

REPORT FROM THE WORKING GROUP ON THE

THROUGH-CARE AND AFTER-CARE OF  
LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN IN SCOTLAND



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

**Making it work together**

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Leaving home is one of the most important and challenging times in any young person's life. Every young person needs advice, help and support to manage this successfully. For young people leaving care, the change to adult living can be doubly daunting. They may have little or no contact with their natural families; they may not have a foster family to provide support; or they may have felt at home in a children's home which they now have to leave.

At this crucial time in their young lives, local authorities have a duty to act as "corporate parents" to provide the support that other young people get from their families. Young people have a right to expect the sort of help that loving parents would provide for their children, help to reach their full potential, and the same chance to make mistakes secure in the knowledge that there is a safety net of support. It is not good enough that many young people leave care without adequate support or even a guiding hand when they most need it. We know that young people can be left struggling to cope, becoming more discouraged and perhaps feeling that there is no-one who cares. Good quality care means that support continues as a young person moves on.

The Executive is committed to ensuring that young people leaving care get the support they need. I welcome this report, which is the result of two years' work by the Throughcare and Aftercare Working Group, which brings together local authorities and the voluntary sector. Crucially, the group includes organisations who have direct contact with young people leaving care and understand their views and needs. The report makes important recommendations both to improve current services and to enhance provision in the future. Most of all it shows how much needs to be done. I would like to thank the Group for the effort they have put in so far. I look forward to working with them in taking forward this report, to make real improvements to the lives of young people leaving care.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cathy Jamieson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line under the name.

Cathy Jamieson MSP  
Minister for Education and Young People

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There are around 11,000 children and young people looked after by local authorities in Scotland, of whom 1,300 are over 16 years old. These young people need support to make a successful transition from the care system to independent adult living, and local authorities have a duty to provide this service. But the outcomes for young people who have been in care – for example in terms of educational achievement and homelessness – indicate that many do not receive the necessary help. Research by the University of York recently published by the Scottish Executive confirmed that current throughcare (preparation for leaving care) and aftercare (longer-term support) services vary across the country.

The Throughcare and Aftercare Working Group was set up in November 1999 to advise the Executive on how to improve these services following consultation on the way that financial support, in particular, was provided, and subsequent legislation. This report covers the Group's work so far, including consultation with young people, the conclusions of the University of York research, how the needs of young people should be assessed in the future, and how an improved service should be delivered.

With the agreement of the Department of Works and Pensions and as a result of the Group's work, and the University of York research, the Executive decided that full implementation of legislative reforms to enhance services – including the withdrawal of entitlement to Department of Work and Pensions benefits for a specific group of young people – should be delayed until April 2004. The Group has recommended that the focus in the first instance is on local authorities improving their existing services. In order to allow local authorities to gauge progress, the Group has recommended (*Paragraph 5.3*) that local authorities gather information for the following performance measures from April 2003:

local authorities should have accurate information about the number of looked after young people leaving care over school age in their area up to 19 years of age, by age and last placement;

there should be a throughcare and aftercare plan for each young person leaving care;

there should be nominated Key Workers/Advisers for all looked after young people leaving care;

local authorities should know the destination and accommodation arrangements of those leaving care over school age in their area up to 19 years of age, including number of moves and periods of homelessness;

local authorities should know the education, employment, or training status of those leaving care over school age in their area up to 19 years of age, including length of placements and any periods of unemployment and incapacity.

The Group also recommended that throughcare and aftercare services be subject to an Audit Commission Statutory Performance Indicator (*Paragraph 5.5*). As a possible indicator the Group suggested:

What had been the outcomes at age 17 (if applicable) and 18 for each young person who had qualified for assistance under Section 29(1) of the Children (Scotland) Act. The range of outcomes should include accommodation arrangements, support received from the local authority (including cash support), and employment, training, and further education arrangements.

The Group considered that such a performance indicator should require local authorities to track and keep in touch with young people leaving care over school age up to the age of 19, and up to 21 for those for whom the local authority continues to provide a service. This would enable both local authorities and the Scottish Executive to monitor the progress of young people towards independent living.

The Group also made the following recommendations:

There should be consultation on whether consortia arrangements could provide specialist throughcare and aftercare services for smaller local authorities (*Paragraph 4.3*).

Young people should have choices in deciding who their key worker/Adviser is, and who need not necessarily be from the Social Work Department (*Paragraph 4.5*).

Regulations should specify that the value of the package of support provided to a young person should be at least the equivalent of the minimum Department of Work and Pensions rate (*Paragraph 4.9*).

Responsibility for financial support for the young person should fall to the authority that last looked after them. However, immediate support should also be available from the local authority where the young person is living (*Paragraph 4.12*).

Social Fund payments and administrative costs should be included in estimates of the costs of the service for the transfer of resources for the Department of Work and Pensions (*Paragraph 6.4*).

Young people leaving care should have access to Transitional Housing Benefit funds transferred to the Supporting People Fund (*Paragraph 6.5*).

Resources transferred from the Department of Work and Pensions should be distributed to local authorities through Grant Aided Expenditure (*Paragraph 6.9*).

Local authorities should provide a report on service delivery at least for the first year of operation (*Paragraph 6.10*).

In order to carry out assessments, materials building on the Looking After Children materials should be provided to local authorities (*Paragraph 7.3*).

Young people should play a central role in the assessment process, taking ownership of their own throughcare and aftercare assessment and action plans (*Paragraph 7.3*).

Local authorities will need to record and share certain information on young people leaving care (*Paragraphs 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.7*).

Training materials should be prepared for local authorities and training seminars should be considered (*Paragraph 9.4*).

## Introduction

### 1.1

It is well established that children and young people who have been looked after by local authorities do worse in life than their contemporaries. For example:

- up to 75% of looked after children leave school with no formal qualifications;
- less than 1% go to university;
- it is estimated that between 20% and 50% of young homeless people have been in the care of a local authority;
- 45% of young offenders held in custody in 2000 had been in residential care at some time.

Young people leaving care also tend to be younger than their peers when they move to independent living. The average age for leaving care is 16/17 years old compared to an average of 22 years old for other young people starting to live independently.

### 1.2

The preparation of young people for leaving care ("throughcare") and their support for their first few years of independence ("aftercare") is crucial if they are to make this change successfully. The Scottish Executive has introduced changes to legislation to improve the delivery of these services to young people. The aim is to strengthen the contact between the local authority and young people, reinforcing the authority's parenting responsibility for young people who may have no other support at this difficult time of transition. Over the last two years the Throughcare and Aftercare Working Group has been advising the Scottish Executive how these legislative changes can best be implemented to ensure that there are real changes on the ground that improve the chances of young people leaving care as they start their adult lives. This report represents the conclusions of this first stage of the Group's work.

## Background

### 1.3

In September 1999, the Scottish Executive consulted on proposals to enhance throughcare and aftercare services by creating a "one stop shop" for advice, guidance and assistance for young people leaving care. Young people aged 16 and 17 years who had been looked after away from home would have their needs assessed and supported by local authorities. They would generally no longer be entitled to claim Income Support, Housing Benefit or Job Seekers Allowance, and some Department of Work and Pensions (DWP, formerly DSS) resources would be transferred to local authorities.

### 1.4

Responses to the consultation indicated support for the principle of a unified approach, but there were concerns about how the system would operate in practice. Scottish Ministers therefore announced on 19 November 1999 that they supported the principle of an integrated service for these young people and set up a Working Group to look in detail at how the system should work. Measures to strengthen existing duties on Scottish local authorities to provide a service, including a needs assessment, to all young people leaving care were included in the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001, and the related provisions to allow benefit entitlement to be removed from some of these young people were included in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, a Westminster statute.

*Sources: For Scotland's Children (2001) A report published by the Scottish Executive and Young People in Custody in Scotland (2000) An Occasional Paper (No 3/2000) published by the Scottish Prison Service.*

## The Working Group

### 1.5

The Working Group was chaired by officials from the Scottish Executive and included representatives from the Association of Directors of Social Work, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the Scottish Council for Single Homeless, the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum (STAAF), Careers Scotland, and Who Cares? Scotland. Full membership of the Group is shown at Annex A.

### 1.6

The Group adopted the following remit:

To consider issues arising from unified funding under local authority control, to support young people requiring throughcare and aftercare services within the context of other relevant policy developments and overall quality of services; and to advise Ministers how best such current and future resources might operate for the good of these young people.

### 1.7

Through Who Cares? and STAAF, two consultations were held with young people to gauge their reactions to the proposals and views on how best the system might operate. The report of the young people's comments is reproduced at Annex B.

### 1.8

This report details the Group's main conclusions on the issues it has considered so far. The Group will remain in existence to assist with implementing the policy, including assisting the production of assessment materials, training packages and the necessary guidance and regulations.

## Recent developments

### 1.9

On 18 June 2002, the Scottish Executive published research that showed that current levels of throughcare and aftercare were variable across Scotland. The Working Group has looked closely at this research, whose results support the Group's recommendations. The Working Group had expressed the view that the focus should be on improving current infrastructure and support to young people before DWP benefits were withdrawn, otherwise there was a risk that the service would actually deteriorate. With the agreement of the DWP, the Scottish Executive therefore decided to delay the introduction of the enhanced duty on local authorities, and the associated withdrawal of some DWP benefits, until 1 April 2004.

### 1.10

The Working Group, and the Executive, are now concentrating on how local authorities might first improve current services, and prepare for the enhanced service. This report reflects the next steps that need to be taken in that process.

## 2.1

Section 29 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 sets out local authority responsibilities to young people who leave care after they are over school leaving age. Under section 29(1) there is a *duty* – unless the local authority is satisfied that the young person's welfare does not require it – to advise, guide and assist those under 19. Under section 29(2) there is a *power* to provide advice, guidance and assistance to young people between 19 and 21 who apply to the local authority, unless the authority is satisfied that the young person's welfare does not require it. Local authority assistance may include assistance in kind or in cash.

## 2.2

These provisions were strengthened by section 73 of the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001, following concerns expressed during consultation that there was a lack of consistency in the throughcare and aftercare service and that regulatory provision would help ensure some consistency of standards.

## 2.4

Section 73(1), which has not yet come into effect, amends section 29 to include a duty on local authorities to:

- carry out an assessment of the needs of young people leaving care who they have a duty or power to advise, guide or assist under section 29;

- establish a procedure for considering representations, including complaints, made to them about the discharge of their functions under section 29.

## 2.5

Section 73(2) gives Scottish Ministers a power to make regulations about:

- the manner in which assistance is to be provided to young people leaving care under section 29;

- who is to be consulted in relation to an assessment of needs;

- the way an assessment is to be carried out, by whom and when;

- the recording of the results of an assessment;

- the considerations to which the local authority are to have regard in carrying out an assessment;

- procedures for considering representations including complaints.

## 2.6

The section also provides that Scottish local authorities have duties to assist young people leaving care, some from England and Wales, who are in their area. Similar reciprocal arrangements exist south of the border for Scottish young people leaving care. Ministers may make regulations to exclude these people from the duties if they are the responsibility of a local authority in England and Wales.

## 2.7

These improvements to the legal framework for throughcare and aftercare are complemented by the provisions in section 6(4) of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 which allow UK Ministers to make regulations removing the entitlement of certain young people being looked after or leaving care to DWP benefits in Scotland. The young people included in the regulations must correspond to those categories of young people whose benefit entitlement is removed in England and Wales by other provisions in section 6. These are essentially young people of 16 or 17 who have been looked after (in terms of the Children Act 1989, rather than Scottish legislation) for thirteen weeks since the age of 14, were being looked after at the age of 16, and are either still being looked after ("eligible" children) or have now left care ("relevant" children).

