Services for Care Leavers in York

Report and Recommendations – Social Services and Health Scrutiny Board

November 2005
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remit</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation and Information Gathering</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background Information</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Areas and roles</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing and Accommodation</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Training</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex A – Voluntary Bodies</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex B – Statutory Bodies</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex C – Participants</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex D – Comments of Scrutiny Management Committee and Executive</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex E – Implications of the Recommendations and Responsibility for Implementation</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chairman’s Foreword

The scrutiny topic covered by this report is an investigation into the services provided for or available to young people leaving care in York.

The preparatory work for this report was carried out by the Board during the period from October 2004 to mid-2005.

The work done to produce this report has quite deliberately sought to identify weak areas in service provision; such an approach was felt necessary in order to make positive recommendations for the benefit of young people leaving care.

It has been necessary to use some specialist terminology in the report and a list of definitions of the terms which have been used is provided at the end of the document.

With the Board, I hope that the recommendations and proposals in this report can be implemented for the improvement of service delivery in this area and to the benefit of a very needy and deserving client group.

Ian Cuthbertson

Chair, Social Services and Health Scrutiny Board
November 2005


Executive Summary

This report describes how the Board conducted its enquiry into the services which are available in York for young people leaving care.

New guidance and regulations under The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 have engendered significant changes to preparation for leaving care and after-care support. A new approach is taken which combines ‘pathway planning’ and after-care support, both arranged in partnership with the young person leaving care. The aim is to make the process of moving from being ‘looked after’ to independent living closer to the experience of other children, where the main transition between youth and adulthood takes longer and happens at a later age.

This report considers how the new way of working succeeds. It identifies some shortcomings in existing provision and strengths in current approaches and directions. The strong performance of the Pathway Team, which had achieved favourable assessments in recent SSI (2003) and CSCI (2005) inspections, was noted by members of the Board, who expressed confidence in the work done by the staff involved in this area of Children’s Services. The report goes on to make a number of recommendations and proposals, which are summarised below. Priorities have been suggested to make these more manageable. The priority levels envisaged are:

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<th>Short term</th>
<th>Achievable or initiated within 12 months</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Little or no cost, or costs need to be established and funding bid for</td>
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<td>Medium term</td>
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<td>Long term</td>
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<td>Reliant on major external funding</td>
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Short-term recommendations:

- The Council should give preference to care leavers in making a full range of supported accommodation available to them.
- The Council should respond positively to any recommendations arising from the pilot of shared accommodation for care leavers which is currently being undertaken.
- The Council should use the experience of past care leavers in developing its services to current and future care leavers.
- The Council should investigate any issues for transferring care leavers from CAMHS to Adult Mental Health services and make efforts to clear any problems identified.
- The Council should promote an expanded mentoring service for care leavers, possibly working through Network2 or in conjunction with an outside volunteering organisation such as York Cares.
- The Council should raise with government the difficulties presented by the benefits trap when extended work experience opportunities are offered to care
leavers. The Council should seek a dispensation to allow trainees to retain benefits while on such extended work experience schemes.

- The Council should encourage local businesses to employ or provide work training, possibly working in partnership with an outside organisation using the protocols established under the York Cares model.
- The Council should act to provide enhanced work experience opportunities, including widely-varied kinds of work, across all directorates along with a number of traineeship vacancies each year prioritised for care leavers.

**Medium term recommendations:**

- The Council should work with NYBEP to enhance the work experience opportunities available for young people who are about to leave care but who are still in full-time education.
- The Council should provide enhanced support for young people entering Further or Higher Education to help them to purchase books, computers or equipment and ensure that, if studying away from home, they can return to familiar, quality, accommodation during vacations.

**Long term recommendations:**

(None)
Introduction

1. The Social Service and Health Scrutiny Board made the decision in July 2004 to review services provided for young people leaving the care of City of York Council.

2. This report records how the Board approached this topic, listing the key witnesses heard, the establishments visited and the overall findings of the Board. In highlighting some perceived shortfalls in services and identifying strengths in current practice, approach and direction, it also suggests ways in which the Council and other organisations may be able to address this important issue.

Remit

3. To listen to young people and those who work with them, with an awareness that what is conveyed will reflect their feelings about the essential elements of provision as they leave care.

4. To identify any gaps in provision for young people as they leave care.

5. To examine the support given to care leavers during the transition from care to independent living.

6. To ensure that the Council, as corporate parent, discharges its responsibilities to looked after young people as they leave care in order to meet their needs and offer them the best possible life chances.

7. To further develop existing relationships between the Council and external partner organisations.

Scope

8. To review all services - including education and employment opportunities, health care, accommodation, leisure activities, financial, practical and emotional support - that are provided for young people just before, during and after the time that they leave the care of the local authority.
Consultation and Information Gathering

Previous Consultation

9. Before this Scrutiny commenced, a Consultation Event with Care Leavers in York had been held on the 31\textsuperscript{st} March 2004. As an outcome of this, the following three requests were made to City of York Council:

- make five modern apprenticeship placements within the council available each year with priority to care leavers and appropriately aged looked after children;
- guarantee interviews for care leavers and looked after children who apply for jobs in the city of York council and meet the minimum criteria during the application process;
- provide work experience and work taster placements for up to one month for York’s care leavers and looked after children.

