshire – young people are involved in: staff recruitment and training, the supported lodgings approval panel and in discussions about service delivery.

South Ayrshire – consultation with young people on looked after reviews.

NCH Preparation for Life Project – young people's focus group looked at tenancy sustainment with invited speakers from Housing Department.

The Big Step – young people setting and managing project budgets.

Dundee and North Lanarkshire – young people are involved in recruiting residential child care staff.

Glasgow – young people involved in consultation on the sexual health policy.

North Lanarkshire – development of a throughcare user involvement forum, with support from the children's rights officer.

2. Throughcare preparation

Preparation for adulthood will be a long-term, continuous process. All those involved with the young person will help them to prepare to reach their potential in all areas

Quality indicators for best practice

- 2.1 Preparation for adulthood and more independent living starts early, while the young person is still looked after.
- 2.2 Preparation for adulthood is clearly identified as a targeted part of the role of all carers, workers and agencies involved in supporting young people who are or have been looked after.
- 2.3 Young people should not be pressured to move on from a placement if they are not fully prepared or ready.
- 2.4 A young person's welfare, best interests and safety are the factors which will determine the time for moving on, not their age.
- 2.5 Preparation should continue to develop naturally during a young person's placement, with a focus on gradually building life skills.
- 2.6 Life skills development should include health, emotional well-being, practical and financial skills, with every individual having their own agreed plan which reflects their own particular needs.
- 2.7 Young people should have stable and consistent placements, so that positive preparation can take place.
- 2.8 Young people will have the opportunity to develop positive relationships so that preparation can take place.
- 2.9 Throughcare preparation should be seen as being holistic and on-going, not a short-term, programmed one-off piece of work.
- 2.10 Identifying and developing a young person's support network is included in throughcare preparation, especially for young people who are living outwith their home area.
- 2.11 Young people should be given an opportunity to 'test out' independent living, with appropriate safety nets still in place, while they remain accommodated.

Legislation & Policy Links:

- Throughcare & Aftercare Regulation 6
- Children (Scotland) Act 1995 Section 17

Supporting Information:

National Care Standards for:

- Care Homes for Children & Young People
 - Foster Care & Family Placement Services
 - School Care Accommodation
- UK Foster Care standards (Fostering Network)
Umbrella Programme Skills for Life Pack

Best practice outcomes

- (a) From the time when a young person is looked after, preparation for adulthood and life skills development takes place at a pace that is suitable to the young person's age and stage of development.
- (b) Preparation for the time when a young person is moving towards more independent living should be included in their care plan/Pathway plan.
- (c) Young people are fully involved in the timing and preparation process with their Pathway views being taken into account at an appropriate stage.
- (d) Referrals to the throughcare team/worker should take place well in advance of any move from care to allow time for preparation and to establish positive relationships.
- (e) Aims identified in the Pathway plan are followed up regularly and changes made to meet new priorities.

***Life can be complicated.
Don't just teach the basics.
We need to know everything
about everyday life.*** Young Person

Who says anyone at 16 is ready for independent living?

Practitioner/Carer

- (f) Safety nets and contingency plans for after a young person has moved on are considered at the throughcare planning stage.
- (g) A young person's move from care can be a step by step process which includes the possibility of keeping their placement available for an agreed period after their move from care.
- (h) Relevant, on-going training and development is mandatory for all those who have a role in preparing young people for moving on.
- (i) Family members, carers and significant others are provided with information regarding the throughcare process.
- (j) Young people should be actively encouraged to build and maintain positive links with their local community, family members, friends, neighbours and other significant people, where this is appropriate.
- (k) Young people remain in their placements until throughcare preparation has fully taken place, which may be beyond the age of 18.

Good practice examples:

Aberlour – Keeping a bed available in the residential unit for young people so they can return.

North Ayrshire – Volunteer mentors help young people to build links in their local community.

Renfrewshire – young people are invited to attend throughcare preparation groups for 6–8 weeks to discuss and prepare for more independent living.

Stirling – young people can move to preparation flats within the same building as the residential unit. Young people also frequently use their previous foster placement as a home base when at university or college.

3. Assessment, planning & reviewing

A comprehensive assessment will be carried out by a suitably skilled person; plans will be made and independently reviewed as an on-going process. Young people will be actively involved and their views will be sought at each stage.