## 2.8

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 makes provisions for throughcare and aftercare similar to section 29 of the 1995 Act. The Act makes detailed provision for the support to be provided to young people leaving care, by amending the Children Act 1989. The Department of Health has now made regulations under the Act and issued guidance on its operation. These provisions came into force in 1 October 2001.

## 2.9

The relevant statutory provisions are set out in full at Annex C.

### 3.1

On 18 June 2002 the Scottish Executive published *Still a Bairn? Throughcare and Aftercare Services in Scotland*, a report by the University of York that was part of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 Research Programme, which aims to monitor the implementation of the Act and to evaluate its operation and impact. The Working Group had previously had a presentation from the authors of the report on their emerging findings.

### 3.2

Previous research had suggested connections between the many problems faced by young people leaving care and the difficulties they experience before and during the period in which they are looked after. The York research was a two-year study in two main stages: stage one, the policy survey, provided a description of throughcare and aftercare provision across Scotland from returns from Social Work Departments. The second stage consisted of a case survey of 107 young people who had left the care of three local authorities, representative of the three main service delivery models for throughcare and aftercare services: non-specialist, centralised specialist and dispersed specialist. The second stage also included in-depth follow-ups with 61 of these young people.

### 3.3

The research findings summary is at Annex D. Some of the main findings were:

Most authorities (77%) offered a planned throughcare programme but less than half (39%) of young people in the survey had received one. Also, 40% had not had a formal leaving care review.

The survey provided evidence of significant variation in throughcare and aftercare arrangements across Scotland. Many authorities lacked appropriate policies and procedures, although many were carrying out developments to extend and improve services.

It was apparent that many authorities lacked adequate data collection and processing systems for monitoring and evaluation and for identifying the number of young people eligible for services.

There was a strong commitment amongst authorities to taking account of the views of young people.

Most authorities provided a range of appropriate accommodation options.

40% of the young people in the survey reported having experienced homelessness since leaving care.

Young people looked after on a home supervision requirement and those returning home were not assessed as eligible for throughcare and/or aftercare services by a number of authorities.

Almost two-thirds of young people in the survey had no standard grade qualifications and most had experiences of truancy (83%) and exclusion (71%). A quarter of support workers were unaware of the educational attainment of the young person with whom they were working.

Almost three-quarters of young people left care at 15 (21%) or 16 (51.9%) years of age.

### 3.4

The report concludes that placement stability, continuity of care and support, family and carer links and help with education are important for effective throughcare and aftercare services. Planned throughcare programmes can greatly assist young people in coping after leaving care and the provision of various forms of support are of great help during and after leaving care.

### 3.5

The report also found that a departmental, corporate and inter-agency framework increases young people's access to a wide range of resources. Local authority departments require a developed policy and procedures framework, which includes specific reference to throughcare and aftercare services in Children's Services Plans; detailed policy and procedures, information guides for staff and young people; and a lead officer. The research showed this was lacking in many authorities.

### 3.6

The report confirmed some of the Working Group's own experiences. For example, it was difficult for some local authorities to give an accurate number of young people who had left their care and to whom they owed duties under section 29 when the Group asked for such information. There is the question of how young people looked after at home are dealt with in relation to their aftercare needs. It was also clear that a range of accommodation options, particularly different forms of supported accommodation were important for young people leaving care.

### 3.7

The Working Group's own conclusions about current practice and the inadequacies of the support given to young people leaving care were confirmed by the findings of the York Research. The Group concluded that there would be a risk to the level of service provided to young people if an enhanced duty, and the associated withdrawal of DWP benefits from some 16 and 17 year olds leaving care, was to proceed as planned on 1 October 2002. Existing services were clearly stretched meeting their current duties. It would be preferable to delay full implementation of the financial changes in throughcare and aftercare and initially focus on improving current services, including preparation for implementation of new assessment duties. The Executive accepted this approach, and with the agreement of DWP, full implementation of the financial measures was delayed until 1 April 2004.

## Models of service delivery

### 4.1

The Group considered whether there was a preferred model of service delivery which should be promoted. The Bulletin *A Safe Launch, Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare in a European Context* published by The Centre for Europe's Children, The Centre for Residential Child Care and the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum in 2000 considered the present services in Scotland in a European context (Scotland, England and Wales, Finland, Germany and the Netherlands).

### 4.2

This work found that successful schemes were often specialist and had some common features. They targeted core needs; they were committed to involving young people in decisions about the schemes and their lives; they worked well with other agencies particularly over benefits, housing, employment and training, they influenced local policies, and they had clear objectives and a management framework which addressed access to them, equal opportunities and service monitoring. Having a good working knowledge of the young person and their background was key.

### 4.3

The Group considered practicable models of service delivery in the Scottish context. The size of the 32 local authorities varies considerably as does the number of young people leaving care in each area. Specialist throughcare and aftercare services were more likely to achieve the desired outcomes, but a dedicated unit of this sort might not be practicable for smaller authorities. **The Group considered that there should be consultation on whether consortia arrangements could provide a specialist services for these authorities.**

### 4.4

Who Cares? Scotland and STAAF consulted young people to produce *In Their Own Words*, which provided some revealing comments about young people's hopes of these services (see Annex B). Key points to come out of this exercise include:

It is important to acknowledge fully the support of family members, residential staff and foster carers, as many young people choose these people as their preferred route for advice and support.

A very low number of young people who were still looked after said they knew their financial benefit rights. Hence, the importance for clear and sufficient information prior to leaving care.

Young people said they preferred throughcare and aftercare contact with people: they know; they trust; that respect privacy; and who "know what they are talking about".

### 4.5

The Group took the view that there should be no prescriptive model of service delivery in Scotland. Instead, whatever model was adopted it should have the following key features:

Nominated key worker or adviser – not necessarily from the Social Work Department – for the young person able to act as contact point for advice and assistance, and the young person should have a choice in deciding who it is.

Clear written policies accessible to young people on what they could expect from the service, including information regarding their rights.

Minimum service standards, including timescales for assistance.

Inter-agency working agreements and data sharing protocols with other relevant agencies and local authorities.

Partnership agreements with other agencies, particularly Careers Scotland.

An accessible resolution/complaints procedures.

A designated senior manager able to operate across local authority services to promote corporate responsibilities to young people leaving care.

## Desired outcomes

### 4.6

The Group identified three main desired outcomes for young people leaving care from the throughcare and aftercare service:

- to ensure that young people make a successful transition to independent living;

- to provide an accurate, accessible and swift service providing financial assistance that leaves young people at least no worse off than under the current welfare benefit system;

- to provide young people leaving care with an independent and swift appeals and complaints system which they can trust.

Ensuring that young people leaving care make a successful transition to independent living

### 4.7

The Group considered that if young people leaving care were to achieve successful independent living, improvements would have to be made to key services to ensure better educational attainment in both higher and further education; improved career advice leading to young people leaving care, finding appropriate further education, training and employment; improved access to appropriate housing/accommodation; and improved access to health care services and information. Young people should not leave care at too young an age. They should be emotionally mature enough to make this

transition and their readiness for moving on needs to be agreed before leaving care.

Providing an accurate, accessible and swift service

### 4.8

As discussed above, the Group considered that it should be for local authorities to determine the best method of service delivery in their area. However, minimum standards would require to be established nationally to ensure equity and consistency regarding service provision.

### 4.9

The Group discussed whether rates of cash payment for those young people eligible for cash support should be laid down in regulation or should be included in guidance, local authorities having some discretion. The argument in favour of regulation is that it will provide consistency for young people, and a right to minimum levels of support. On the other hand, guidance would provide more flexibility to local authorities to consider the whole value of a package of support (other than cash), and would avoid local authorities merely taking on the role of benefit agencies. The Group did not favour regulations specifying scales of payment. However, the Group felt that regulation should make clear that minimum packages of support must be at least equivalent to DWP entitlements (both personal and housing related). This would avoid any perceived incentive for young people to leave care before leaving school age, an unwanted outcome. Where agreement on appropriate packages of support cannot be agreed between the local authority and eligible young person, regulation should make clear that the young person, has, at minimum, entitlement to DWP rates of payment if they are not in receipt of any other income. Guidance should make clear that local authorities should be working with young

people to provide enhanced packages of support, not merely this minimum standard. Guidance or regulations should also cover how any income or capital sums which the young person or their parents may have should be taken into account. The aim should be to taper the availability of support to avoid creating further poverty traps, or over dependency on services, for these young people.

#### 4.10

Whilst guidance might cover the means of payment, local authorities should have sufficient discretion to be able to cope with each young person's circumstances. Ideally payment into a bank account via the BACS would be the most straightforward to administer. However, the Group considered it was unrealistic to expect all young people to comply with this method. Alternative methods, such as cash payments, should also be available.

#### 4.11

The Group was of the view that eligibility criteria for certain types of support, particularly cash support, should be a matter for regulation. However, the duty to assess needs to be applied to all young people leaving care.

#### 4.12

Clear guidance would be needed on the responsible authority when a young person moved from one area to another. **The Group's firm view was that responsibility for the costs of support should fall to the authority that last looked after the young person.** However, immediate support should also be available from the authority where the young person was living. The aim should be to minimise disputes over the responsibility of local authorities for young people who move with clear procedures laid down in the regulations.

#### 4.13

There should be guidance on partnership agreements with Careers Scotland and the Job Centre Plus. A model partnership agreement was available for looked after and accommodated young people which could be used (see Annex E). When in place Careers Scotland would provide local authorities and the Scottish Executive with statistical information, in line with performance measurement requirements, on further education, training and employment outcomes for eligible young people. Local authorities would provide Careers Scotland with sufficient information for Careers Scotland to contact, track and work effectively with eligible young people. Guidance on links with Careers Scotland and the Job Centre Plus should emphasise they would have no role in policing whether a young person should receive financial support from the local authority.

#### 4.14

Information about eligible young people and their payment history should be available to all local authorities. This would help prevent double-counting/abuse of the system. Guidance on this should be provided. Further details on the information to be gathered is detailed at Chapter 8.

**Providing independent and swift appeals and complaints system young people can trust**

#### 4.15

The Group agreed that complaints, particularly complaints about the level of financial assistance, should be dealt with quickly and locally. The formal complaints procedure under the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 is unlikely to meet the needs of prospective complainants within the context of proposed changes for 16 and 17 year olds and their benefit entitlement. Detailed mechanisms should be produced in regulations but the

system must remain one which is accessible, transparent and provide detailed responses to complaints made.

The Group recommends that a three-stage model should be the subject of forthcoming consultation.

### Stage 1: Informal Resolution

If disagreement/unhappiness is expressed about a decision made, then the issues raised should be recorded. Discussion and negotiation should be used, where possible, to reach a mutual resolution of issues raised.

### Stage 2: Formal Complaint

If issues are not resolved at Stage 1, then the young person will have the option of making a formal complaint. The young person should be supported to make the complaint in writing. The young person should then receive a response within an agreed timescale. To ensure the integrity of the system, complaints should be investigated at arms-length by the responsible department.

### Stage 3: Appeals

The complainant should also have the right to appeal the decision/outcome of any complaint made. The appeal board/body should be as independent as possible but empowered to reverse/implement decisions made on appeal, including backdating of payments.

### Key Principles

All young people have the right to independent advocacy at any stage of the process.

Disagreements, complaints and appeals should be resolved as swiftly as possible, without delay.

Young people should always have their accommodation and maintenance costs met, if they attend, during any complaints/appeals.

Decisions and feedback given to young people should be in clear and understandable language.