Current Review

10. Formal and informal methods were used in order to receive information and to gain the views of young people for this review. A number of organisations attended the Board’s meetings, either to present information or discuss the issues. An event was set up to enable Board members to meet and talk to some of the young people who had left care in York in recent years.

11. Throughout the whole of the Scrutiny there has been close consultation with and support from officers of Children’s Services, who also helped to put members in touch with other organisations who could contribute.

12. Relevant reports are listed in the Bibliography section and referenced within this report by a number in square brackets (eg [2] refers to the DoH Good Practice Guide ‘Care Leaving Strategies’). For other information, the reader is referred to the Agendas and Minutes of the Board’s meetings during the scrutiny process.

13. Information for the review was gathered over the following period:

October 2004
The Board received an initial presentation from members of the Pathway Team, which is the Council's leaving care and after-care service provider. This outlined the service provided at present and introduced some of the major problems experienced by care leavers.

December 2004
The Board held discussions with accommodation providers led by Jane Moore, Accommodation Officer from the Pathway Team. Carl Wain of the Scarcroft Road Project and Judith Pollock of Safe and Sound Housing also contributed to the discussion.

January 2005
Barry Jones, Education, Training and Employment Officer with the Pathway Team, led discussions. Contributions were made from partner agencies such as York College, Connexions and Future Prospects.

January 2005
Board members met with young people who had left care in York in recent years and heard their concerns. They also viewed a short film which had been made by other recent care leavers.

February 2005
The Pathway Team introduced issues concerning health and relationships for young care leavers.

April 2005
The Chair received a briefing from Network 2 about the services provided to young people through a mentoring scheme, positive activities and action days with public and emergency services.

May 2005
The Board discussed opportunities for care leavers to gain work experience and employment as trainees with the Council when the Chief Executive attended the meeting of the Scrutiny Board.

June 2005
The Chair attended a presentation from York Cares about the proposed Starting Blocks project. After this, presentation, a further discussion with the Pathway Team’s Education, Training and Employment Officer brought out some of the difficulties for care leavers which can arise from the ‘benefits trap’.
Background Information

14. Paragraphs 34 – 75 of the report set out the Board’s findings; they commence with a discussion of the role of corporate parent and continue with a summary of roles of both statutory and voluntary organisations. The findings amalgamate the comments, feedback and ideas received from the young people, Council’s service teams and the external organisations involved. No other officers, special interest groups or members of the public attended. After the issues which arise in each role or service area are discussed, recommendations for action are set out; priorities have been suggested to make these more manageable. The priority levels envisaged are:

| Short term | Achievable or initiated within 12 months  
|            | Little or no cost, or costs need to be established and funding bid for |
| Medium term| Achievable over a number of years  
|            | Costs need to be identified and funding bid for |
| Long term  | Aspirational  
|            | Reliant on major external funding |

Educational Achievements of Care Leavers

15. A recent LGIU briefing, ‘Close The Gap For Children In Care’ [3], refers to a report by NCH (a major voluntary sector provider of services to children in care), which covers the relative educational achievements of children in care and other children. The briefing deals with several aspects which are relevant to this report:

a. The report, which deals with the achievement gap between children in care and other children, urges the government to completely close this gap by 2020.

b. It points to government statistics which in 2004 highlighted the ‘huge disparity’ between the educational achievements of children in care, 6% of whom left care with five or more GCSEs, compared with 53% of pupils achieving the same overall. Since 2000, this gap has risen by 2%.

c. It points out that the need for urgent action, not just because all children are entitled to achieve their full potential but because helping them to do so will:
   - Promote child welfare
   - Help us to achieve broader social and economic goals
   - Discharge our duty to these children, who are the responsibility of the State which itself should provide a model of ‘good parenting’

d. It identifies a number of individual elements which are recognised to contribute to underachievement within this group, many of them referred to elsewhere in this report.
e. It makes a number of recommendations to all involved in supporting
looked after children from central government, local government,
educational providers, social workers, foster carers/residential care
workers and inspectorates to NHS workers.

*Looked after children*

16. The term ‘looked after’ was introduced in the Children Act 1989, and refers to
children who are subject to Care Orders or are accommodated by the Local
Authority.

17. Children become looked after for a variety of reasons. Many will have been
affected by distressing and damaging experiences, including physical and
sexual abuse and neglect. Some will be looked after because of the illness or
death of a parent, because they are not wanted or because their families are
unable to provide adequate care for them. The majority of looked after
children come from families who experience hardship and they are separated
from them because circumstances in the family change, or because there are
significant problems.

18. During the 1960s and 1970s, offending, truancy and being ‘beyond parental
control’ were often the main reasons for a young person being taken into care
- ‘neglect’ was not often used *per se* as a reason for taking a child into care.
There was also a clear stigma attached to having a child taken into care and
the reasons were often perceived as being very negative.

19. In the 1980s, there came a growing awareness that sexual and other abuse of
children and young people was more common than had been thought. Action to
deal with such abuse became easier to take during the 1990s
following The Children Act 1989. One requirement of the Act was for Local
Authorities to be more proactive in considering taking children into care and to
have a particular regard to the ability of the parent(s) to cope (whether the
child is new born or difficulties become apparent later in the child’s early life).

