

**Directorate: SALFORD CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**Principles for the provision of support to young people remaining open to the Next Step service between the ages of 21 and 25**

**Relevant Staff Group: Leaving Care**

**Date Policy reviewed: April 2020**

**Lead officer responsible for review: Phil Varghese**

# Principles for the provision of support to young people remaining open to the Next Step service between the ages of 21 and 25

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. These principles provide a consistent framework to underpin the discharge of responsibilities by local authorities to young people returning for a leaving care service aged 21 to 25.
- 1.2. Overarching principles which should apply when considering and developing local implementation of this document are:

*Being a good corporate parent*

*Supporting young people for longer*

*Flexibility based on individual needs*

*Assessment and assistance based on a pathway plan*

## 2. Legal framework

- 2.1. The Children Act 1989 as amended, related regulations and statutory guidance provide the legal basis for provision support to this group of young people - defined specifically in s 23CA(1) of the Act as *“a former relevant child who is (a) aged under 25, (b) in relation to whom the duties in 23C(2)(3) and (4) no longer apply, and (c) he has informed the local authority that he wants to pursue or is pursuing a programme of education or training.”*
- 2.2. The local authority must
  - Appoint a personal advisor
  - Carry out an assessment of need
  - Prepare a pathway plan
  - Provide assistance to the extent that the young person’s needs require it.
- 2.3. Further detail on the specific discharge of responsibilities is contained within associated guidance:

Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations, Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers statutory guidance which was revised and published in January 2015.

The Children & Social Work Act 2017 introduced a new duty on local authorities, to provide Personal Adviser (PA) support to all care leavers up to age 25, if they want this support. This duty commences from 1 April 2018.

Extending Personal Adviser support to all care leavers to age 25: Statutory guidance for local authorities (February 2018)

### 3. Communication

3.1. Communicating the right of care leavers to remain open or to return to the local authority for support post-21 will be key to meeting the aspiration to support young people for longer.

3.2. Next Step will want to consider a range of methods to communicate the right to remain open or to return for a service as part of their overall approach. This will help in ensuring a greater proportion of care leavers receive clear information and facilitate better planning for likely demand on resources. Local mechanisms to communicate with young people could include the following means:

- Verbally through personal advisor and as part of any 'exit' discussion
- Personal letter (copy included here)
- Pre 21 pathway plan
- Former Relevant Review

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| <p><b>Our Ref: CS/T/NS/PV/SM/</b></p> <p><b>Date:</b></p><br><p>Dear</p> <p>As you are now approaching 21 years of age, Next Step will be carrying out a review of the support you may require (if any) beyond your 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.</p> <p>It may be the case that you no longer require a service from Next Step and your regular involvement with the team comes to an end. However, depending on your circumstances and your wishes, you might continue to receive support from us for a limited period or up to your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. Please note you can also return to Next Step for advice and signposting anytime in the future.</p> <p>If your relationship with Next Step finishes before your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, we will be contacting you once every 12 months by telephone, email or letter to ensure you are making good progress.</p> <p>If you change your address or other contact details, please could you let Next Step know so we can update our records.</p> <p>Yours sincerely</p><br><p><b>Phil Varghese</b><br/><b>Service Manager</b></p> |
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### 4. Assessment

4.1. The completion of an assessment of need is a responsibility of the local authority within the legal framework as outlined above and this will be completed prior to the care leaver's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. Subsequent assessments will take place as and when required beyond their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday up to the age of 25.

4.2. It is recognised young people may need more than one opportunity to access further/higher education successfully.

#### 4.2.1. Higher Education

4.2.1.1. The assessment principles outlined above are intended to be applicable regardless of the nature of education or training. In the case of Higher Education, additional principles are outlined, acknowledging the additional statutory provisions in this area, notably *The Children Act 1989 (Higher Education Bursary) (England) Regulations 2009*. As is apparent, these regulations provide for the payment of a bursary of £2000 to care leavers pursuing a course of higher education.

4.2.1.2. Payment of the bursary will depend upon agreement with your pathway advisor which may be paid by instalments with the first payment within four weeks of commencement of the course.

It is encouraged for this payment to be saved due to the student's access to current subsistence allowances. The bursary funding could be used for future use including access to a Masters Degree.

4.2.1.3. Salford City Council has a clear financial policy in addition to the HE Bursary. This currently includes support in the form of:

- Meeting accommodation costs (including direct funding to the university/landlord)
- Provision of IT equipment and internet access.
- Combined support allowance encompassing some or all of the aspects noted above in a regular weekly payment.

#### 5. Decision making

- The Head of Integrated Looked After Service is authorised to make a final decision on the level and provision of financial support allocated to those in higher education.

5.1. In being consistent with the overarching principle of being a good corporate parent, Salford City Council will consider individual circumstances including:

- Actual financial contributions, such as agreement to pay towards books, uniform or similar
- Earned income – in practical terms this will, as with other young people, include part-time work whilst undertaking a further or higher education course
- May include requirement for young people to access all loans, maintenance grants and other funding sources e.g. support from individual Higher Education Institutions

**Phil Varghese**  
**April 2020**