## Key issues for consideration next year

### 4.16

The Group identified the following key issues as requiring consideration before full implementation of the throughcare and aftercare measures:

- achieving the right balance between regulation and guidance, including financial support, to ensure consistency of service without shackling local authority discretion to deal with individual cases;

- identifying performance measures for quality of service and service delivery to enable continual service improvement;

- establishing clear guidelines on assessment and action planning and ensuring that all who would be required to deliver the service were aware of and understood these;

- establishing effective computer-based information systems and data-sharing protocols;

- setting up a suitable appeals and complaints system.

Consultation on the content of regulation and guidance will take place in 2003. The Group will have an input into the drafting of the proposals that are issued for guidance. Performance measures are proposed for consultation in this report. The need for assessment is discussed in Chapter 7. The content of regulations on assessment and, if required, for an appeals and complaints system will also be included in the consultation on the draft regulations and guidance next year. The information requirements are discussed further in Chapter 8.

### 5.1

The Group considered it important that there should be good monitoring arrangements and clear performance measures for throughcare and aftercare services to enable local authorities, Ministers and, most importantly, the young people themselves to gauge service development and delivery. Monitoring and measuring service development would be vital over the next year to show the progress that local authorities were making in improving current services, before full implementation from April 2004.

### 5.2

The Group recommends the following performance indicators from April 2003. The Group understands the Executive intends to consult on these indicators on the publication of this report.

### 5.3

The performance measures are:

local authorities should have accurate information about the number of looked after young people leaving care over school age in their area by age and last placement up to 19 years of age;

there should be a leaving care plan for each young person leaving care;

there should be nominated Key Workers/Advisers for all looked after young people leaving care;

local authorities should know the destination and accommodation arrangements of those leaving care over school age up to 19 years of age, including number of moves and periods of homelessness;

local authorities should know the education, employment, or training status of those leaving care over school age up to 19 years of age, including length of placements and any periods of unemployment and incapacity.

## 5.4

The Group would expect further performance measures to be put in place as local authorities move to full implementation in April 2004. These would include: the existence of partnership agreements, policy statements and inclusion of throughcare and aftercare in the Children's Services Plans; involvement of young people in developing the service; an information pack for young people leaving care; information on young people receiving an enhanced section 29 service and how much cash support is being provided; completion and assessment and action planning; information on basic health factors e.g. number registered with a dentist/ GP, lone parenthood; and information on complaints received and how they have been resolved. More guidance on these further indicators should be provided, for example on the link with Careers Scotland performance indicators.

## Statutory Performance Indicator

### 5.5

While recognising that young people who had left local authority care were a highly mobile population, the Group considered that it was most important their outcomes should be monitored for as long as possible. **The Group therefore recommended that throughcare and aftercare services be subject to an Audit Commission Statutory Performance Indicator.** As a possible indicator the Group suggested:

**What had been the outcomes at age 17 (if applicable) and 18 for each young person who had qualified for assistance under Section 29(1) of the Children (Scotland) Act. The range of outcomes should include accommodation arrangements, support received from the local authority (including cash support), and employment, training, and further education arrangements.**

### 5.6

The Group considered that such a performance indicator should require local authorities to track and keep in touch with young people leaving care over school age up to the age of 19, and up to 21 for those for whom the local authority continues to provide a service. This would enable both local authorities and the Scottish Executive to monitor the progress of young people towards independent living.

### 6.1

The Group was aware that additional resources of £1 million had already been made available to local authorities through the earmarked Children's Services Development Fund in 2000/01 and 2001/02 to help develop the throughcare and aftercare service. Additional funds of £10 million had been given to local authorities in 2001/02 to improve the educational attainment of looked after children. Some local authorities, in partnership with the NHS and the voluntary sector, are also applying for Changing Children Services Fund resources to improve services, including throughcare and aftercare, to looked after children.

### 6.2

The Group was aware that resources would be transferred from DWP to the Scottish Executive in respect of benefits currently paid to young people leaving care to take account of local authorities taking on the full support of these young people. In addition to the Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance and Housing and Transitional Housing Benefit already planned for transfer, the Group identified the need for resources to cover the ending of access to Social Fund payments through the ending of benefit entitlement. The Group understood that Social Fund payments had not been included in the equivalent transfer in England and Wales, but the Group was of the view that they should be included in Scotland as they form a proportionately larger part of the eventual funds that would be given to local authorities, particularly smaller authorities, to provide this service.

### 6.3

The Group also recommended that an element be included in this transfer for administrative costs that local authorities would incur in setting up the scheme, conducting needs assessment and

administering payments. These had not been included in the transfer in England and Wales.

### 6.4

As already noted, there were difficulties in providing the Group with actual numbers of young people who would be affected by the transfer, and the potential numbers for future years. Information was provided by some local authorities, and more is becoming available. These figures require further work to form a firm basis for estimating total costs. However, on the figures available the Group concluded that the basis of the transfer in England and Wales would not provide sufficient funds for local authorities to provide a full service in due course. **The Group therefore urged the Executive to include the Social Fund payments and administrative costs in negotiations with the DWP for the transfer, and that actual estimates of costs from local authorities should be used, rather than the national figures used in England and Wales.**

### 6.5

The Group also explored the relationship with the transfer of Transitional Housing Benefit for the Supporting People Fund. Following the delay in withdrawal of DWP benefit from young people leaving care, the Group understands that current Transitional Housing Benefit payments made to these young people should form part of the transfer from the DWP to provide money for the Supporting People Fund. **The Group urged the Executive and local authorities to ensure that young people leaving care should have access to this funding, preferably as part of the Supporting People Fund.**

## Distribution to local authorities

### 6.6

There are three routes whereby the additional resources from the DWP transfer might be distributed to local authorities – (a) claw back of current spend, pooling the resources and giving specific grant thereafter, (b) specific grant for new resources or (c) through Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE).

#### Claw Back Grant Option

### 6.7

From Group discussion, it became clear that local authorities were not able to disaggregate current spend on young people leaving care for any claw back option to have effect in time for delivery of the new service. One of the difficulties in this option was in separating out the various funding streams and pinpointing actual local authority spend itself. Disaggregation of funding streams also had a bearing on the choice between specific grant and GAE options.

#### Specific Grant versus GAE

### 6.8

Specific grant would favour the city councils who had most need. However, this method would disadvantage the island councils who, with small numbers of young people leaving care would struggle to deliver the integrated service envisaged by the Group. Other problems with specific grant identified were the need for local authorities to identify separate funding streams used in integrated service delivery and the perverse incentive it might give local authorities to discharge young people early from care in order to claim grant.

### 6.9

**On balance, the Group considered the way forward, initially and subject to strong reporting requirements and review, should be through GAE.** This would allow local authorities freedom to use the resources to the best advantage of the young people concerned irrespective of whether the young people remained in care up to the age of 18 or moved to independent living. This approach was consistent with the Group's recommendation that responsibility should rest with the authorities that last looked after the young person (*Paragraph 4.12*).

### 6.10

However, use of GAE would need to be accompanied by strict reporting on and monitoring of service delivery. **The Group recommends asking local authorities for a report to the Group after the first 12-month period of operation at least. The information in the report should cover at least the performance measures noted in Chapter 5 and progress which the local authority considered it was making towards the desired social justice milestones, including where the money has been targeted.** This would enable the Group and Scottish Ministers to assess whether the GAE option was, in fact, the right one for delivery of this service to the most vulnerable young people or whether that finance delivery route had to be reassessed.

### 7.1

The amendments to section 29 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 introduce a statutory duty to carry out an assessment of the needs of young people leaving care. Scottish Ministers will in due course make regulations on how these assessments should be carried out. It is clear that the needs assessment will be a key part of ensuring that young people make a successful transition to independent living.

### 7.2

The Group has developed a framework for assessing the needs of young people leaving care, which is at Annex F. This framework is intended as a starting point in discussions on how best guidance can be given to local authorities on how to perform their statutory duty. The balance between regulation and guidance has already been discussed in Chapter 4, and there will be consultation on this next year.

### 7.3

The Group has considered the need for material to be provided to local authorities to help front line workers carry out these assessments. There is clearly a relationship between existing Looking After Children materials, especially the 15+ assessment and action records, and the assessment that young people will need on leaving care. **The Group has concluded that local authorities should be provided with materials to help in carrying out assessments, and that these materials should build on the existing Looking After Children materials. The Group recommends that additional sections are developed to cover preparing for leaving care (be this at 15+ or older) and for aftercare. The section for preparing to leave care should form the throughcare plan for the young person. The aftercare section should be an update and extension of the throughcare plan**

**and form the basis of regular reviews for the young person with their key worker/adviser.** The content of these sections should be modular, based on the framework developed by the Group, and there should be a positive focus on aspirations and achievements. The Group emphasises the importance of the young person playing the central role in addressing each area (with whatever person is placed to help them) and taking ownership of their own throughcare and aftercare assessment and action plans. The Group also emphasises that the design and language of the sections should reflect the older age group that will be using them. For example, the expression “looked after child” should not be used.

### 7.4

The Group is aware that the Scottish Executive is pursuing the recommendation to establish a modular single assessment format in *For Scotland's Children*, the report on better integrated services for children. The Group believes that throughcare and aftercare of young people leaving care should be included in that exercise. However, that should not inhibit development of assessment tools for the throughcare and aftercare of today's young people, building on this Chapter and Annex F.

### 7.5

The Group believed that particular regulation or guidance would be required for the assessment of any cash support given to young people leaving care. This is discussed in Chapter 4.

## 7.6

The Group also considered eligibility for needs assessment. The duty under the amended section 29 will be owed to all young people leaving care beyond school age, not just those who have been accommodated away from home. The Group believed that the same procedure should be available to all these young people. However, the Group recognised that the action on certain elements of the assessment – for example, of accommodation and financial needs – would normally only be required for those young people who had been accommodated away from home and were not returning. The Group believed that only these young people should normally be eligible for a full support package. This focus on the most vulnerable young people leaving care would enable local authorities to build practice in assessing young people leaving care from its current level. However, the Group did not believe that regulations should exclude other young people from the possibility of the full range of support, even if they had, for example, been looked after at home, if this was thought appropriate by their key worker/adviser. The needs of some young people might also change, for example if they return home on leaving care but this does not work out. The improved contact with the young person and a structured assessment process should allow the local authority to offer different options for support if the original placement fails.

## 7.7

The Group was aware of Recommendation 27 of the Homelessness Task Force final report of looked after children. The needs assessment and the related materials recommended in this chapter would allow local authorities to meet much of that recommendation. The Group considered that further work was required on the implications of extending eligibility for throughcare and aftercare as recommended by the Homelessness Task Force.

## 8.1

This chapter considers the information that will need to be kept by local authorities following full implementation of the changes to throughcare and aftercare in April 2004, in particular the withdrawal of DWP benefits. It also identifies the information that will need to be shared.

## Trigger points

### 8.2

It may take some time for young people to realise that the new arrangements do not allow them to access payment through DWP. It will require a specific question regarding a young person's looked after status to be asked by agencies that could be trigger points for financial assistance.

#### Social Work

This is likely to be the most frequently used access point for financial assistance, and there needs to be a close link between those maintaining contact with young people and those authorising payments – if they are not the same. Social Work Services are the critical link in the process, as they will hold key information relating to the young persons care experience and leaving care arrangements.

#### Accommodation

There will be occasions where young people will require to pay for accommodation, and who are still the financial responsibility of the local authority. Housing Benefit payments cannot be recovered from central government after implementation, and there will be a requirement on accommodation providers to identify those young people for whom the local authority has financial responsibility. This will require protocol agreements between the local authority and supported accommodation providers.

#### DWP

The local authority will be required to inform the local DWP of a young person for whom they have financial responsibility, and DWP will require to notify all officers of the conditions where the local authority has financial responsibility.

#### Careers

Careers Scotland have a responsibility to assist access to education, training, and employment opportunities – and these may generate income that local authorities should take into account when assessing a young persons financial needs. There needs to be protocol agreements in place for this to occur.