20. The Children Act 1989 was intended not only to protect the rights of the child
but to ensure that families remained together as a unit for as long as possible
and there can be a tension between these two objectives of the Act. Further,
it not only provided a mechanism by which young people could be protected
from abuse but it also gave young people in care the right to independence on
their own initiative at an appropriate age.

21. Even up to this point, young people leaving care (often with the poorest
educational support and the poorest mental health) were effectively being left
to themselves after being cared for, although this had been a concern for
many years. A major effect of leaving young people to their own devices at
such a time is to prolong their involvement with public services or to increase
the likelihood of their return to an institution of one form or another.

22. Few children want to be in care, even though they may understand that they
cannot live with their families. Uncertainty about the immediate and long-term
future is a major worry. Some children feel safer and well cared for in foster care and residential homes, but all have to cope with significant losses – of family, friends, and in some cases familiar neighbourhoods and communities. For some the worst separation is from brothers and sisters who may have remained with their original family or may be looked after somewhere else.

23. Looked after children have much change to cope with: new carers, surroundings and ways of doing things. Many children experience a number of moves of home and sometimes these will be unplanned.

24. Even a competent, self-confident adult would need considerable personal resources and a robust support network to withstand what many looked after children regularly experience. And there is no acknowledgement of (or response to) many of the direct consequences of being taken into public care such as rejection, loss, change and uncertainty. Instead, the stigma often associated with being looked after means that children and young people can feel excluded from normal activities or opportunities and they are assumed to be troublesome or badly behaved.

25. Yet many children who are looked after retain strong links with their family, and return home to them after either long or short periods in care.

26. Children who are looked after by the local authority may live with foster carers, with relatives or in residential homes; in some circumstances under a Care Order looked after children may live with birth parents.

**Homelessness after leaving care**

27. In the UK, most young people live with their family at home and the average age at which they leave the family home is 22 – 24 years; this age is increasing [13]. In marked contrast, the average age at which young people in care leave their foster carers or residential home is 16 – 17 years [10] and there is no opportunity to return if the decision to leave turns out to have been a mistake.

28. Most of those leaving the family home can return to their parents if they encounter a time of crisis or find they have made a mistake. But that option of returning home is not open to young people who have been in care - once they have left the care system there is usually no going back. As a consequence of this, around half of the young people who have left care have experienced homelessness. Moreover, the risk of being homeless is increased for those who leave care at a young age (say 16 or 17) or who have had a problematic or unstable care history.

29. Action is therefore needed to ensure that young people leaving care do so on terms which will ensure that they have the best possible life chances as they move on to independence.

30. City of York Council has worked to implement the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 so as to ensure that the young people who have been looked after by
the Council have a smooth transition to independent living at the time they are ready for this.

31. The Act substantially extends the duties of local authorities towards looked after children and makes significant changes to aspects of the Children Act 1989. The local authority acts as a corporate parent to looked after children, a substitute parenting role which, until this Act, effectively ceased at 16. The Act ensures that children leaving care at 16 do not suddenly stop being the responsibility of the local authority, like the reality of natural parenting. Local authorities are now obliged to advise, assist and befriend looked after children with a view to promoting their welfare when they cease to be looked after. The Act also alters arrangements for financial support and access to benefits. If the care leaver is in education or training, financial responsibility remains with the local authority until the age of 21 or, for students in higher education, 24.

32. This Act is part of a wider government agenda for tackling social exclusion. Its aims are to prevent care leavers from feeling isolated and help them participate socially and contribute economically as citizens. These aims can partially be met by delaying the young person’s discharge from care until they are prepared and ready to leave.

33. Although there is careful preparation for the transition to independent living as required by the Act, a large proportion of young people leaving care (43% in 2004) [10] can still go straight from care into homelessness. Typically, such a move is sudden and unplanned (e.g., breakdown of care placement when the young person is 16).

Service Areas - Roles

Members of Council as Corporate Parents

34. As in other local authorities, all Members of the Council share the role of Corporate Parent but there is a question as to how to achieve this in practice. A balance needs to be struck between enabling Members to have appropriate information to assist them in such a role while ensuring that operational matters remain the responsibility of officers. Some local authorities have a small cross party group of Members that meets regularly, others give a lead role to the Cabinet (or Executive) Member for Children’s Services. While this Council’s Executive Member for Children’s Services may assume this role where necessary, it seems unclear whether and, if so, how the role is otherwise shared in practice between Members of Council.

Short term recommendation:


Pathway Team
36. The Pathway Team is part of Children’s Services based at Hollycroft and is the main provider for young people leaving care. Members of the team will support young people as they leave care and during the period after they have left care. The team is led by a Service Manager and has two Social Workers, four Support Workers, an Accommodation Officer, an Education, Training and Employment Officer and an Administrative Support worker.

37. The team’s main roles are:
- To co-ordinate Needs Assessments and Pathway Plans for all Care Leavers aged 16 – 21
- To co-ordinate and implement for each Care Leaver a support package and review it every 6 months
- To manage and administer finances for relevant Care Leavers
- To develop and provide a range of group based services for Care Leavers
- To ensure that Care Leavers can access universal services appropriately by age 21
- To assess the needs of and give support to homeless 16 – 17 year olds (who are not care leavers).