Quality indicators for best practice

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| <p>3.1 Pathway assessments and plans will evolve as a young person develops and grows and should respond to any changes in circumstances, with as little disruption as possible for the young person.</p> <p>3.2 Pathway assessment, planning and reviewing should integrate with other relevant assessments and should avoid duplication of work.</p> <p>3.3 The start of the Pathways process will not be initiated solely on the basis of a young person's age or school leaving date. It will be based around their readiness, their own development and emotional maturity.</p> <p>3.4 The assessment, planning and reviewing process is comprehensive and takes into account relevant history, current circumstances, future plans, young people's views and aspirations.</p> <p>3.5 A suitably skilled worker should carry out the assessment and will have relevant experience, qualifications and training.</p> <p>3.6 The sharing of information should be explained to young people and thoughtfully considered and agreement sought from young people, especially in terms of information regarding relevant past history and explaining when information must be shared for safety and protection reasons.</p> | <p>3.7 All relevant agencies should liaise with and support the Pathway Co-ordinator in ensuring that the work identified in any plans is undertaken.</p> <p>3.8 Young People's Supporters should be empowered and supported to be part of the planning and reviewing process.</p> <p>3.9 The format and location of Pathway reviews should be as young person friendly as possible and reflect young people's wishes, and should involve a degree of independence, e.g. an independent chair person or a supporter independent of the agency, in agreement with the young person.</p> <p>3.10 Young people's views are sought on their experience of the Pathways process. Their suggestions are taken on board to inform service developments.</p> |
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Legislation & Policy Links:

- Throughcare & Aftercare Regulations 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12
- Children (Scotland) Act 1995 Section 29 (5)

Supporting Information:

- Pathways Handbook
- Throughcare & Aftercare Guidance
- 21st Century Social Work Review

Best practice outcomes

- (a) The local authority has policies and procedures in place for their Pathway assessment, planning and reviewing process, with this information being appropriately shared with young people.
- (b) Every young person has someone identified to fulfil the role of Pathway Co-ordinator to oversee the assessment, planning and reviewing process.
- (c) Young people are encouraged to identify a Supporter and they are given information about what this role entails.
- (d) Partnership working is in place which allows for the sharing of appropriate information and avoids duplication of work especially during the assessment process.
- (e) Young people understand why certain information needs to be shared with others and under what circumstances, especially where the safety of the young person or others is concerned.
- (f) The Pathways process starts as a result of a proactive Looked After Children review decision, well in advance of any move and following discussions with the young person.
- (g) Other tools and resources are used to support the Pathways work with young people.
- (h) If it is in the best interests of a young person, they are supported to stay in their care placement when this is an outcome of their Pathway assessment or care plan.
- (i) Training on assessment skills and the Pathways process is on-going and is provided for all staff and carers involved in supporting young people.
- (j) The Pathway Co-ordinator regularly liaises with any individuals and agencies, including the Young Person's Supporter, who have been identified in the plans and are supporting young people.
- (k) Pathway reviews are seen as an integral part of the assessment & planning process, where plans are regularly reviewed, young people actively participate and checks are made on the progress of identified plans and goals.
- (l) Young people are actively encouraged to participate in giving their views, preparing and taking part in the reviews. They are able to influence decisions around their Pathway reviews, in terms of where, when and how they take place and who should attend.
- (m) Workers are aware of the needs and legal status of unaccompanied young people when assessing their needs and formulating plans, with appropriate training and support given to all staff and carers.

It's about building a good picture of a young person's needs and making sure they are met.

Practitioner/Carer

Young people do not always feel comfortable at meetings – too many professionals whose needs are being met. Young Person

Good practice examples:

Falkirk – Consulted with young people to update My Pathway Views from their feedback.

West Lothian – have an independent reviewing officer for Pathway Reviews.

East Lothian – use a reviewing checklist for every young person as they cease to be looked after.

4. Health & well-being

Young people will be supported to be healthy and well in all aspects of their life. Accessible arrangements will be in place to meet the health and well-being needs of young people as they engage with the throughcare & aftercare process.