#### Health

Access to passported health care (e.g. eye and dental treatment) has already been recognised as a potential area of difficulty, and the use of specific forms needs a locally agreed protocol.

## Information held by local authority

### 8.3

Local authorities will be required to record the following information for all young people leaving care:

#### Name

Data bases should have the capacity to cope with aliases as this is the single most frequent reason for confusion regarding records.

#### Age

Dates of Birth can be another source of misinformation.

### NI number

Each local authority should have a system to ensure that all young people leaving care have an NI number. There can be difficulties in the release of information from DWP to local authorities, as the release of the NI number has to go direct to the young person. This issue requires to be addressed if local authorities are to have a quick way of checking NI numbers.

### Bank Details

It is proposed that local authorities should ensure that all young people leaving care should have a bank account so that income maintenance payments can be made direct to the account. There will be occasions where personal payments require to be made, but these should be kept to a minimum.

### Address

This requires to be a full accommodation record for a young person since leaving care. This should include their last care placement details.

### Status

This requires details of the living arrangements of the young person (staying alone or with a partner), and be able to identify when the young person is responsible for children.

### Other Income

This requires to be a full record of education, training, or employment, and any associated income, since leaving care.

### Payments

This requires a full record of dates and payments made in terms of income maintenance, housing, and any discretionary payments made by the local authority. The recording details of payment breakdown may require further guidance.

### Key worker

There needs to be a key worker/adviser identified for the purposes of contact within the local authority who can confirm the details relating to the young person. This key worker/adviser will need some basis of contact with the young person to be able to confirm their circumstances and needs. The key worker should remain in contact with young person for at least 24 months following their departure from care. This will require minimum reporting requirements between the young person and the key worker/adviser.

## Sharing of information

### 8.4

There will need to be an agreement between the local authority and the young person about the sharing of personal details. Local authorities will need to seek this agreement of young people prior to leaving care, so that personal information can be released to other agencies. This should include: the reasons for information sharing; the extent of it; the kind of information to be shared; and which agencies information is likely to be shared – including other local authorities.

### 8.5

Local authorities need to consider internal arrangements for the sharing of information on young people that will help to facilitate the issues around payments. This will need agreements amongst services and agencies within the local authority about the need to know information so that appropriate payments can be made. It is particularly relevant for Social Work Services to have arrangements in place that ensures information can be shared with Housing, Supported Accommodation Providers, Careers Scotland, and DWP (see model partnership agreement with Careers Scotland at Annex E).

### 8.6

It is expected that young people will move around – and the most vulnerable tend to be the most restless. As a result, local authorities will need to share information regarding young people for whom they are responsible. It may be useful for local authorities to have data sharing protocols with all neighbouring authorities so that there is a framework for this sharing of information.

### 8.7

There may be instances where young people refuse to agree to information sharing. However, it is difficult to see how a receiving local authority could make payments – if required – unless information regarding eligibility is made available to them. This will require the young person to agree to giving relevant information to the local authority providing funds, and where appropriate, for the local authority to check details with any other relevant local authority at the point of carrying out an assessment of financial need.

### Data Protection

### 8.8

Any exchanges of information must comply with the Data Protection legislation. Local authorities and other agencies should ensure that they have the necessary protocols in place.

## IMPLEMENTATION

### 9.1

There is a need for young people to be involved in the implementation process so they are fully informed of the proposals and of the throughcare and aftercare to which they will be entitled.

### 9.2

Local authorities have now nominated a Lead Implementation Officer to co-ordinate activities within the authority and with other important organisations such as Careers Scotland. The aim is that these Lead Implementation Officers will act as the main point of contact between the Executive, the Group and authorities in the lead up to full implementation in April 2004.

### 9.3

The first seminar for Lead Implementation Officers was held by the Executive on 24 June 2002. For the seminar, Lead Implementation Officers were provided with a paper prepared by the Group on their roles and responsibilities. This is attached at Annex G. The paper provides a checklist of activities for local authorities to consider to begin improving current throughcare and aftercare services and to prepare for full implementation. This checklist will form the basis for future activities in local authorities.

### 9.4

It is intended that further seminars will be held for Lead Implementation Officers every three months. The Group was supplied with a timetable for future action, including training, consulting young people and work for local authorities.

### 9.5

There will be a considerable training requirement for local authority staff in the run up to full implementation. **The Group recommends that training materials are prepared to allow local authority training departments to prepare key staff for these changes. The Group also recommends that regional training seminars, to share points of common interest, are considered.**

### 10.1

It is vital that young people leaving care are given proper support to make the transition to successful independent living. The Group has drawn up a list of what young people could expect, which is at Annex H. However, research has demonstrated that the current arrangements do not provide a consistent service to these young people. The enhanced service to be brought in through changes to the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 is an opportunity to put this right. There is a risk that the service might actually deteriorate unless existing services are improved to meet this challenge.

### 10.2

The Group welcomes the decision to delay full implementation until April 2004. It believes that this provides a welcome period to put in place the necessary changes and to prepare systems and train people to introduce the reforms fully.

### 10.3

The steps described in this report are the first measures that need to be taken, and the Group looks forward to working with the Executive and local authorities on these measures, and eventually to the successful full implementation of improved services and better outcomes for these young people.



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## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

The views of young people leaving care

THE RESULTS OF AN INITIAL CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED TRANSFER OF DSS RESOURCES TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Compiled by Alison Caulfield-Dow assisted by Deirdre A Watson, November 2000

### Introduction

The Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum in collaboration with Who Cares? Scotland carried out this piece of consultation, following a request by the Scottish Executive's Throughcare and Aftercare Working Group. The Throughcare and Aftercare Working Group was set up at the beginning of 2000, to look at the variety of issues involved in the implementation of new arrangements for supporting young people leaving care, aged 16-18 years old.

### Aims

The aim of this consultation was to gain young people's views on leaving care, claiming benefits and gaining throughcare and aftercare support. The proposed changes to financial support will affect many young people who are leaving care. By gaining the views of young people in different parts of Scotland, it should ensure that young people's opinions are heard and that any new arrangements will reflect what young people think should happen.

### The Questionnaire

Two sets of questions were devised by Who Cares? Scotland, in consultation with the Forum. These questions could be answered through group discussion or individually, and were aimed at:

- **Young People in Care:** *who are still looked after, aged 15+.*
- **Care Leavers:** *young people who have already left care.*

### Respondents

The Forum received responses from 73 individuals and one group of young people. These young people were living in their own place, supported accommodation, children's homes or residential school, in 15 different areas of Scotland. Thirty-two young people answered the "Young People in Care" questions, and 45 young people and one group answered the "Care Leavers" questions. (NB – four young people answered both sets of questions.)

## RESPONSES

### Introduction

There was a wide range of different responses, with a variety of comments made to each of the questions. All the responses are outlined in the following pages, under the sections: "Young People in Care" and "Care Leavers". The results also include many of the young people's actual comments, so that young people can have their say, in their own words.

**Young People in Care:**  
*who are still looked after, aged 15+*

Just less than half of all young people who responded, answered the questions for "Young people still looked after" (32 out of 73). These young people were currently at a residential school, in contact with a throughcare team, or living in a supported accommodation project.

**Question 1: When do you think is the right time to start thinking about throughcare and moving on?**

Young people gave a variety of different ages at which they felt you should start thinking about throughcare and moving on.

The right time is at...	Number of young people who said this
15 years old	7
15-and-a-half years old	5
16 years old	4
17 years old	2
18 years old	1
19 years old	3
20 years old	1
Not sure	2

The following comments were also made about when it is right to move on:

*"When you realise yourself that it is time to move on."*

*"When ready."*

*"ASAP."*

Two young people said:

*"At least 6 months before you leave."*

**Question 2: Who do you think is the best person to talk to about your plans for the future?**

Again, young people gave a range of different responses:

The best person is...	Number of young people who said this
Family member	10
Social worker/throughcare worker	13
Residential staff/keyworker	6
Carers	3
Support project	2
Friends	2
Myself	2
School	2
Who Cares? Scotland	2
Careers	1

A few young people gave a number of different people:

*"Mum, keyworker, throughcare worker and social worker."*

*"Throughcare worker, social worker, keyworker."*

One summed it up as:

*"Someone who's going to be there."*

Another commented:

*"Some throughcare teams don't run efficiently. In my area, there are only three workers for the whole area. Each worker has an average of thirty young people to deal with – this is very unrealistic."*

**Question 3: What are your plans/thoughts about moving on?**

There were several different plans and thoughts about moving on:

Plans and thoughts about moving on...	Number of young people who said this
Looking forward to it	6
Stay with relative and get a job	4
Share a flat/Get own flat	7
It's too early	2
College	1
Have none	1
Don't know	2
Scared/worried	3

Some other thoughts about moving on were:

- "When I feel I'm ready."*
- "I would like a supported flat before getting my own."*
- "Get a job, own flat in the countryside – looking forward to moving on."*
- "I am a little upset about it, but you have to."*
- "I'm worried about having to go and live in a hostel."*
- "Either move in with a parent or get a house. I want to move on when I am ready but just now I feel I wouldn't like to because I don't like being on my own."*
- "When the time comes I hope that throughcare will have enough staff to support me."*

**Question 4: If you are about to move on, have you been able to talk to somebody about it and work out how and when it would happen?**

A high proportion of the young people who were still looked after were generally positive about this but a significant percentage were not so sure.

Do you have someone to talk with and plan...?	Number of young people who said this
Yes	12
No	10
Not due to leave yet	8

One young person identified:

*"Keyworker, auntie, relatives."*

Another made the following comment:

*"I'm not ready to move on, but feel I have plenty of support and people to talk to."*

Others observed:

- "I am currently being assisted by Barnardo's 16+ project."*
- "I am aged 15½ – no throughcare as yet – I want information about when and where to."*
- "I am going to move on, between 10 months and up to a year from now but every time I mention it my carer does not listen and tells me it is a long time away, but it isn't really."*

**Question 5: Do you know what your financial benefit rights will be?**

It was concerning that the majority of young people who were still looked after did not know what their financial benefit rights were.

Do you know your benefit rights...?	Number of young people who said this
No	23
Yes	5
Some	4

One young person stated:

*"Not sure about financial side. Will get keyworker to talk about it."*

**Question 6: Who would you ask about that?**

Young people gave a wide variety of different people who they would go and ask about financial benefits.

Who would you ask...?	Number of young people who said this
Support Project	5
Social worker/Department	9
Throughcare worker	6
Keyworker	3
Mother	3
Friends	2
Family	2
Social Worker and Residential Staff	1
Throughcare Worker and Keyworker	1
Sister or Social worker	1
Carer	1
Who Cares? Scotland	1
Not sure/Don't know	5

These responses reflected that although social work came out slightly in front there was not one unanimously preferred choice to whom young people would go to seek advice or information about benefits.

**Question 7:** *If you had the choice, who do you think you would like to talk to about money?*

- (a) Social Work Department
- (b) Benefits Office
- (c) Someone Else

There was not one answer that was the preferred choice by any significant margin.

Who would you talk to about money...?	Number of young people who said this
Social Work Department	10
Benefits office	11
Someone else	10

One young person said they preferred both (a) and (b) because:

- "The benefits agency can give exact information and social work can give me advice on how it will affect me."*
- "Social Work Department, because I already know them."*
- "Benefits office, because I don't like social workers."*
- "Benefits Agency would treat me like everyone else."*
- "Benefits office would take ages to process the money."*
- "Throughcare because I can't trust them."*

**Question 8:** *Why did you choose a, b or c?*

The following are specific comments that were given by the young people as reasons for their choice:

**Those who chose: (a) Social Work Department:**

- "They always help me."*
- "Because I already know them."*
- "Privacy."*
- "More familiar with Social Work Department."*
- "The Social Work have done everything else for me."*

Being familiar with the people who offer support is important for many young people, as they can feel more comfortable with people they know and trust.