38. Besides meeting the requirements of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, the main purpose of the Pathway Team’s work is:
- To improve life chances for young people living in and leaving care
- To delay young people’s discharge from care until they are prepared and ready to leave
- To improve assessment, preparation and planning for leaving care
- To improve the financial arrangements for care leavers

39. Members of the Pathway Team start to become involved with ‘eligible’ young people at 15yrs 9mths in co-ordinating the Needs Assessment. A ‘Pathway Plan’ is developed - this is the agreement as to how a young person is provided with support towards independence and it is reviewed at 6 month intervals until the young person’s 21st birthday. Each plan is different because it is tailored to the needs of the individual. There is a minimum requirement to maintain a quarterly contact with all care leavers through to age 21.

40. The Pathway team involves York’s care leavers in a number of consultation activities:
- Care2Listen
- The GAS (newsletter)
- Website www.york-careleavers.com
- The Reference Group
- Looking Ahead
- Peer education/mentoring
- Attendance at local and national events - BBC, SSI and inspections
- Interview panels for staff recruitment

41. Members of the Pathway Team have identified the current local challenges and areas for development:
- Accommodation options for care leavers
• Services to young people leaving care from out of area placements
• Management of care leavers’ finances
• Impact of youth homelessness in York on services to care leavers
• Services to young people with a disability leaving care
• Participation of care leavers in service delivery and development

Future Prospects

42. Offer support and employment advice to young people over the age of 16. Special projects offer services to particular groups such as young mothers.

Network2

43. This is part of the Council’s Youth Service (Inclusion Arm) and it has some 40+ mentors for about 50 young people. About 35% of clients (about 18) are referred by the Pathway team. Network2 offers support and employment advice to young people over the age of 16. Special projects offer services to particular groups such as young mothers.

Voice for the Child In Care

44. Voice for the Child In Care is a national organisation which provides a regionally-based advocacy and complaints handling service for looked after children and young people. The organisation was contacted as part of this review but no response has been received.

Youth Enquiry Service

45. Offer support and employment advice to young people over the age of 16. It is important to remember that YES may not be aware that a client is a care leaver because disclosure by the young person is purely voluntary. Special projects offer services to particular groups such as young mothers.

York Action for Young Homeless

46. This organisation meets quarterly under the auspices of York CVS and it acts as a clearing house for policy issues affecting homeless young people. A concern expressed by this group is that there seems to be an increasing number of young people who have been ejected from their home by parents in the knowledge that a statutory requirement exists for them to be cared for.

York Cares

47. York Cares is an organisation set up jointly between York University, Connexions and the Council, which aims to involve local businesses and their staff in volunteering for the community. The organisation has successfully implemented a number of projects over the past two years and is currently engaged in a project called Starting Blocks, which is aimed at giving young people leaving care an opportunity for work experience with the companies involved, one of which is one of York’s largest employers. This work experience may in due course lead to full time employment. A difficulty which has been encountered is that young people encounter a ‘benefits trap’ on taking up a work placement or training which makes them
unavailable for work for more than 16 hours per week (this does not apply to training undertaken with a registered training provider). This trap means that housing benefit and job seekers allowances are lost for the period of the placement and a re-assessment has to be made after the placement. A return to benefits is possible but there is a period of waiting for the allowances to be restored after re-applying which leads to money problems for the young person, while more work is created for the local authority and for DWP staff at the Job Centre.

York College

48. York’s own FE college has a number of students who are care leavers; they are attending for access or Level 1 - 3 courses. The College’s tutorial system offers support to care leavers throughout their time at College. It offers counselling, guidance, health promotion and some financial assistance. Full time students are also offered key skills training to improve their prospects of employment. The support of a key worker helps to motivate students to return to their studies after vacations.

York CVS

49. This organisation acts as a facilitator for voluntary organisations to support joint working. Its headquarters are in central York with a full range of office support and meeting/conference facilities available to member organisations.

York Homelessness Forum

50. This body is promoted and organised by the Council. It meets regularly on Council premises and acts as a co-ordinating body to aid communication, working together and joint training between the voluntary organisations. It also fosters communication and joint working between City Council officers and voluntary organisation staff.

Findings

51. The main issues for young people leaving care are centred on a few aspects of day-to-day life which most people take for granted:

1) Accommodation

52. The average age at which young people leave home in the UK is 22 – 24 years. Many of these people may return to their parents if they find they have made a mistake or have a time of crisis. This option is not open to young people who have been in care; once they have left the care system there is usually no going back.

53. In York, the average age for leaving care is 16 – 17 [10], and there is no opportunity to return if they are unhappy with their decision to leave. Around half of York’s young people who have left care have some experience of
homelessness. The risk of being homeless is heightened for those who left care at a young age (16 or 17) or who have had a problematic or unstable care history.

54. As pointed out earlier, a large proportion of young people (43% in 2004) move straight from care into homelessness [10]. Often, this is a sudden and unplanned move, for example if a care placement breaks down when the young person gets to 16.

55. Nationally, mentoring (especially peer mentoring by former care leavers or by young people of a similar age) has been found to be a good way of underpinning advice to be cautious in moving to independent living [11].