Quality indicators for best practice

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| <p>4.1 Agencies will support and empower young people to be healthy.</p> <p>4.2 All relevant agencies must recognise and address their corporate responsibilities in terms of physical, mental, sexual health and emotional well-being for all looked after young people.</p> <p>4.3 Young people must have access to a range of fitness and leisure opportunities and they should be supported to develop interests and hobbies.</p> <p>4.4 Young people will have access to named health practitioners who will support and empower young people to address their health and well-being needs.</p> <p>4.5 Young people will be empowered and supported to access appropriate health services and health information.</p> <p>4.6 Young people will be encouraged and supported to make healthy lifestyle choices, with staff and carers acting as positive role models.</p> <p>4.7 A holistic health & well-being assessment and health care plans must be available and recorded for all looked after young people. These should continue to be reviewed in a planned way after leaving care</p> | <p>4.8 Clear information on health promotion is made available to all young people, staff and carers, in a manner that is meaningful and understandable.</p> <p>4.9 Young people will be encouraged and supported to attend appointments and must be registered with a GP, Dentist and an Optician (if required).</p> <p>4.10 Health information is treated as confidential, with agencies equally recognising their responsibilities to protect young people and others from harm.</p> <p>4.11 In order to protect, support and care for a young person, if there is reasonable concern that a young person may be at risk of harm, information may need to be passed on by the agency.</p> |
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Legislation & Policy Links:

- Throughcare & Aftercare Regulation 8(4) and Schedule 2
- Health for all Children 4: Guidance on Implementation in Scotland

Supporting Information:

- National Care Standards
- Foster Carer's Training Packs
- Scottish Healthy Care Network Resource List

Best practice outcomes

- (a) Staff and carers have an understanding of a young person's right to access health services.
- (b) The Pathway Co-ordinator ensures that a young person's health and well-being needs are identified and addressed during the Pathways assessment and planning process.
- (c) There is at least one dedicated health worker who links in with relevant staff and carers who are involved in working with looked after young people.
- (d) Young people are empowered and supported to access health services and to communicate their needs to health professionals.
- (e) Young people who are supported by the local authority at 16 and 17 have access to free health care, including dental treatment and prescriptions, and support is given to complete the necessary forms.
- (f) Staff and carers have access to appropriate training in relation to the health and well-being needs of young people who are looked after.
- (g) Young people, staff and carers have access to accurate and up to date information on how to access health services.
- (h) Healthy eating and the development of a healthy lifestyle, which includes healthy choices and healthy diet, are promoted by staff and carers.
- (i) Positive identity and positive achievements, self-esteem and confidence building are supported and recognised as contributing to emotional well-being.
- (j) Specialist resources are made available for additional health, mental health, sexual health or substance misuse / addiction needs.
- (k) Young people's sexual health needs are addressed by supporting access to young person friendly sexual health services, sexual education information and contraception advice.
- (l) Young people who are parents or prospective parents are given appropriate support, information and advice on all aspects of parenting to promote the health and well-being of themselves and their children.
- (m) The particular health needs of young people with disabilities are addressed.
- (n) There is clear information and guidelines in place regarding rights to confidentiality and these are fully explained to young people and workers.

Health isn't just about antibiotics and temperatures. It's about how you think, feel and react to things around you. Practitioner/Carer

I didn't realise I had bad health. Health wasn't important for me. It is now. Young Person

Good practice examples:

South Ayrshire – A Community Mental Health Nurse is attached to the Throughcare Team. All young people are offered a basic health check and there are good links with local GPs and Dentists.

North Lanarkshire – Health Liaison Officer is working jointly with school nurses to provide drop-in advice in residential units.

The Big Step, Glasgow – working together with young people in residential units and local chefs to promote cooking, healthy eating and international food.

Stirling – a residential unit has set up a dog walking group for young people who have left care. Walking dogs from a local dog refuge allows young people to improve their self-esteem and gain the physical health benefits of walking.

5. Accommodation

Suitable accommodation options and appropriate support will be provided to meet young people's individual needs. The provision of accommodation and support will be provided to a quality and in a manner that reflects the values of a responsible parent.