**Those who chose: (b) Benefits Agency:**

- "Because they know about it."*
- "Because they will provide me with money."*
- "Best people to talk to about money I am entitled to."*
- "Because the Social Work Department don't always tell you everything that you need to know."*
- "Benefits office would know more about it."*

These comments reflect how it is crucial for people to have thorough knowledge of how the financial support systems work, in order to offer effective support for young people. Staff need to know exactly what they are talking about, but be able to make it clear and understandable for young people.

**Those who chose: (c) Someone Else:**

- "Nobody else listens."*
- "Because the rest of them flog you off!!"*
- "Because I would much rather talk to family or care workers."*

Some of the young people were very specific about who they would prefer to get support from and why:

*"My sister – 'cause I know her better and trust her."*

*"16+ Project put it into a language I can understand."*

*"My keyworker. Because you know him."*

Many young people obviously have several different preferred choices of who to go to for advice and support.

#### General Comments:

One group of young people were clear in their point of view:

*"Don't care, as long as it is paid on time."*

This reflects the importance of whatever new systems are put in place, that they are efficient and do not leave young people stranded, without money.

#### Care Leavers:

*Young people who have already left care.*

Over a half of young people responded to the "care leavers" questions (45 out of 73), although four young people had also answered the questions for "young people still looked after". These young people were living in a variety of different types of accommodation, e.g. supported accommodation, their own place or a hostel.

**Question 1: Did you feel it was the right time in your life to start thinking about throughcare and moving on?**

**Question 1(a): At what age was it?**

The responses to these two questions have been combined below. This illustrates the age that young people were thinking about or actually moving on from care and whether they felt that it was the right time in their life:

Number of young people who said this			
Was it the right time in your life...?			
Age given	YES	NO	No answer
15	7	2	9
15½	2	1	2
15/16	1	1	–
Over 15	–	–	1
16	3	5	5
17	1	1	2
18	–	1	–
19	1	–	–
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19</b>

From the responses, it appeared that some young people put the age at which they started to think about moving on, whereas others may have put the age at which they actually left care.

The following comments were also made about moving on:

*"I had no choice as I fell pregnant at 16."*

*"I should have stayed longer."*

*"I got a lot of support from my keyworker. But it came at the wrong time. I was the only young person doing GCSEs in the unit."*

*"It should be up to you when you are ready to move on."*

*"Social worker mentioned it because they wanted me out of the foster care placement. I got shoved out."*

*"I left care two days before 16. I always said I would move in with Mum as soon as I turned 16 – it did not work. The idea came from me as I did not like the idea of not living with my parents, all my pals did."*

These answers show that young people had mixed experiences and mixed feelings about how they felt. Without further exploration, it is hard to know why a young person felt it was the right time or not. It is possible that young people who felt it was the right time at 15 years old, were receiving preparation and support at an earlier age. A higher number of young people felt that 16 was not the right age.

One young person made the following comment:

*"It should be properly started at school leaving age. If in mainstream school, it should be after GCSEs."*

### **Question 1(b): Where or who did the suggestion come from?**

A wide range of responses were given to this question:

Where did the suggestion come from...?	Number of young people who said this
Social worker/Department	10
Residential staff/Keyworker	9
Myself	7
Review	4
Throughcare worker/Team	2
Care workers and Social worker	2
Residential staff and Throughcare worker	1
Foster parents	1
Myself and my Dad	1
Myself and Social worker	1
Myself and Residential staff	1
Age limit	1

The following reasons were also given:

*"No choice – no funding."*

*"I had to get my own flat."*

*"I ran away."*

*"I wanted to leave care, but the social worker made a decision."*

*"I couldn't stay at the residential school – because I was pregnant they accommodated me."*

*"Children's unit pushed me into moving on – or to start thinking about it."*

*"I have started to think about moving to my own flat – what I am going to buy, and how I am going to budget my money. No-one talked to me about this in the unit. I would like someone to start helping me to think about this."*

*"I did not think it was the right time, I know I had to move on some time but my age should not have been the leading reason."*

*"Yes I thought it was the right time to move on, but now I wish I had stayed in foster care for longer."*

**Question 1(c): Do you think it affected your schooling?**

Did it affect your schooling...?	Number of young people who said this
No	27
Yes	7
Very little	1
Straight away	1

NB – A number of young people were not at school at the time.

The vast majority of young people said they felt that leaving care did not affect their schooling.

The following comments were also made:

*"I had been thrown out of school."*

*"I had left school by then."*

*"It was in the middle of standard grades. It gave me a lot of worries. I wasn't concentrating on exams."*

*"I wasn't at school – not attending, but it had a huge impact on my life."*

*"Yes it affected my exams. It was mad being in that place."*

**Question 2: In your experience, did your support get better or worse when you left care?**

Did support get better or worse...?	Number of young people who said this
Better	11
Worse	11
Same	9
A little better	2
Worse at first	1

Again, young people had varied experiences, with responses being equally shared between better, worse and the same.

*"Too many people involved in my life because of my son – giving me different advice. It was confusing."*

**Question 2(a): What was the most difficult change/transition to make? (good or bad)**

In response to this question, there were many different things that young people found most difficult. The most common answers were:

Most difficult change/transition...?	Number of young people who said this
Isolation/Loneliness/Living on own	12
Settling/Moving into own place	3
Leaving care	3
Budgeting	2
Nothing	2
Leaving friends	1
Finding somewhere to stay	1
DSS	1
Getting a job	1
Better support	1
Worse support	1
Going back to home	1
Better relations with social work	1

Young people also stated the following things:

- "Moving back in with my Mum."*
- "Learning to stand on my own two feet."*
- "Not having as many people around."*
- "Shopping, cooking, budgeting."*
- "I was rushed out too quickly, and the move on accommodation wasn't good."*

Some young people also mentioned some good things about moving on.

- "Being able to do what I wanted, when I wanted."*
- "I got to choose where I wanted to live."*
- "More independence."*

More general comments:

- "Loneliness – five years really to get over it."*
- "Loneliness – money led to depression."*
- "I had nobody to fall back on."*
- "I was fast tracked out of care."*
- "When I left care the support got better – I had more contact with throughcare."*
- "Independence is good."*
- "It would be helpful to talk to someone with experience, like someone who was in care and who has gone through the same as us."*
- "The worst thing was money and going from a house full of people to just me with nobody supporting or helping me. I got more support in care."*
- "The most difficult transition was living in a hostel with 13 adults after living in a unit with six young people."*
- "I only left foster placement for four months. When it did not work out at Mum's I could not go back to carers. Social work knew I was not ready to move back home. I had to move into a homeless unit, I had nobody."*
- "I got on better with social work after I left care."*

**Question 2(b): Did everyone involved work together to help you?**

Did everyone work together...?	Number of young people who said this
Yes	25
No	9

Some of the young people who answered "yes" also gave these comments:

- "I had the same social worker."*
- "My care worker."*
- "Yes – apart from social work."*
- "Just a couple of people in the children's home helped, but they had nothing really to do with my case."*

The following comments we made by the young people who answered more negatively:

- "At the start, but then drifted."*
- "Hardly saw my social worker."*
- "My contact with social workers was never kept, so I got myself into a lot of problems."*

Some more general comments:

- "People don't seem to talk to each other."*
- "They disagreed about what was best for me."*
- "No, they said they would draw up a plan to see me but they did not come the amount of times it said in my plan."*
- "Nobody worked together, I just got pushed out. Social work has not done anything to help me since I left care. They are not interested in me anymore. They come twice monthly but it makes no difference. I get half an hour if I'm lucky."*
- "I only contact social work when something goes wrong."*

Although most young people said that people worked together to support them, many still seemed disappointed or unhappy that their contact with their social worker did not continue.

**Question 2(c): How much contact did you have with the Social Work Department?**

How much contact did you have...?	Number of young people who said this
Every week	7
Fortnightly	4
Monthly	1
Little	7
Very little	3
Hardly any	2
A lot	5
A lot at the start	1
Quite a lot	1
Enough	2

As can be seen, the Social Work Department's contact with young people varied greatly after they had left care.

Two young people mentioned how they had some contact at first, but then it "faded out" or "dwindled away". Another three young people stated that they had "not much" or no contact from social workers, but had regular contact from the throughcare team.

The following comments were also made:

*"The Social Work Department had parental rights over me 'til I was 18. I seen the resource worker when I needed."*

*"During the time I was leaving, it was just the children's home that I got support from."*

*"I feel the contact from my social worker was over and above service I should be getting – good social worker."*

*"I was pretty lucky that I had a social worker who cared about what happened to me."*

**Question 3: What was it like claiming benefits for the first time?**

What was it like claiming benefits...?	Number of young people who said this
OK	7
Difficult/Hard	6
Needed support	3
Strange	2
Very confusing	2
Went to college instead	2
Not done it yet	2
Good	1
Not too bad	1
No problem	1
Not easy	1
Awkward	1
Painful	1
Embarrassing	1
No answer	6

There were very mixed reactions to claiming benefits for the first time. Young people also stated the following things:

*"It was hard work – I had to go to different places."*

*"Didn't like claiming benefits. I went to college to avoid benefits."*

*"It was OK, but not enough money."*

*"It's not easy. Filling out forms is a nightmare."*

*"It was confusing. Throughcare have always helped me with that side of things."*

*"I was helped to get income support by the Homeless Unit. I don't like claiming benefits it makes you look like a drop out."*

*"I can contact throughcare. They give you money if your claim is delayed or rejected."*

**Question 3(a): Did you know what you were entitled to from DSS?**

Did you know your entitlements...?	Number of young people who said this
Yes	16
No	19
Not really	3

There was a clear split between young people who knew what benefits they were entitled to and those who did not. More said they did not.

Two young people also stated that they knew their entitlements once their throughcare worker had told them.

**Question 3(b): Was support offered/given when claiming?**

Was support offered...?	Number of young people who said this
Yes	29
No	11

Most of the young people said they had support when claiming benefits. Three young people said that this support was gained from their throughcare worker. Another one stated that it was their Careers Officer who had supported them. One young person who was supported, stated:

*"As I was pregnant, they told me what I was entitled to."*

One young person answered:

*"No and yes! Yes by throughcare."*

**Question 3(c): Who would you turn to if your claim was delayed/rejected?**

Who would you turn to...?	Number of young people who said this
Throughcare worker	13
Social worker/Department	7
DSS	3
No-one	3
Support project workers	2
Job Centre	2
Citizens' Advice Bureau	1
Member of family	1
Don't know	5

A high number of young people said that if a claim was delayed or rejected, they would turn to the local authority for support, from either their throughcare worker or the Social Work Department. Even though a range of responses was given, three young people felt they would not go to anyone for support. One young person stated, "Don't know who I would go to. It's all on my own back. Social work have not helped me at all."

**Question 3(d): Who have you had contact with, from your local authority?**

The following shows the number of young people who stated one or more of the following:

Who have you had contact with...?	Number of young people who said this
Don't know	2
Throughcare worker/Team	19
Social worker/Department	14
Housing staff/Department	4
Residential workers/Keyworker	2
No-one	2
Careers	1
DSS	1
Everybody	1
Respite	1
Support worker	1

Again, young people gave several responses to this question. The majority of young people stated throughcare workers were their main form of on-going contact. Some young people answered more than one category.

**Question 4: How do you think you would feel if the local authority distributed benefits rather than DSS?**

How would you feel...?	Number of young people who said this
OK	5
Better	4
Good	3
Worse	3
Less hassle	2
Bad	2
Much the same	2
Pain in the ****	1
A lot better	1
Don't know	5

The majority of young people who responded to this question gave a positive response to the prospect of local authorities distributing benefits, rather than the DSS.