56. There are many problems in finding suitable accommodation for young people once they have left care. It is difficult to quickly find supported housing when an existing placement breaks down or the young person faces some crisis. There are increasing numbers of homeless young people who do not come from care which can lead to increasing competition for accommodation.

57. After leaving care, a high percentage of young people will typically make several changes of accommodation within a relatively short period [10]. Of 13 young people who left care in 2001, 2 have remained in their first permanent address, 4 have gone to a second address, 4 have moved to a third address, while the remaining 3 have moved to a seventh or higher address. Of 19 young people who left care in 2003, 5 have remained at their first placement, 8 have gone on to a second address, 2 have moved to a third address, while the remaining four have moved to a fourth or higher address.

58. It is encouraging that, overall, the numbers of care leavers in York who have finished up homeless within two years of leaving care has reduced since 2000:

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<tr>
<th>Accommodation outcomes for recent care leavers:</th>
<th>1999-00</th>
<th>2000-01</th>
<th>2001-02</th>
<th>2002-03</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. leaving care</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless within 2 yrs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>50</td>
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Source: Pathway Team – Leaving Care Service Annual Report 2004-05 [10]

59. Some of the options available in York for (supported) independent living which have been reported to the Board are:

Safe and Sound Homes (SASH). There are presently 12 places in supported lodgings available for single 16 – 25 year olds who are at risk of homelessness (not necessarily coming from care). They can stay from a few months for up to two years. It involves sharing a home with a provider who will also provide help and support to the young person in partnership with their support worker. This can be an opportunity for the young person to learn the skills they need to live independently.
Scarcroft Road Project. This provides accommodation for 16 – 18 year olds via York Housing Association; it consists of three flats each of which can house three tenants. Anybody facing homelessness can apply; it is not exclusively for care leavers. There are staff in residence: support is not 24 hours although are staff are present at night on “sleeping duty”. Support workers help the tenants develop plans to move on to more permanent accommodation, as well as with any other issues of concern. People can stay from 6 to 18 months. Some of the young people who talked to Board members expressed concern that the wide range of referrals made to the project includes drug offenders which gave rise to some anxieties about safety.

Southlands Road Project. This accommodation is managed by Foundation Housing and has staff on site providing 24 hour support. There are five places for homeless young people with high support needs (not exclusively care leavers) and tenants can stay from a period of 6 to 12 months.

Trainer Flat. City of York Council has a ‘trainer flat’ which is available for young people who are still in care to try living in for four weeks. This gives them the opportunity to try out independent living before making the decision to leave care.

City of York Council or Housing Association flat. Care leavers go on the waiting list and are allocated “urgent need” status. Once in a tenancy, floating support is provided for the care leaver by a Pathway Team worker.

Women’s Housing Project. Self contained supported accommodation for nine single females of all ages. This is run by York Housing Association and young women who have left care are eligible to apply.

York Flexible Support Scheme. This is a scheme run by York Housing Association which helps tenants of private landlords to develop the skills to maintain their tenancy. Support workers help tenants for up to two years. They can help them find furniture, set up utility bills, manage debts, claim benefits etc.

60. If a housing placement breaks down there are often difficulties in obtaining quick access to new supported housing for people who were recently in care. One reason for this is the increase in numbers of homeless young people in the general population. From April to December 2004 there were 112 referrals to Children’s Services of 16/17 year olds who were homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Short term recommendations:
2. The Council should give preference to care leavers in making a full range of supported accommodation available to them.

3. The Council should respond positively to any recommendations arising from the pilot of shared accommodation for care leavers which is currently being undertaken.

4. The Council should use the experience of past care leavers in developing its services to current and future care leavers.

2) Health

61. **Physical Health** - All looked after children are registered with a GP and this is kept up as they go into independence. They are also registered with the dental service in Monkgate. Health is part of the Pathway Plan and Review and young people can always consult the Looked After Children’s Nurse beyond the transition to independence. This nurse can provide advice to the Pathway workers if necessary.

62. **Emotional Health** - The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) can offer help to all young people up to the age of 18. A young people’s Mental Health Adviser post is funded jointly by CAMHS and Connexions. This post offers consultancy for staff and direct counselling for young people which is accessible via the Youth Enquiry or by appointment. It also acts as a way of opening doors into Adult Services from CAMHS although there appear to be some issues over transition to Adult M/Health services in some acute cases. The befriending role assumed by Network 2 Mentors can also help reduce feelings of isolation upon leaving care.

63. **Sexual Health** - The teenage pregnancy strategy includes a sexual health and relationships education programme planned for 2005/6. This will build on existing sexual health awareness work which is undertaken in residential homes and in the Looking Ahead Group (independence preparation). There has been a gap in this for foster children but this is now being addressed by targeting all foster carers who care for teenagers in the first year. Direct support for foster carers provided by the Family Placement Team will supplement this. Young mothers are helped through projects initiated by the York Hospitals Trust (Mums 2B) and Future Prospects (Baby Gap) which support them into parenting and/or ETE. While very few of them are in a stable partnership or are living with the father of their child, the evidence is that York has less ‘looked after’ females up to 21 years becoming pregnant (about 33%) than the national average (about 50%)

64. **Substance Abuse** - Compass provides consultancy for staff and direct referral for young people; the Connexions Alcohol and Substance Misuse Worker provides a similar service. Where such matters involve criminal proceedings, the YOT is involved in giving support.
65. Health Promotion - Financial support can be provided to support leisure interests such as gym or swimming, also holidays and visits to friends or family. Pathway Planning encourages take-up of ‘meaningful’ activities such as Future Prospects short courses (which may give rise to further ETE opportunities), Millennium Volunteers or Prince’s Trust. A support network of peer mentors is planned for 2005/6.