Quality indicators for best practice

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>5.1 A range of suitable accommodation options are developed in partnership with other relevant organisations and they are made available for young people who have been looked after.</p> <p>5.2 The choice of accommodation will be based on a young person's needs. The location, access to services and education, training and employment opportunities, young person's social networks and the size, structure and facilities of the accommodation will be taken into account.</p> <p>5.3 There should be a senior named person within the local authority who is accountable for the corporate parenting duties in relation to housing provision.</p> <p>5.4 Young people are fully prepared to take on the responsibilities of independent living at an appropriate age.</p> <p>5.5 Respite or safety net accommodation should be available so that young people can take some 'time out' from current accommodation provision.</p> <p>5.6 There will be flexibility around support, especially if a young person rejects support at a particular time. Agencies should give clear information to young people to explain that the door is kept open for them to re-engage.</p> | <p>5.7 There will be accommodation protocols that are developed and shared across Social Work, Housing departments and housing providers.</p> <p>5.8 There will be a corporate parenting protocol which reflects responsibilities and enables all departments and partner agencies to recognise their role.</p> <p>5.9 Becoming homeless must not be the main or sole route to access suitable accommodation. Gaining accommodation should be part of a planned and supported move.</p> <p>5.10 Formerly looked after young people should be specifically referred to in local authority homelessness and supporting people strategies, with the status of these young people being clearly defined within the local authority's priorities.</p> |
|---|--|

Legislation & Policy Links:

- Throughcare & Aftercare Regulation 14
- Children (Scotland) Act 1995 Section 25, 29, 30
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- The Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003
- Code of Guidance on Homelessness

Supporting Information:

- Information from Scottish Council for Single Homeless
- Shelter good practice briefings

Best practice outcomes:

- (a) Housing providers and social work have an agreed definition of 'suitable accommodation' and the elements that this involves, which include the needs of young people with disabilities.
- (b) Bed and breakfast accommodation for young people is used only in absolutely exceptional circumstances and it is not part of a long term move or a routine stop-gap measure. Where possible it is avoided.
- (c) In the local authority area there is a multi-disciplinary panel to review the provision of suitable accommodation for young people, which includes representation from the voluntary sector, housing associations, other providers and young people.
- (d) The Local Authority Chief Executive or Depute holds corporate accountability for accommodation provision for young people who cease to be looked after.
- (e) There are flexible levels of accommodation and support. This flexibility is not undermined by clashes in agency remits, issues around benefits or other funding sources.
- (f) Young people are supported financially and practically when moving home and they are provided with suitable luggage for their possessions. Bin bags are not used as an alternative to suitable luggage.
- (g) Young people have access to temporary storage space that is secure and private for their possessions, if required at times of transition.
- (h) In developing joint working protocols for operational and strategic teams, it is recognised that it is not a 'one-off' activity and that it requires the provision of appropriate information and on-going support and training for staff at all levels and in all agencies.
- (i) There is flexibility for rent payments when young people are in the process of moving into new accommodation, e.g. use of dual housing benefit.
- (j) Where necessary and unavoidable, homeless person's legislation is used positively and imaginatively to ensure homeless young people have access to suitable accommodation.

If you wouldn't send your own child there, why would you send a child that is parented by the local authority? Practitioner/Carer

There should be a good standard of living for all young people. It's not just the house, it's the area you live in. Young Person

Good practice examples:

South Ayrshire – Multi-disciplinary Youth Housing Support Group.

West Dunbartonshire – Five standby furnished flats are available for the 24 hour service. They can be used until other accommodation is available and prevents the use of B & B accommodation in a crisis.

North Lanarkshire – The joint housing and social work protocol will be underpinned by an information sharing seminar for all relevant staff.

Renfrewshire – Throughcare team have flats available for young people to support their first move to more independent living. A housing support team is available to offer emotional and practical support during evenings and weekends.

6. Financial support

Local authorities will provide financial support to young people during the transition from the looked after system to independence, as set out in a clear, transparent, young person friendly policy.

Quality indicators for best practice

- 6.1 Financial support will be provided in the best interests of the young person by taking into account legal responsibilities and duties.
- 6.2 The local authority will have a financial support policy that clearly states in plain language the support available and identifies links to relevant legislation, regulations and guidance.
- 6.3 Financial support should promote positive outcomes and recognise positive achievements by the young person.
- 6.4 Young people have a right to a minimum income which is at least equivalent to DWP benefits.
- 6.5 Incentives should be made available, which are aimed at motivating young people to take up learning and work opportunities.
- 6.6 Easy to read information on entitlements to financial support will be made widely available to young people and those who support them.
- 6.7 Financial support will be a positive, integral part of the overall support package offered to young people.
- 6.8 Advice and guidance will be given to young people to promote their financial welfare in the longer term.
- 6.9 Financial support will be flexible enough for the local authority to exercise their powers as a responsible corporate parent.

