

Scope

This policy applies to all young people cared for by PCC Foster Care Agency foster carers other than those in short break placements.

Purpose

To prepare and support all cared for young people through the transition into adulthood, to achieve independence, enable them to reach their full potential and achieve economic wellbeing.

Introduction

PCC Foster Care Agency is committed to fulfilling its duties and responsibilities in regard to the preparation and support of young people in their transition into adulthood as outlined in:

- Foster Service Regulations 2011
- Foster Services: National Minimum Standards 2011 (Standard 12)
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) 2010
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning transition into adulthood for Care Leavers 2010

The role for foster carers

PCC Foster Care Agency is committed to enabling its foster carers to support and encourage their children and young people to:

- Establish positive and appropriate social and sexual relationships
- Develop positive self-esteem and emotional resilience
- Prepare for the world of work and/or further or higher education;
- Prepare for moving into their own accommodation
- Develop practical skills, including shopping, buying, cooking and keeping food, washing clothes, personal self care and understanding and taking responsibility for personal health care
- Develop financial capability, knowledge and skills;
- Know about entitlements to financial and other support after leaving care, including benefits and support from social care services.

This will be achieved by ongoing training of foster carers.

The role for the PCC Foster Care Agency

Generally

Preparation for adult life is a lengthy process and for the Looked After Child should begin as soon as they come into the care system. The significant act of leaving care is not a single event but part of a process.

The role of PCC Foster Care Agency is to train, guide and support this work. Carers will receive ongoing training with regard to transitions.

Specific areas surrounding young people being prepared for adulthood, independence and leaving care -

- Young peoples' issues during adolescence.
- Supporting young people through transitions.
- Life skills development, supported by 'Get Ready for Adult Life' pack and CD-Rom.
- Legislation, in particular the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.
- Pathway Planning.
- Money management.
- Employment, training and education.
- Accommodation issues and much more.
- The carer's SW will provide one to one support for carers experiencing concerns and needing guidance about their foster child moving on to independence.
- The carer's SW will provide resource material to help facilitate the preparation for adult life and the moving on process.
- Where necessary the Team Manager will liaise with the relevant Local Authority about specific concerns that arise.

Specifically

As a young person reaches their 16th birthday a pathway plan will be instigated by the placing authority, PCC Foster Care Agency and the foster carer will meet with the child and work through a Pathway Plan.

The foster carers and SSW/key worker will work with the placing authority social worker to identify knowledge and skills gaps in the skills needed to achieve independence.

PCC Foster Care Agency will ensure that foster carers are made aware of legislative changes and also examples of developments of good practice as issued by NCAS.

PCC Foster Care is actively engaged in all aspects of the educational needs and progress of its foster children including attainment of further and higher educational aspirations.

Foster carers are given training based upon the Financial Services Agency (FSA)

‘Young People and Money’ training programme.

Foster Carers caring for young people 16 years old and over will be expected to attend PCC Foster Care’s ‘Pathway Plan’ training, and be given given practical guidance on contributing towards Pathway Plans and working with other professionals in the implementation of such plans. The training identifies the range of life skills which are necessary for the development of successful independence and the skills that foster carers need to engage the foster child in that process.

PCC Foster Care encourages foster carers to equip foster children from an appropriate age with the practical and emotional skills needed in their progression to adulthood.

PCC Foster Care is committed to ensuring that no young person should move into independent living until they are ready to do so.

Young People over the age of 18 and ‘Staying Put’

Once the young person in placement reaches the age of 18, they can legally no longer be ‘in care’. Therefore, other arrangements need to be made to allow the young person to remain with the carer if that is in their best interest and is set out in the Pathway Plan.

Where a young person is not ‘demonstrably ready’ to move to independent accommodation and they wish to remain in their existing placement, consideration must be given as to how this can be achieved.

‘Staying Put’ schemes were introduced in the ‘Care Matters: Time for Change’ White Paper as a way of enabling young people the flexibility and time to decide their next move.

Local Authorities should have ‘Staying Put’ policies in place for young people in foster care aged 18 – 20 years and each Authority will define who is eligible to participate. The following could be included:

- Unemployed NEET (not in education, employment or training)
- Part time employed (with or without training)
- Full time employed (with or without training)
- Unable to work, train, or study due to ill health or disability
- In further education – at home or studying away from home In higher education – at home or studying away from home

‘Staying put’ ends on the young person’s 21st birthday, or sooner if that is their choice.

PCC Foster Care Agency is supportive of any request by a Local Authority to allow an existing foster care placement to change to a Staying Put arrangement after consultation with the foster carer and young person in placement.

PCC Foster Care Agency foster carer will be informed of the support and financial

arrangements so that they can make the decision regarding the Staying Put placement on an informed basis.

PCC Foster Care Agency agrees to hold a review of the foster carer once the plan has been agreed by the foster carer, young person, the agency and Local Authority. This review will consider the implications of the plan and the carer's suitability to change to a Staying Put provider.

The carer review will include a report covering such matters as the impact upon the household: how carers can meet the needs of the young people in placement; and the effect of the change on foster placement availability.

Once the carer has been approved as a Staying Put provider, PCC Foster Care Agency agrees to:

- Continue to carry out DBS disclosure checks in line with fostering regulations, including the Staying Put provider, the young person and any other adults in the house.
- Pay the Staying Put provider as set out in the contract agreed between the Local Authority and PCC Foster Care Agency.
- Visit and support the Staying Put provider on a basis agreed between the Local Authority and the PCC Foster Care Agency.
- Provide regular reports that outline the progress of the placement and any issues that have arisen.
- Review the Staying Put placement on an annual basis.

PCC Foster Care Agency expects that the Local Authority will work with the agency to ensure that those financial and support arrangements that are the Local Authority's concern are carried out promptly and fully.

Most young people leaving care will be entitled to a Leaving Care Grant, the amount varying from Local Authority to Local Authority and according to circumstances. The young person's PA will advise the young person as to how this money needs to be used. Advice from the foster carer should also be sought.

It is anticipated that each Local Authority will issue their Looked After Children with the 'Get Ready for Adult Life' Pack (produced by WMTD Project 2007). PCC Foster Care Agency foster carers will be made aware of this resource.

Disabled Young People

Legislation concerning Looked After Children applies equally to those who have a disability.

It is expected therefore that to ensure a smooth transition into adulthood and, where

appropriate, independent living, referrals will be made to services which can best meet the challenges that are faced at that significant time.

The community care or adult services departments within the Local Authority should be included in the Pathway Planning process to ensure that the young person's special needs are met and that there is a smooth transition from children's to adult's services. A Transition Meeting may be held alongside the Pathway Planning process to ensure continuity of services taking into account the young person's developing needs.

In deciding the young person's future needs, there should be continuing liaison with the Education Dept which is responsible for providing adequate facilities for further education and which will need to consider the needs of those over compulsory school age who have learning difficulties (Learning and Skills Act 2000, Further and Higher Education Act 1992).

Specific health requirements may continue into adulthood and the local authority should be proactive in liaising closely with health services to ensure the best possible transition from child to adult health provision.