Short term recommendations:

5. The Council should investigate any issues for transferring care leavers from CAMHS to Adult Mental Health services and make efforts to clear any problems identified.

6. The Council should promote an expanded mentoring service for care leavers, possibly working through Network2 or in conjunction with an outside volunteering organisation such as York Cares.

3) Education, Training and Employment

66. Evidence concerning the poor educational progress, lack of qualifications and limited career opportunities for looked after and young people who have left care is well established. After year 11 at school, just under 60% of looked-after young people stay in full-time education compared to over 70% of those living with their families. About 50% of people in prison have been in care. Less than 1% of care leavers go to university (compared to nearly 50% of those living with their families). Yet those care leavers who do go to university have a lower drop-out rate (10%) compared to the average student in the UK (14%).

67. The aim of the Pathway Team is to ensure that the proportion of care leavers aged 19 in education, employment or training is at least 75% of that achieved by young people in the same area. This target was defined in the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) and fulfils BVPI 161.

68. Care leavers in York appear to be meeting the LPSA’s retention targets:

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<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of care leavers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of care leavers in ETE</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of care leavers in ETE</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
<td>76.47%</td>
<td>72.41%</td>
<td>79.99%</td>
<td>74.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYC pop.</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### In ETE

| LPSA target | 74.07% | 84.96% | 80.45% | 88.88% | 83.33% |

*Source: Pathway Team presentation 14.10.04 [12]*

69. Getting it Right [1]: a good practice in leaving care resource pack (2000) demonstrates that care leavers’ employability is less than that of their peers, because ‘looked after’ young people tend to show some or all of the following characteristics as a result of their life experiences:

- Inability to be consistent;
- Lack of self-esteem;
- Lack of confidence;
- Feeling of isolation;
- Poor emotional development into adulthood;
- Poor performance in the education system.

70. Since the mid-1980s, jobs for unqualified school leavers have virtually disappeared and getting employment for young people who lack self-esteem and who have poor educational attainment remains a problem. Placements aimed at giving work experience can be frustratingly unproductive for all parties. During the discussion with care leavers, dissatisfaction was expressed with the arrangements for work experience placements. The view was that a two week placement was inadequate and that insufficient real experience of ‘doing the actual job’ is available – “it’s more like a holiday than a real job” was one comment. A minimum period of four weeks or a month was felt to give a more realistic opportunity to understand what is entailed in a full time job.

71. It seems clear that the real problem is to give young people leaving care adequate support to hold down and succeed at a longer work experience placement so that they can use this as a springboard into full-time employment and a career. Yet the Starting Blocks project planned by York Cares (which is due for implementation in late-October 2005 and will offer young care leavers work experience placements initially with Norwich Union) is hamstrung in terms of its wider possibilities by the limitations imposed by the benefits trap.

**Short term recommendation:**

7. The Council should raise with government the difficulties presented by the benefits trap when extended work experience opportunities are offered to care leavers. The Council should seek a dispensation to allow trainees to retain benefits while on such extended work experience schemes.

72. City of York Council’s Corporate Objective 5 aims to ‘Work with others to improve the health, well being and independence of York residents’. Improving links with outside volunteering and mentoring organisations such as
Network2 and York Cares should improve our ability to address many of the issues which arise for care leavers. The Board believes that developing such stronger links with these bodies would help to meet this objective and support other strategic aims of the Council.

73. Many work placements in York are negotiated in conjunction with NYBEP and it seems that the organisations together could play a pivotal role in helping care leavers to gain worthwhile work experience in extended placements. NYBEP already works with York Cares but, if the ‘benefits trap’ mentioned earlier can be avoided, could be instrumental in helping care leavers gain the extended work experience opportunities which seem necessary to be of real benefit to them.

Medium term recommendation:

8. The Council should work with NYBEP to enhance the work experience opportunities available for young people who are about to leave care but who are still in full-time education.

74. In his discussion with the Board, the Chief Executive reported that a number of work placement opportunities are provided by the Council in conjunction with Trident. These are mainly centred on two directorates (Commercial Services and Community Services) and they usually take the form of taster days and one or two week work experience placements. In addition, small numbers of young people are employed on ‘apprentice’ training schemes where they aim for a trade qualification with Commercial Services or for an NVQ in Care with Community Services. Although the matter of providing such placements on a wider and better planned basis has been discussed at senior management level and by the Council’s Corporate Management team, no firm proposals for implementing such a scheme across the Council have yet been agreed. Members of the Board believe that role of corporate parent gives the Council a clear responsibility to support care leavers in such a role (in the same way, perhaps, that children might be given some experience of working in or running a family business).