The following comments were made:

*"OK if it is going to be made easier for young people. If it stays the same or is worse keep it as it is."*

*"OK – it might be easier in the short term but many delays – to maybe use DSS system."*

*"I can see both sides. In one sense it would make it easier and in another it would make it harder to get into normality."*

*"Bit too many questions – no safety net."*

*"Wouldn't have to stand in queues and answer hundreds of questions."*

*"It would be bad because my throughcare worker works with loads of young people and you can't get hold of her."*

**Question 4(a): Are there any specific good/bad points you can see?**

Good Points:

Good points for local authorities distributing benefits...	Number of young people who said this
Understand more	4
Better service	5
Deal with people you know/who know you	4
Less delays/easier	3
More information	1
They know your entitlements	1
It's more appropriate	1
Because they listen to opinions	1
No answer/don't know	6

Some young people also made the following additional comments about good points:

*"It could help the local authority when they are dealing with the young people, when they leave care."*

*"As a person, the DSS don't know much about you, but the local authority will know everything about a person."*

*"It's good, because they know you better, i.e. throughcare."*

*"The DSS never believe what you say. I feel easier to approach the local authority."*

*"More approachable maybe than DSS – more understanding of care leavers situation?"*

*"It would be good if housing benefits were passed over to save housing debts."*

*"I would feel more comfortable – as you can rely on them."*

Bad Points:

Bad points for local authorities distributing benefits...	Number of young people who said this
Less money	2
Difficulties between YP and SW	3
Awkward	1
LA has too much work	1
No bad points at the moment	2
Not treated like others	1
Don't know/no answer	

A few young people also stated the following:

*"I would feel awkward as I know them. The DSS aren't people I know, so it wouldn't bother me."*

*"I think the local authorities are already given enough work to deal with, never mind giving them more."*

*"It's bad enough as it stands."*

*"Definitely not. Would go without first."*

Although young people raised not so many specific bad points, this could be due to the lack of specific information that is currently available. It is hard to try to imagine whether the new proposals will be better or worse when there are no details of how the new arrangements will work in practice.

General Points:

Several young people also gave general comments about their views on the benefits system and financial support:

*"Don't care who. Just on time."*

*"Should have grants, not loans."*

*"For further education students, the age should be raised to 21 years old, for example, so they can get their benefits from local authorities."*

*"Young people should have benefits raised to same as others, e.g. pensioners. Should have Christmas bonus and cold weather payments."*

**Question 4(b): Would you be comfortable approaching the local authority in a crisis?**

Would you approach the local authority in a crisis...?	Number of young people who said this
Yes	33
No	6
Don't know/no answer	3

The vast majority of young people who had left care, said that they would be comfortable to approach the local authority in a crisis, with six young people feeling that they would not.

Some of the young people who said they would feel comfortable, gave the following reasons why:

*"For me, I was in care, and I knew when you could contact the local authority and when you couldn't."*

*"I would (feel comfortable) with the Social Work Department, as I've been looked after for a long time and they're like my parents."*

*"They know the circumstances better than any other service."*

*"The local authority knows who is entitled to how much, and are less official, and you wouldn't feel so awkward finding out about it."*

*"Yes – have to take help where you can get it."*

*"More comfortable than approaching a stranger at DSS and getting hassle."*

One young person did feel differently and stated:

*"No. Last people to ask."*

The good points that young people have identified should be used as specific qualities and approaches that local authorities should take when they have to administer financial support for care leavers.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Overall

In general, this piece of consultation has provided a wide variety of responses. It has not been possible to say if these young people are either totally for or against the proposals for local authorities to provide all financial support to care leavers. Instead, many of the young people consulted have raised very important points that should be fully taken into account as new arrangements are taking shape.

These young people have shared their personal views and experiences of leaving care and accessing financial support. Whilst a lot of the views expressed were generally positive, other young people reflected more negative experiences of leaving care. This could be directly due to the level of throughcare and aftercare support that they have received, or have not, as the case may be. It appears that the young people who have expressed more positive experiences, have been well supported during their transition from care, into adult living.

Young people who have experienced leaving care, or are about to, have obviously got a lot of important comments to make, from which we all should listen and learn. This is why as many actual comments as possible have been written fully in the results of this consultation.

### Young People Still Looked After

From these responses, there were some significant points that became apparent. Most of the young people had positive hopes for the time when they would be leaving care. Several also stressed the importance of moving on only at a time when you feel ready.

A high number of young people stated that they felt that a member of their family was the best person to talk to about their plans for the future. Several young people also made clear reference to the advice and information that they currently, or would prefer to receive from residential staff or their keyworker. It is important to fully acknowledge the support of family members, residential staff and foster carers, as many young people can choose these as their preferred means of advice and support.

There was an extremely low number of young people who said they already knew what their financial benefit rights would be. Whilst still looked after, young people should be given sufficient information on benefit entitlement and the various means of financial support, even if they may not immediately claim benefits. This is an important part of good throughcare preparation.

It is important to ensure that whichever local authority department is chosen to offer financial support, staff must be fully equipped with up-to-date and detailed knowledge of the relevant systems. Young people have said that they prefer contact with people who know what they are talking about.

Through their responses, young people have identified qualities that they find important when seeking support. Such qualities should be translated into important aspects to be taken into consideration and applied by whichever local authority department and staff will be dealing with financial support for young people leaving care.

The following qualities have been identified as important:

- Knowing people, who also know you.
- Being able to trust them.
- Putting things in a language that is easy to understand.

### Young People Who Have Left Care

Young people who had already left care, also identified a number of important qualities that they feel more comfortable with:

- Already knowing people.
- Being familiar with them.
- Having privacy.
- Being listened to.
- Having people they can talk to.

In the responses, it was also clear that young people have been in contact with many different people, from several different agencies. They also gave a variety of people with whom they would prefer to approach if a benefits claim was rejected. Some young people may also have more available options for support than others.

These options should still be made available, and young people should be able to choose to seek support from the people with whom they have built trusting relations.

Some young people did raise some bad points about the proposal to gain financial support from local authorities, and these should be taken into consideration.

Two comments that stood out were:

*"I would feel awkward as I know them (the local authority). The DSS aren't people I know, so it wouldn't bother me."*

And...

*"I think the local authorities are already given enough work to deal with, never mind giving them more."*

### Areas to Address in the Future

This piece of consultation is hopefully just the first step in actively seeking young people's views and experiences of leaving care and gaining support. This should be an important part of the Scottish Executive's overall consultation, when devising new throughcare and aftercare arrangements, through the proposed transfer of DSS resources to local authorities.

This particular stage of consulting young people was made slightly difficult, as there was not any concrete information on the new proposals that could be shared with young people. Instead, it was only possible to ask young people about their current experiences of leaving care and their views on receiving financial support.

There is a real need for more precise information for young people, as and when details start to become clearer. Young people need to be well informed on:

Which young people will be affected by these changes, and who will not.

How and when these new proposals will be introduced.

To whom and where they need to go to receive support.

What their entitlements will be.

Who they can go to if they have cause for complaint or appeal.

It will also be important for this information to be provided to front-line staff and carers working in: residential and foster care, throughcare and aftercare teams, careers services, supported accommodation, etc. These are people with whom young people have the most contact, and who are usually a young person's first point of contact for information, advice and guidance. Benefits Agency staff and other local authority staff, e.g. in social work, housing and finance, should also be made aware of any new proposals and changes.

Young people have many valuable views and opinions on claiming benefits and gaining financial support, as they are the ones who have had to deal with the systems first hand. The Scottish Executive's Throughcare & Aftercare Working Group should speak with more young people about what they think are the qualities and particular approaches that a local authority should have when administering financial support for care leavers. These young people are on the receiving end of support services, and can tell us what they need, what works in practice and what makes them feel most comfortable.

As one young person said:

*"Once more information comes out, and when there is a fact sheet or something that comes out about the arrangements, I'd be interested in going to the Forum or Scottish Executive meetings."*

The Scottish Throughcare & Aftercare Forum would like to see other opportunities in the near future to carry out wider consultation with young people, once there are more concrete proposals. Young people should have a central role in the whole process, especially when the new regulations and guidance and any supporting information are devised.

## Acknowledgements

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*Geilsland School, Beith.*

*Go Project, Perth.*

*Preparation for Life Project, Alexandria.*

*Throughcare & Youth Homelessness Team,  
West Dunbartonshire.*

All Young Persons Workers from Who Cares? Scotland but in particular those from the following local authority areas:

*Glasgow; North Ayrshire; Fife;  
East Dunbartonshire; Aberdeen &  
Aberdeenshire; Falkirk; Clackmannanshire;  
Stirling; East Lothian; West Lothian.*

*Thanks to Stephen McGinley for his help in  
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In the near future, the Scottish Throughcare & Aftercare Forum and Who Cares? Scotland hope to be able to take more opportunities to consult wider with young people all over Scotland.

## RELEVANT STATUTORY PROVISIONS

Children (Scotland) Act 1995 (1995 Chapter 36) as amended by the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 (2001 asp 8)

### 29.

- (1) A local authority shall, unless they are satisfied that his welfare does not require it, advise, guide and assist any person in their area over school age but not yet nineteen years of age who, at the time when he ceased to be of school age or at any subsequent time was, but who is no longer, looked after by a local authority.
- (2) If a person within the area of a local authority is at least nineteen, but is less than twenty-one, years of age and is otherwise a person such as is described in subsection (1) above, he may by application to the authority request that they provide him with advice, guidance and assistance; and they may, unless they are satisfied that his welfare does not require it, grant that application.
- (3) Subject to section 73(2) of the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 (asp 8), assistance given under subsection (1) or (2) above may include assistance in kind or in cash.
- (4) Where a person –
  - (a) over school age ceases to be looked after by a local authority; or
  - (b) described in subsection (1) above is being provided with advice, guidance or assistance by a local authority,
 they shall, if he proposes to reside in the area of another local authority, inform that other local authority accordingly provided that he consents to their doing so.
- (5) It is the duty of each local authority, in relation to any person to whom they have a duty under subsection (1) above or who makes an application under subsection (2) above, to carry out an assessment of the person's needs.
- (6) Each local authority shall establish a procedure for considering representations (including complaints) made to them by any person mentioned in subsection (1) or (2) above about the discharge of their functions under the provisions of subsections (1) to (5) above.
- (7) In subsection (1) above, the reference to having been "looked after by a local authority" shall be construed as including having been looked after by a local authority in England and Wales; and subsection (4) of section 105 of the Children Act 1989 (c.41) (construction of references to a child looked after by a local authority) shall apply for the purposes of this subsection as it applies for the purposes of that Act ("local authority in England and Wales" being construed in accordance with subsection (1) of that section).

Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act  
2001 (2001 asp 8)

Section 73 Amendment of Children  
(Scotland) Act 1995: after-care

(1) Amends section 29 of the Children  
(Scotland) Act 1995

(2) The Scottish Ministers may in regulations –

(a) specify, either generally or in relation to a category or description of persons mentioned in subsection (1) or (2) of section 29 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 (or treated, by virtue of paragraph (b)(i) below, as so mentioned), the manner in which assistance is to be provided or, as the case may be, may be provided under the subsection in question;

(b) prescribe a category or description of persons who –

(i) though not mentioned in subsection (1) or (2) of that section are, for the purposes of the subsection in question, to be treated as persons so mentioned; or

(ii) though so mentioned are, for the purposes of the subsection in question, not to be treated as so mentioned,

but such category or description must for the purposes of sub-paragraph (i) above be of persons who are, or have been, “eligible children” within the meaning of paragraph 19B(1) of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 (local authority support for children and families) or “relevant children” within the meaning of section 23A(1) of that Act (functions of responsible authority) and for the purposes of sub-paragraph (ii) above be of persons to whom the subsection in question applies by virtue of subsection (1) above;

(c) make provision as to assessments for the purposes of subsection (5) of section 29 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995; or

(d) make provision as to procedures established under subsection (6) of that section.