Legislation & Policy Links:

- Throughcare & Aftercare Regulation 13 and 16
- Children (Scotland) Act 1995 Sections 17, 22, 29, 30
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, Section 6

Supporting Information:

- Local Authority Financial Support Policies
- Citizens Advice Bureau website for money advice
- Dealing with Debt: Finding your Feet (Scottish Executive, 2002)

Best practice outcomes:

- (a) The financial policy is fully implemented for all relevant young people and includes specific statements regarding young people who are in education, training & employment and those who return home.
- (b) A clear, transparent and young person friendly policy is in operation and is readily made available so that young people know their entitlements to financial support and how their individual assessment has been worked out.
- (c) Financial support is provided for as long as the young person needs to be dependent on the local authority as their main source for support.
- (d) The financial policy should allow for an element of discretion in relation to payment methods, maintenance, rent and other payments.
- (e) A clear, transparent and young person friendly appeals process is in place and deals swiftly with resolving disputes.
- (f) Financial support is never indefinitely withheld due to non-contact.

***Don't just throw money at us.
Support us to do the best with it.***

Young Person

Young people shouldn't have to go through hoops to get financial support. We should provide what they are entitled to and more.

Practitioner/Carer

- (g) Young people are supported to access Education Maintenance Allowance if eligible and still studying.
- (h) The transition into the benefits system is supported by the local authority so that the young person is not disadvantaged during the application period.
- (i) The transition into paid training or employment is supported by the local authority so that the young person is not disadvantaged during this transition.
- (j) Young people are financially supported to meet any costs of remaining in supported accommodation, if they move into paid training or employment.
- (k) Overlapping financial arrangements are available for an interim period when a young person is in the process of moving into new accommodation.
- (l) Links are made with local DWP staff to ensure a young person's transition into the Benefits System goes smoothly and to ensure that all local authority and DWP staff are fully informed of the process.

Good practice examples:

West Lothian – Welfare rights advice is made available for all young people leaving care.

Stirling – Young people have access to a financial transition period which covers rent costs when moving accommodation.

Fife – All young people have access to a contingency fund for financial support in a crisis or for unforeseen costs.

7. Education, training & employment

Young people will be supported to achieve positive educational outcomes. Supported and achievable routes into further & higher education, training and employment will be provided.

Quality indicators for best practice

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>7.1 Support must be based around the young person's needs, abilities and aspirations.</p> <p>7.2 A young person's aspirations and long term goals must be identified, supported and reviewed regularly.</p> <p>7.3 There will be early intervention at school and in care placements to support a young person's learning needs.</p> <p>7.4 A seamless transition from school to post school provision must be supported and ensured.</p> <p>7.5 Routes into further education, training and employment are clearly understandable and explained and discussed with young people and those who support them.</p> <p>7.6 Appropriate and inspiring advice and employment support will be ensured for all looked after young people.</p> <p>7.7 Targeted packages of support must be provided for young people with identified special needs or learning disabilities.</p> <p>7.8 An increased range of appropriate learning and work related opportunities should be provided for young people, particularly for those furthest away from the labour market.</p> | <p>7.9 Services will identify and evidence measurable outcomes with regards to young people's education, training and employment achievements and will show their steps towards meeting these outcomes.</p> <p>7.10 Agencies must develop services that aim to positively inspire young people to engage with services that respond to and reflect their needs.</p> <p>7.11 Dedicated and specialist employment support workers should be available to promote advice and guidance to young people in order to help develop employability skills.</p> <p>7.12 Appropriate support and suitable accommodation must be provided to maintain young people in or near to their place of education, training or employment.</p> |
|--|--|

Legislation & Policy Links:

- Throughcare & Aftercare Regulation 8 and Schedule 2
- Additional Support for Learning Act 2004
- Children (Scotland) Act 1995 Section 30

Supporting Information:

- Careers Scotland local Partnership Agreement
- Scottish Executive "More Chances, More Choices" Strategy
- Careers Scotland Framework for Assessment
- Workforce Plus Employability Framework

Best practice outcomes:

- (a) Every looked after young person has a learning plan to support the achievement of educational attainment, training and employability targets.
- (b) The local authority Education Department continues to have a responsibility for a young person's education up to the age of 18 years old.
- (c) An active interest is taken in a young person's learning and studying by people who support them, which includes individual tutoring and learning support being made available.
- (d) The local authority positively uses funds from section 6, section 29 and section 30 budgets to support and encourage young people's sustained engagement in education, training and employment.
- (e) There is joined up work between Pathway Co-ordinators, key workers and agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities in helping young people to engage with, sustain and progress in education, training and employment.
- (f) Education, training or employment support roles are explained to and understood by the young person.
- (g) Partners and service providers demonstrate that their provision meets the needs of young people.
- (h) A joint working protocol between Social Work and Careers Scotland and any other relevant agency, is in place and is used effectively to support a young person's transition from school to education, training or employment.
- (i) Partnership agreements are in place with local colleges which outline the 'in college' support, naming support contacts within the college.
- (j) Core learning and training needs, including literacy and numeracy, are tackled in ways that engage young people.
- (k) Relevant legislation has been fully implemented in practice, for example the additional support for learning package in schools.
- (l) Support in training and models for supported employment that offer additional and continuing support are established, widely promoted and made available for young people.
- (m) There is a policy within the organisation that promotes internal employment opportunities for formerly looked after young people, including young people with disabilities.

New flexibility to give financial incentives assists the support and motivation for young people to engage in education, training and employment. Practitioner/Carer

You need extra help with your education when you are still in the home and after you leave. Young Person

Good practice examples:

South Ayrshire – STEP project which aims to improve the employability of 16–24 year olds.

North Lanarkshire – Young people are regularly offered financial support for accommodation and other costs when in further or higher education.

West Dunbartonshire – Young people have attended the Columba 1400 leadership academies.

Glasgow – partnership agreement between the Care Leaver Employment Service and Glasgow Colleges.

8. Management of risk

Procedures and arrangements will be in place for the assessment, support, reviewing and monitoring of young people who are or may be a potential risk to themselves or others and may or may not be convicted offenders.

Quality indicators for best practice

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>8.1 Young people are supported to identify, understand and take responsibility for behaviours that put themselves or others at risk.</p> <p>8.2 When the Looked After Children or Pathways process raises concerns, or at any other time, a risk assessment will be carried out, using recognised risk assessment tools.</p> <p>8.3 Set procedures must be in place to carry out all work to assess, plan, manage, review and monitor individual young people.</p> <p>8.4 Key services involved with a young person must be fully informed of work that is being undertaken by particular agencies and, as necessary, the outcomes of any risk assessment will be shared.</p> <p>8.5 If risk assessment information is passed to other agencies, the agency should not negatively discriminate against that young person.</p> | <p>8.6 Young people must be made aware of when and how information is recorded and when it will need to be shared with others.</p> <p>8.7 Information should be shared with young people in an appropriate manner, which will include the outcomes of their risk assessment.</p> <p>8.8 There will be clearly defined roles in terms of who holds responsibility for the co-ordination of cases and for co-operation between agencies.</p> |
|--|--|

Legislation & Policy Links:

- Throughcare & Aftercare Regulations 7, 8
- Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults Guidelines

Supporting Information:

- Scottish Executive Strategy for High Risk Young People
- ASSET / YLS-CMI / AIM Risk Assessment tools
- Local Authority Protocols
- Youth Justice Standards

Best practice outcomes:

- (a) Appropriate and sufficient resources are in place for young people who are a potential risk to themselves or to others.
- (b) Agencies work with young people to focus on their strengths and positive behaviours in order to work towards changing risk behaviours.
- (c) Evidenced based concerns are discussed by the case manager / Pathway Co-ordinator with their line manager and if necessary this includes a formal risk assessment e.g. ASSET or AIM, within the Looked After Children or Pathways process.
- (d) Looked After Children materials or the Pathways framework are still used to provide a framework for obtaining a young person's views, an overall assessment and appropriate plans.
- (e) If a risk assessment is required, part of the discussion will identify which key services should be invited to a formal meeting, e.g. police, housing, social work.
- (f) Risk Assessment, Child Protection, and Vulnerable Adults training is made available and undertaken by all staff working with young people, e.g. care placement providers, housing officers, health, education, careers, panel members, reporters.
- (g) Young people's key details are checked by line management on IT and paper files every two months. Those with evidenced concerns regarding aggression and/or abuse risks are checked monthly.
- (h) Relevant and detailed information is provided to a new team prior to transfer, when a young person moves local authority area or becomes the responsibility of another team within the agency. Paper files are passed over prior to transfer and signed over to new team.
- (i) The young person is informed in writing of any hazard recording (IT or paper file) and this is appropriately explained, especially if they have literacy difficulties.
- (j) Links are established with criminal justice teams, police, young offenders institutions, prison service, secure care providers, reporters to the children's panel, to support and promote joint working.
- (k) There is a multi-agency signed agreement, regarding the sharing of information between agencies.
- (l) Detailed information specifically relating to risk is passed to any relevant agencies via the key team and Pathway Co-ordinator, specifically information on risk assessment or risk factors.