75. During the conversation with care leavers, it emerged that there are difficulties for young people attending university away from York in terms of the purchase of books and study aids such as computers (although universities do have bursaries and assisted purchase schemes of various kinds). A further problem is that, when they return to York during vacations, these young people have had to give up their tenancy on leaving for university and they then return to a new, possibly totally unfamiliar environment such as bed and breakfast accommodation for the vacation. This adds further unsettling experiences to an already disrupted life.

Short term recommendation:

9. The Council should encourage local businesses to employ or provide work training, possibly working in partnership with an outside organisation using the protocols established under the York Cares
model.

10. The Council should act to provide enhanced work experience opportunities, including widely-varied kinds of work, across all directorates along with a number of traineeship vacancies each year prioritised for care leavers.

Medium term recommendations:

11. The Council should provide enhanced support for young people entering Further or Higher Education to enable them to purchase books, computers or equipment and to ensure that, if studying away from home, they can return to familiar, quality, accommodation during vacations.

Relationships with external bodies and services

76. York has several voluntary organisations which work with young people (not only care leavers) who are in danger of homelessness. There is good evidence of effective joint working between these organisations through York CVS, the York Homelessness Forum and York Action on Young Homeless, although there are overlaps between the specific roles of these organisations.

Foster carers

77. During conversations with care leavers it emerged that some felt that it would be useful for a care leaver to be a member of the panel which recruits foster carers. Subsequent enquiries showed that there is a place for a person who has been in care on the Foster Panel in York, but that it is not always possible to guarantee continuity.

Reviewing the implementation of the recommendations

78. The Board wishes to review the progress with implementation of the recommendations on a six-monthly basis; the first update report will come to the Board in June 2006.
Definitions

In this report:

‘The Board’ means the Council’s Social Services and Health Scrutiny Board

‘BVPI’ means Best Value Performance Indicator (one of a series of measures acting as key performance indicators in assessing the Council’s performance against government targets, resulting in a CPA score)

‘Care Order’ means an order made by a court as to the arrangements for accommodating, looking after and supervising the upbringing of a child

‘The Council’ means City of York Council

‘Corporate Parent’ When a Local Authority starts to look after a child or young person, the Council (ie both Members and officers) has a legal responsibility to share the duties and responsibilities of the child’s parent. The Council is a body corporate (rather than being one or two individuals) and many different people carry out its work, hence the expression.

‘CPA’ means Corporate Performance Assessment, a process carried out yearly in which the Council’s performance against government targets is assessed.

‘DfES’ means the Department for Education and Skills

‘DoH’ means the Department of Health

‘ETE’ means (in) Education, Training or Employment (ie as opposed to NEET)

‘LSC’ means the Learning and Skills Council, a government funded agency which has the responsibility for funding and promoting access to further education qualifications locally

‘NEET’ means Not in Education, Employment or Training and refers to those young people aged 16 – 19 who fall into this category

‘NYBEP’ means the North Yorkshire Business and Education Partnership, a body set up jointly between the Council, North Yorkshire County Council and the LSC (York and North Yorkshire)

‘Pathway Plan’ means an agreement between Children’s Services and the care leaver which identifies arrangements for ongoing support and contact based on the outcome of a Needs Assessment, including personal support, accommodation, education, training, employment, family and social relationships, practical and other skills, financial support, health needs and contingency planning

‘The PCT’ means the Selby and York Primary Care Trust

‘Teenage Pregnancy Strategy’ refers to work done by CoYC in conjunction with DoH, DfES, HM Government’s Teenage Pregnancy Unit and the PCT to reduce the rate of teenage conceptions and to increase the participation of teenage mothers in education and work so as to reduce their risk of long-term social exclusion.

‘YOT’ means the Youth Offending Team
Bibliography and references


4. Leaving Care: Quality Protects Research Findings. DoH 2003


6. Close the gap for children in care. NCH 2005 (LGIU policy briefing paper PB142/05)

7. Children’s Services Inspection, City of York. Social Services Inspectorate, DoH June 2003


12. Pathway Team presentation to CoYC Social Services and Health Scrutiny Board 14th October 2004

13. Social Trends 2004, OPCS 2005
Annex A - Voluntary Bodies

Safe and Sound Homes (SASH). An organisation which provides supported living places, each at the home of a provider who will also provide help and support to the young person in partnership with their support worker.

Scarcroft Road Project. This organisation provides accommodation for 16 – 18 year olds in shared flats. There are staff in residence and support workers help tenants develop plans to move on to more permanent accommodation, and deal with any other issues of concern.

Southlands Road Project. This organisation accepts homeless young people with high support needs. It has staff on site and accommodation is available for limited periods.

Voice for the Child In Care. This organisation provides a regionally-based advocacy and complaints handling service for looked after children and young people.

Women’s Housing Project. This organisation provides self-contained supported accommodation for single females of all ages.

York CVS. This organisation acts as a facilitator for voluntary organisations to support joint working in areas of common interest or concern, maintaining links between health and social care organisations, providing a flow of information to voluntary organisations about local and national policy changes. This role is increasing as the York Compact is extended to health services.

York Flexible Support Scheme. This is a scheme run by York Housing Association to help tenants of private landlords develop the skills to maintain their tenancy.
Annex B - Statutory Bodies

Connexions Service. Offer careers guidance, work preparation, mentoring and support. For care leavers this work is carried out in consultation with the Pathway staff. If the service could be offered to younger children whilst still at school then the numbers not going into education, employment or training (NEET) could be reduced.