(3) Regulations under subsection (2)(c) above may in particular make provision about –

(a) who is to be consulted in relation to an assessment;

(b) the way in which an assessment is to be carried out, by whom and when;

(c) the recording of the results of an assessment; or

(d) the considerations to which the local authority are to have regard in carrying out the assessment.

(4) Regulations under this section may make different provision for different areas.

Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000  
(2000 Chapter 35)

6.

- (1) No person is entitled to income-based jobseekers allowance under the Jobseekers Act 1995, or to income support or housing benefit under the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, while he is a person to whom this section applies.
- (2) Subject to subsection (3), this section applies to –
  - (a) an eligible child for the purposes of paragraph 19B of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989;
  - (b) a relevant child for the purposes of section 23A of that Act; and
  - (c) any person of a description prescribed in regulations under subsection (4).
- (3) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide that this section does not apply to a person who falls within subsection (2)(a) or (b) but who also falls within such category or description, or satisfies such conditions, as may be prescribed in the regulations.
- (4) The Secretary of State may make regulations prescribing descriptions of person who do not fall within subsection (2)(a) or (b) but who –
  - (a) have been looked after by a local authority in Scotland (within the meaning of section 17(6) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995); and
  - (b) otherwise correspond (whether or not exactly) to eligible or relevant children.
- (5) The Secretary of State may in regulations make such transitional, consequential and saving provision as he considers necessary or expedient in connection with the coming into force of this section.
- (6) Section 175(3) to (5) of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 (supplemental power in relation to regulations) applies to regulations made under this section as it applies to regulations made under that Act.
- (7) Powers to make regulations under this section include power to make different provision for different areas.
- (8) Powers to make regulations under this section are exercisable by statutory instrument.
- (9) No statutory instrument containing regulations under subsection (4) is to be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before Parliament and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.
- (10) A statutory instrument containing regulations under subsection (3) or (5) shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

## Scotland's Children: Children (Scotland) Act 1995

### Research Findings No. 3

A Study of Throughcare and Aftercare Services in Scotland

Jo Dixon and Mike Stein, University of York

The findings presented below are based on: (i) a national policy survey of Scottish local authorities and other service providers to explore arrangements for providing throughcare and aftercare; and (ii) an in-depth study of the experience of young people leaving the care of three Scottish local authorities.

## Main Findings

### Policy Survey

Most authorities (77%) offered a planned throughcare programme but less than half (39%) of young people in the survey had received one. Also, 40% had not had a formal leaving care review.

The survey provided evidence of significant variation in throughcare and aftercare arrangements across Scotland. Many authorities were carrying out developments to extend and improve services.

The lack of adequate data collection and processing systems for monitoring and evaluation and for identifying the number of young people eligible for services was apparent in many authorities.

The need to develop stronger links with corporate and external agencies was evident.

There was a strong commitment amongst authorities to taking account of the views of young people. 77% of authorities had strategies in place for involving young people in planning and policy development and 68% reported involving young people in the monitoring and evaluation of services.

Most authorities provided a range of appropriate accommodation options. 84% provided more than four options.

Young people looked after on a home supervision requirement and those returning home were not assessed as eligible for throughcare and/or aftercare services by a number of authorities.

### Survey of Young People

Almost two-thirds of young people in the survey had no standard grade qualifications and most had experiences of truancy (83%) and exclusion (71%). A quarter of support workers were unaware of the educational attainment of the young person with whom they were working.

Almost three-quarters of young people left care at 15 (21%) or 16 (51.9%) years of age.

A third of young people who had been looked after away from home had experienced four or more placement moves during their last care episode. Only 7% had remained in the same placement.

Reliable support, whether formal or informal, was paramount to positive outcomes in most life areas and the ability to *access* and *return* to services when in need was crucial for young people finding their way through the challenges of post care living.

## Introduction

The study explored the way local authorities discharge their duties and powers under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 to promote throughcare and aftercare for looked after young people. It comprised two main stages.

Stage one, the policy survey, provided a national description of throughcare and aftercare provision across Scotland. This involved looking at the arrangements of local authorities and other service providers for preparing and supporting young people during their transitions from care.

Stage two involved a survey of 107 young people who had left care or moved to independent living in three local authorities; and an in-depth follow-up study of 61 of these young people to explore starting points and outcomes over a six-month time-span. Information was also sought from young people's support workers and from key policy staff.

## Findings and Issues for Consideration

### 1 Policy Survey

#### 1.1 Policies and Procedures Framework

Analysis of *Children's Services Plans* shows that throughcare and aftercare were afforded relatively limited coverage and suggests that they could be improved in three main ways. First, by giving more prominence to throughcare and aftercare. Secondly, by using the terms more consistently, as defined in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 Regulations and Guidance Volume 2. Thirdly, by specifying in more detail the aims, objectives and time scales for developing specific throughcare and aftercare services.

Most authorities (74%) reported having written *Policy Statements*. Many of the documents reviewed were very general in scope. They could be improved by detailing the specifics of throughcare and aftercare provision, and, as a small number of authorities did, by outlining the means of translating their policies into practice.

In addition to social workers and residential workers, *Guidance* on throughcare and aftercare services should be made available to all relevant parties. Only 32% of authorities made guidance available to foster carers and only 10% did so for parents. Also, all local authorities should provide *Information Guides for Young People*, as less than half (45%) of those surveyed did so.

Most local authorities surveyed (77%) had a *lead officer* for throughcare and aftercare services although this included project leaders, service managers and heads of social work services.

A structured policy and procedures framework should include: clear documentation in Children's Services Plans; clearly written, comprehensive and accessible throughcare and aftercare policies and procedures; written guidance for staff, carers and young people; and the appointment of a lead officer at an appropriate level of responsibility to represent throughcare and aftercare services both within the Department and wider local authority.

## 1.2 Corporate and Inter-Agency Framework

In terms of *Corporate and External Partners*, the survey demonstrated strong links with housing and housing providers (84% and 58% of authorities respectively). Eight were joint Housing and Social Work Departments. Fewer authorities reported links with education (23%), careers (29%), health (23%), benefits agencies (16%) and the Children's Reporter (13%). Where working arrangements existed they were generally seen by corporate and external agencies as positive.

Responding to the wide range of needs of care leavers requires corporate parenting. More consideration could be given to extending formal agreements with education, careers, health, benefits agencies and the Children's Reporters. There appears to be scope for developing better communications and clearer procedures for working arrangements and sharing information.

## 1.3 Eligibility for Services

Centrally collated data on the numbers of young people eligible for throughcare and aftercare services are a minimum requirement for service planning. However, half of local authorities surveyed experienced difficulties in accessing and collating data on the numbers of young people eligible for their throughcare and aftercare provision. This meant that they were unable to identify as a matter of course all eligible young people in their authorities.

The main problems identified by authorities related to: data not being stored electronically or being stored on a number of different databases; data not being routinely collected in specific categories of eligibility; data collection forms not being completed or updated by staff. In a third of authorities young people looked after at home were not assessed as eligible for throughcare and aftercare services – despite their eligibility for services under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

The collection of accurate and up-to-date information is a matter for urgent consideration given its implications for the central planning and resourcing of throughcare and aftercare services.

## 1.4 Throughcare: Leaving Care Planning

Most local authorities reported that they provided a *planned throughcare programme* for young people looked after in children's homes and foster care. In just over half of authorities specific throughcare provision was made for one or more groups of young people with particular needs.

A number of issues arising from the survey require further consideration.

- (1) Whether eligible young people living at home should receive throughcare services (as they did in less than half of authorities surveyed).
- (2) Whether enough consideration is given to all the main elements of preparation (self-care skills, practical skills, interpersonal skills, education and identity). Only one of the authorities that responded to the survey mentioned all five areas.
- (3) In relation to the previous point, whether a greater take-up (under half at the time of the policy survey) of the Looking After Children Action and Assessment Records by authorities would assist the throughcare planning process, especially by highlighting the seven main dimensions.
- (4) Should leaving care reviews be more structured to address the range of planning areas? This may include the identification of key planning areas, needs assessment, action plans, responsibilities, time scales, and progress since last planning meeting.

### 1.5 Aftercare

Core aftercare services include personal support; accommodation; finance; education, employment and careers; and health care.

In the survey, *personal support* included young people continuing in foster care after legally leaving care as well as formal policies in relation to providing a continuing role for foster and residential carers. Most authorities surveyed (87%) reported that young people had a named person for contact after they left care, either a specialist leaving care worker, field social worker or residential worker.

Policies to promote continuity of care should be considered by all authorities. Also, more consideration should be given to the process of ending personal support: whether there need to be more formal procedures involving a review by the leaving care worker and line manager and an exit interview.

The survey revealed the high priority afforded to meet the *accommodation* needs of care leavers. Most of the authorities surveyed had formal agreements with housing departments or housing providers, and had access to a range of accommodation including supported lodgings, independent tenancies, floating support schemes, semi-independent flats and supported hostels. Also, most authorities reported that accommodation breakdowns were dealt with under the Homeless Persons legislation and that care leavers were treated as a priority group.

Local Authorities have powers under sections 29 and 30 of the Children (Scotland) Act to provide *financial assistance* to care leavers. At the time of the survey over two-thirds of authorities provided four or more forms of financial assistance including leaving care grants, accommodation subsidies, income top-ups and assistance with education and employment.

The survey highlighted a number of issues for consideration.

- (1) There is a need for clear and transparent policies in respect of eligibility criteria, assessment and application procedures, and the range and extent of provision available under section 29 and 30 payments as well as from other sources.
- (2) Local authorities should consider introducing income/benefit maximisation checks to ensure that young people receive their full income entitlements.
- (3) Local authorities should provide information to young people about their income entitlements.
- (4) Local authorities should develop formal working relationships with agencies responsible for financial assistance.

A majority of authorities that responded to the survey had a strategy for helping care leavers into *education, employment and training*, although 40% of respondents did not. Arrangements included: accessing advice and assistance from careers and education services; offering financial assistance; ring-fencing skill seekers placements; and providing specialist employment support. Less than half (40%) did not provide young people with information on education, employment and training.

Issues for consideration include the importance of local authorities developing a strategy or formal arrangements with regards to education, training and employment, and providing young people with relevant information.

The survey suggests that meeting the *health needs* of care leavers was a lower priority than the other aftercare areas but one that was increasingly recognised as needing more attention.

There is a need for more local authorities to consider the introduction of strategies for health promotion and the setting up of formal arrangements with health providers to promote the health and development of young people as part of throughcare and aftercare.

### 1.6 Involving Young People

The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and accompanying Regulations and Guidance provide the legal framework for *involving young people* in all decisions affecting their lives. Overall, there was a high level of commitment by local authorities to facilitating participation. Over three-quarters of local authorities had arrangements for involving young people in the development of their policy, procedures and guidance. This included the consultation process for Children's Services Plans and being involved in the evaluation of throughcare and aftercare services. Some local authorities had developed formal links with Who Cares? Scotland to facilitate consultation with young people. Also, most young people in the sample were involved in the care planning and review process.

### 1.7 Monitoring and Evaluation

*Monitoring and evaluation* are important in planning effective services. Most of the local authorities surveyed acknowledged difficulties in collecting up-to-date statistical information and outcome data on young people receiving throughcare and aftercare services.

It was recognised that this could be improved in two main ways.