There's been so much publicity recently about managing risk that everyone gets anxious about it.

Practitioner/Carer

The young person needs to be the focus. Young Person

Good practice examples:

Stirling – the youth justice team have facilitated risk assessment and risk management training for all operational teams, and proven risk assessment tools are used.

West Dunbartonshire – on-going Child Protection training is provided for all staff.

9. Quality assurance & development of services

Key partners will contribute to an integrated system for evaluating, ensuring and improving the quality of services for young people who are or have been looked after. This should be in accordance with national standards for the range of relevant support services.

Quality indicators for best practice

- 9.1 The on-going development and the outcomes of evaluating throughcare and aftercare services must be explicitly stated within Children's Service Plans.
- 9.2 The views of all young people will be routinely sought about the quality, quantity and appropriateness of services available.
- 9.3 All agencies involved in the provision of throughcare and aftercare services should contribute to the formal system of evaluating and appraising the service.
- 9.4 The views of parents, carers and others (significant to the young person) must be sought and used to inform the improvement of services.
- 9.5 Appeals and complaints must be dealt with in a swift and young person friendly manner, with initial attempts being made to address and resolve concerns or disagreements in an informal manner.
- 9.6 The outcomes of resolving concerns, appeals and complaints will be used by organisations to inform and influence the development and improvement of services.
- 9.7 All relevant service providers, i.e. social work (including residential care, foster care and youth justice), education, health services, housing and accommodation providers, leisure and cultural services, have a responsibility to ensure the quality assurance of all services for young people who are or have been looked after.

Legislation & Policy Links:

- Throughcare & Aftercare Regulations 16 – 20
- Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, Section 5
- Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001

Supporting Information:

- National Care Standards
- Children's Services Plans
- How Good is Your Throughcare & Aftercare Service?

Best practice outcomes:

- (a) A system of evaluation is in place that measures outcomes for young people against clear indicators of performance which have been agreed locally and nationally.
- (b) Service user feedback is directly linked into the system of evaluation.
- (c) Local authorities and other service providers seek feedback on young people's views by working in partnership with other relevant organisations that work with and advocate on behalf of young people.
- (d) Young people are supported to organise and arrange their own young people's meetings within their care placement or with the throughcare & aftercare team, with all issues and outcomes being noted and taken on board by service providers.
- (e) If young people are not happy about any aspect of their service, they are made fully aware of their right to complain or appeal a decision and they are supported to pursue this.
- (f) The organisation uses the evaluation of the quality, quantity and appropriateness of services to inform the on-going improvement of services.
- (g) The provision and quality of throughcare & aftercare services is reviewed and measured against the best practice standards set out in this document.

Services can't offer the best support unless you know exactly what needs to improve and what works well.

Practitioner/Carer

I'm glad to see standards down in black & white and that things are moving in the right direction.

Young Person

Good practice examples:

North Lanarkshire – Young people's forum that engage in throughcare & aftercare service developments.

RGU / SIRCC – Young people's group that influences the development of social work training.

Stirling – The young people's Tik Tak group provides consultation on a number of areas including their experiences of being looked after and throughcare & aftercare.

West Dunbartonshire – young people complete a 'customer satisfaction survey' that is analysed by strategy department.

City of Edinburgh – Young people are invited to complete initial, review and ending feedback forms in respect of care leavers supported accommodation flats.