Network2
Youth Service (Inclusion Arm)
Directorate of Learning, Culture and Children’s Services, City of York Council

Selby and York Primary Care Trust

Pathway Team
Childrens Services
Directorate of Learning, Culture and Children’s Services, City of York Council
Annex C – Participants in the Scrutiny Review

Members of the Board from June 2005

Cllr K Aspden  
Cllr I Cuthbertson (Chair)  
Cllr S Fraser  
Cllr J Hopton  
Cllr M Lancelott (Vice Chair)  
Cllr G Nimmo  
Cllr D Wilde

Members of the Board up to May 2005

Cllr K Aspden  
Cllr I Cuthbertson (Chair)  
Cllr S Fraser  
Cllr J Hopton  
Cllr K King  
Cllr M Kirk  
Cllr M Lancelott (Vice Chair)

Participants in Interviews and Presentations in Alphabetical Order

Commercial Services Directorate  
Connexions York  
Pathway Team – CoYC Children’s Services  
Network 2  
York CAB  
York Cares  
York College  
York CVS  
Youth Enquiry Service

Officer Involvement

Barbara Boyce  Scrutiny Officer  
Bill Hodson  Senior Assistant Director (Community Services)  
Ruth Love  Pathway Team  
John Roughton  Pathway Team  
Barry Buckley  Training Officer – Commercial Services Directorate  
Jane Moore  Accommodation Officer – Pathway Team  
Barry Jones  Children’s Services
Annex D

Comments of Scrutiny Management Committee

SMC wanted to draw attention to the fact that there is a high incidence of Statements of Special Educational Need amongst young people in care – as highlighted in the Scrutiny Report on Post-16 Inclusion.

Comments of the Executive

(to be added)

Annex E

Implications of the recommendations and responsibility for implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Financial implications of the recommendations</th>
<th>Legal or HR implications of the recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Council should act to clarify how members share the role of corporate parent defined by The Children Act 1989, The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and The Children Act 2004.</td>
<td>No additional financial implications of this recommendation which can be completed through review of existing arrangements</td>
<td>To fulfil legal requirements as indicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Council should give preference to care leavers in making a full range of supported accommodation available to them.</td>
<td>This recommendation could be achieved through continuing to build on existing partnership to enhance care leavers priority and overall options available</td>
<td>No additional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Council should respond positively to any recommendations arising from the pilot of shared accommodation for care leavers which is currently being undertaken.</td>
<td>Financial implications are unable to be identified until the pilot phase is completed</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The Council should use the experience of past care leavers in developing its services to current and future care leavers.</td>
<td>No additional financial implications of this recommendation which can be completed through existing arrangements</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The Council should investigate any issues for transferring care leavers from CAMHS to Adult Mental Health services and make efforts to clear any problems identified.</td>
<td>No additional financial implications of this recommendation which can be completed through review of existing partnership</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Proposal</td>
<td>Arrangements</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The Council should promote an expanded mentoring service for care leavers, possibly working through Network2 or in conjunction with an outside volunteering organisation such as York Cares</td>
<td>There is currently no identified budget to progress this specific recommendation at this particular time. Priority would be given to try to identify such a resource (£10Kpa) from existing leaving care budgets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>The Council should raise with government the difficulties presented by the benefits trap when extended work experience opportunities are offered to care leavers. The Council should seek a dispensation to allow trainees to retain benefits while on such extended work experience schemes.</td>
<td>This does not have additional financial implications and can be progressed through existing resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>The Council should work with NYBEP to enhance the work experience opportunities available for young people who are about to leave care but who are still in full-time education.</td>
<td>This recommendation would be implemented through capacity afforded by ongoing but now joint funding of care leavers Employment officer post (currently under consideration within budget round)</td>
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<td>This recommendation would be implemented through capacity afforded by ongoing but now joint funding of care leavers Employment officer post (currently under consideration within budget round)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>The Council should provide enhanced support for young people entering Further or Higher Education to enable them to purchase books, computers or equipment and to</td>
<td>Implementing this would have financial implications the extent to which is limited and dependent on annual cohort reaching further or higher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ensure that, if studying away from home, they can return to familiar, quality, accommodation during vacations.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Care leavers bursary. If you are starting university within 3 years of leaving care you are eligible for extra support. This includes anybody who has left care but has since re-engaged with their Leaving Care Team while they continue their education. You can also get support if you have been made homeless or been at risk of homelessness after the age of 16 or have lived in supported accommodation such as a foyer, refuge or hostel. Depending on your circumstances we may be able to offer you: A bursary each year that you are studying. We will make sure you are aware of any other support services available to you. We want to make sure you are happy and thriving at university. You will always have someone to go to for help, advice or just a cup of tea and a chat. A care leaver is a young person aged 16-25 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks in total since the age of 14. Those who are aged 16 or 17 are â€˜eligibleâ€™ (still looked after) or â€˜relevantâ€™ (no longer looked after) children. Those aged 18-25 are â€˜former relevant childrenâ€™. This should include all services offered by the council that can support care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living â€“ both those that the authority is legally obligated to provide, such as â€˜staying putâ€™ and housing support, and universal services such as careers advice or public health services.