Supporting information

Supporting documents

- Children (Scotland) Act 1995, (HMSO, 1995)
- Supporting Young People Leaving Care: Regulations and Guidance on Services for Young People Ceasing to be Looked After by Local Authorities. (Scottish Executive, 2004)
- Pathways Handbook and Materials. (Scottish Executive, 2004)
- Leaving Care: Throughcare & Aftercare in Scotland' by Jo Dixon & Mike Stein (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2005) www.jkp.com
- National Care Standards (The Care Commission, revised 2005) at www.carecommission.com
 - Care Homes for Children & Young People
 - Foster Care and Family Placement Services
 - Housing Support Services
 - School Care Accommodation Services
- The Key to Success: A Framework for Throughcare & Aftercare Standards for young people who are leaving care. (Scottish Throughcare & Aftercare Forum, 2000)
- National Standards for Scotland's Youth Justice Services (Scottish Executive, 2002)
- Individuals in Transition: A Framework for Assessment and Information Sharing (Careers Scotland, 2005)
- Service User Involvement: A Study into Service User Involvement in Youth Homelessness Organisations in Scotland (Scottish Council for Single Homeless, 2006)
- 'More Choices, More Chances: A Strategy for reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in Scotland.' (Scottish Executive, 2006)
- 'Changing Lives: 21st Century Social Work Review Report' (Scottish Executive, 2006)
- Health for All Children: 4th Edition (D. Hall & D. Elliman, Eds, Oxford University Press, 2003) and Health for All Children 4: Guidance on Implementation in Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2005)
- Code of Guidance on Homelessness (Scottish Executive, 2005)

Examples of local policies and practice documents

- Local Throughcare & Aftercare Service Standards
- Financial Support Policy
- Reviewing Checklist
- Supported Lodgings Standards
- Careers Scotland Protocol
- Joint Housing Protocol

Other relevant publications available

From Scottish Council for Single Homeless at www.scsch.org.uk

- My Space, My Place – Young Person's Guide
- My Space, My Place – Workers Toolkit
- Moving Towards Independence – The Carers Guide

Further acknowledgements

- Participants in the nine Work Groups at the Forum's Annual Conference on 30th November and 1st December 2005
- Work Group Facilitators at the Annual Conference 2005:

Young People's Involvement

Lynne Mathers, Gemma McIlwaine, Robert Price, Nicola Twine.

Throughcare Preparation

Teresa Hodgkins, Anne Ramsay, Kim Tracey

Assessment, Planning & Reviewing

Norah McMullan, Andy Murray,
Nick Newlands

Health & Well-Being

Gillian McLernon, Ailsa Clunie

Accommodation

Matt Elton, Julie Hunter, Ian Wood

Financial Support

Viv Boyle, Torhild Dewar, Shona Lawson

Education, Training & Employment

Jane Billington, Mark Brown, Jon Gray

Management of Risk

Helen Heatlie, Greg McKenzie, JJ Walsh

Quality Assurance

John Ryan, Gary Stopford, Kate Tomlinson

- Helpful advice from:
 - Shirley Laing and Louise McCue at the Scottish Executive
 - Helen Happer at the Social Work Inspection Agency
 - Ronnie Hill and Bryan Livingstone at the Care Commission.
- The designers at The Graphics Company, Edinburgh, www.graphics.coop

Glossary of terms:

Corporate Parenting

Local authority duties and responsibilities for all children and young people who have been looked after.

Looked After Children

Measures of care and supervision provided by a local authority to children and young people. The term also applies to the framework and materials used for monitoring and reviewing a child's care.

Pathways

The process of assessing, planning and reviewing a young person's throughcare & aftercare support needs.

It also applies to the framework and materials that are used to support this process.

Pathway Co-ordinator

The named person for each eligible young person who ensures throughcare & aftercare support is planned for and provided as necessary.

Regulations & Guidance

The document that sets out local authority responsibilities and duties for providing throughcare & aftercare support for all eligible young people in Scotland.

Young Person's Supporter

A role recognised in the Regulations & Guidance for a suitable person who supports young people throughout the transition to more independent living.

Looked After Children Review

The social work review of a child or young person's care, that takes place when they are 'looked after'.

Notes

Published in October 2006
© Scottish Throughcare & Aftercare Forum
ISBN: 978-0-9554049-0-0
ISBN: 0-9554049-0-8

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Registered in Scotland as a Company Limited by Guarantee. Company No: SC286432
Recognised as a Scottish Charity. Scottish Charity Number: SC030522

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