- (1) By collating information electronically. This would require a greater investment in Information Technology including expert support systems to maintain up-to-date information.
- (2) By the development of a comprehensive database for the collection of core information and outcome data on throughcare and aftercare services.

## 2 Survey of young people moving on in three local authorities

### 2.1 Looked After Young People

The first main issue for consideration arising out of the descriptive survey is achieving *placement stability* whilst young people are being looked after. Analysis showed that the average number of placements was three (excluding young people looked after at home) and only 7% of young people placed away from home had remained in the same placement throughout their last care episode. A third of young people in our survey had moved on at least four occasions.

A second issue for consideration is the *age of leaving care*. The majority of young people (93%) in the survey legally left care or moved to independent living far younger than their peers from non-care backgrounds. Nearly three-quarters of those who had legally left care did so at 15 (21%) or 16 (52%) years of age.

There are a number of reasons why looked after young people leave care or move to independent living earlier than their peers. This raises important issues which local authorities should consider, including young people's expectations (wanting to be independent); the age structure, culture and expectations of and within children's homes (young people seeing themselves as "*out of place*" and "*pushed out*" at 16); the scarcity of foster care placements and the impact this has upon "*older*" young people ("*I was too old and the foster carers had younger kids*"); and the costs of extending foster care placements.

## 2.2 Throughcare – Preparation for Leaving Care

Less than half of young people in the survey received a *planned throughcare programme*. A smaller proportion of young people who had been looked after on a home supervision requirement had done so. Young people generally thought that they had adequate throughcare support except in the area of assistance with budgeting. It was also clear that where throughcare was offered, a wide range of workers were involved, including teachers, health, employment and housing staff.

Leaving care workers and social workers played a lead role in assisting young people in their *planning for after leaving care*. However, the research found that 40% of young people did not have a formal leaving care review.

The follow-up study of young people, six months after leaving care, shows that there was clear evidence of a link between throughcare preparation and coping after leaving care. Preparing young people in domestic tasks, lifestyle issues and social skills enhances young people's coping skills. In addition, throughcare provided by carers and specialist leaving care workers appeared to be as effective for young people looked after away from home as that provided by parents for young people on home supervision requirements.

The research suggests that more young people should have planned throughcare programmes. This will require: successfully engaging more young people; greater availability of throughcare programmes; wider coverage of life skills areas; and being able to continue throughcare programmes when young people move. Also, although negative post care circumstances can undermine good throughcare planning, young people can improve their coping by receiving reliable formal or informal support after leaving care.

In addition, the position of young people on home supervision requirements will need further consideration.

## 2.3 Aftercare

The research highlights the need for *effective personal support* of young people leaving care. However, as many as a third of the sample did not have a social worker or leaving care worker at the start of the study and, for those who did, contact was likely to decrease over the follow-up period. In addition, some young people were confused about who was supporting them.

Support provided by specialist leaving care workers was likely to be more frequent and seen as more helpful than that provided by non-specialist social workers – an important issue for consideration in planning leaving care services. Young people valued regular support, reliability and availability.

Social workers, specialist workers and other professionals with a wide range of life skills (reflecting the corporate and inter-agency context of throughcare and aftercare services) were involved in assisting young people.

In respect of *coping with adult life*, the main issue for consideration arising from the survey of young people is ensuring that all young people are assisted with the full range of life skills areas. Up to 47.5% of young people would have liked more help and support with specific areas.

## 2.4 Education, Employment and Careers

A further issue, which is currently a high priority for Government, is *improving the education of looked after children and young people*. The majority of young people in this survey and the follow-up study had poor education outcomes. Less than half (39%) of the sample reported having one or more standard grades and only 3% had Highers. The average number of standard grades for the total sample was two, compared to the national average of seven. An issue of particular concern was social workers' lack of knowledge of young people's educational qualifications (over 25% had no knowledge of this). In addition to the low levels of attainment, the survey showed that exclusion and truancy were common experiences for over three-quarters of young people.

Educational disadvantage casts a long shadow. At the point of entering the study over half of young people in the survey were unemployed, a quarter were in education or training and a tenth were in paid work. Just under half (42%) were dependent on benefits as their main source of *income* and 59% of those surveyed said they survived on less than £35 a week.

Nearly two-thirds of the young people in the follow-up study had failed to find stable employment, education or training by the end of the follow-up period. The qualitative analysis suggests that good outcomes were linked to the availability of either formal or informal support or both.

Improving young people's access to *employment, education and training* is a key challenge – but any strategy must be integrated with *improving* and *prioritising* the education of looked after children.

Greater placement stability may help to reduce interruption in education and may also assist those young people who are taking standard grade examinations to maximize their attainment.

In developing strategies for improving education, employment and training, consideration will need to be given to the provision of formal or informal personal support.

Issues to consider include: reducing placement instability; prioritising the education of looked after children through specific improvement initiatives; reducing school exclusions; and preventing truancy and ensuring the presence of formal or informal support to facilitate achievement in education and employment.

## 2.5 Accommodation

The research showed that most young people who were going to live independently had received assistance in arranging *accommodation* at the time of leaving care. Over three-quarters of young people in the follow-up sample had good or fair housing outcomes at both points in time, although some experienced considerable disruption in between, including homelessness.

It is highly likely that this can be explained by the priority given to accommodation in all three areas. Young people's experiences also show the importance of formal and informal support in helping them sustain their accommodation and in assisting them in times of difficulty, including out of homelessness.

As reported above, many young people had experienced mobility and homelessness. Most (61%) had moved three or more times since leaving care, and 26% of young people in the follow-up study had moved two or more times in the previous six months. Furthermore, 40% of the survey reported having experienced homelessness since leaving care. Most often this involved staying with friends or in homeless units or hostels.

The main issues for consideration are: the frequency of post care moves experienced by some young people; helping young people sustain accommodation; assisting young people more with relationship problems with other residents, friends or carers; helping young people in crisis and facing homelessness, including young people returning home to family problems and evictions; and young people feeling isolated and unsafe.

Even where young people were otherwise happy in their accommodation, some experienced loneliness, as illustrated by Heather's comments about the downside of independent living: *"It's being away from my mum, I'm only 16 and still a bairn and get a bit weepy at times."*

## 2.6 Family Links and Social Networks

The descriptive survey reinforces the importance of *informal support* in terms of both immediate and extended family members and friends – although it may be important to consider the distinction between contact, offering emotional and practical support and returning home.

The majority of young people had good *family links* and *social networks* at both points in time and these proved very important in supporting young people both emotionally and practically during their transition to adulthood. Where young people had poor family links they were in the main supported by specialist leaving care workers and social workers. However, those young people with poor social networks lacked self-esteem and a sense of well-being, and all had poor outcomes in coping with life skills.

It is very important that all local authorities assess family links and social networks in planning for leaving care, taking into account both immediate and extended family as well as positive social networks.

### 3 Developing Throughcare and Aftercare Services

Although the numbers of participating young people has not allowed us to make statistically robust analytical comparisons between the three local authority models, the different data sources – the policy survey and interviews, descriptive study and outcome analysis – provide a strong evidence base to guide the development of effective leaving care services. The key issues for consideration are identified above. Whatever authority-wide model is adopted, and completed research suggests there is no single organisational blueprint, there are a number of clear messages from the research.

Throughcare and aftercare services need to build upon good quality substitute care. Stability, continuity, family and carer links and help with education are the foundation stones.

Planned throughcare programmes can greatly assist young people in coping after leaving care.

The age at which most young people leave care to live independently and their subsequent experiences contrast starkly with normative youth transitions to adulthood. Most of the young people surveyed have compressed and accelerated transitions.

The provision of both formal and informal support greatly assists young people during and after leaving care. The former includes specialist leaving care workers, social workers and carers; the latter, parents, immediate and extended family and friends.

The provision of personal support is pivotal to the whole throughcare and aftercare system, including access to informal support, other agency services and resources.

The departmental, corporate and inter-agency framework increases young people's access to a wide range of resources, including accommodation, employment and training, finance and healthcare.

Local authority departments should have a developed policy and procedures framework, which includes specific reference to throughcare and aftercare services in Children's Services Plans; detailed policy and procedures; information guides for staff and young people; and a lead officer.

Local authorities should involve young people both at an individual and policy level in the development of throughcare and aftercare services.

Local authorities should develop electronic information systems to identify the numbers of young people eligible for throughcare and aftercare services and to monitor outcomes.

## Model Partnership Agreement between Careers Scotland and Social Work Services

### 1.1 Context

Every young person in Scotland matters. Scottish Ministers are committed to ensuring social justice for all. Their vision is of a Scotland in which every young person has the opportunities, skills and support to make a successful transition to working life and active citizenship.

Research indicates care leavers are particularly vulnerable when making the transition from school to post-school provision. Many leave school with no formal qualifications and find it difficult to move successfully into further/higher education, training or employment.

Careers Scotland (area) and Social Work Services (area) are committed to work together in partnership to help improve the educational attainment and outcomes (further/higher education, training and employment) of care leavers.

**This Service Level Agreement reflects the aim of both organisations to strengthen existing joint services offered to care leavers in (area).**

The Service Level Agreement will be incorporated into the area Services Plans for Children and Young People, in keeping with the aim of promoting a unified and coherent approach to delivery of services.

### Local authority duties

Under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 local authorities have a statutory duty to provide a service which prepares young people who are looked after and accommodated for the transition to independent or semi-independent living and support them when they have taken this step and continue to support them through this process.

*Priority (in terms of legislation and vulnerability) is given to:*

Young people who are or have been Looked After and Accommodated by a local authority under the age of 21 years.

Young people who are or have been Looked After by the local authority under the age of 19 years.

*This Partnership Agreement refers to young people who are or have been Looked After and Accommodated by a local authority under the age of 21 years.*

The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 has been amended by Section 73 of the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 for young people who have been looked after and accommodated to introduce regulatory provision of throughcare and aftercare services to ensure consistency of provision.

The new powers to strengthen throughcare and aftercare provision reinforces local authority obligation in respect of care leavers affected by the DWP resources transfer.

The local authority will be required to carry out a *needs assessment* of each care leaver and incurs an obligation to meet the young person's identified need under the new DWP regulations and guidelines. The needs assessment will cover many areas including health, housing, education, training and employment which will necessitate collaboration between statutory and voluntary organisations.

*Careers Scotland (area) is committed to working in partnership with Social Services (department/area) to help the local authority meet its obligation to provide a comprehensive and quality service that will meet the individual's care leavers needs, in relation to career advice and guidance.*

### 1.1.1 Careers guidance provision

The Employment and Training Act 1973, as amended by the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993, places a duty on the Scottish Executive to secure the provision of a careers guidance and placing service to young people in schools and colleges.

**Careers Scotland (area) will deliver these services on behalf of Scottish Executive in the (area) as of 1 April 2002.**

Careers Scotland (area) has embraced the recommendations of the Beattie Committee to offer the support required by young people who may experience particular difficulty when making the transition from school to post-school options. This can include young people who have been looked after and accommodated in their life by Social Services.

**Social Work (department) agree to the following:**

Social Work Services will provide Careers Scotland with sufficient information for Careers Scotland to be able to track and work with those young people, in line with performance measurement requirements.

Provide details of each residential placement in the (area).

Have a named contact (link person within Social Work who has a management role in terms of each young person. This could be social worker, key worker or leaving care worker) in each residential placement who will give details of care leavers at age 15 (before the statutory care plan at 15½)

to a named Careers Adviser. The information should include the young person's name, address, date of birth, current or last school, actual school leaving date, National Insurance Number, social worker, area team, and key worker (if appropriate) and legislation young person is covered by. The young person will be asked to complete a mandate to exchange information (this should be completed at the point of referral). Any information transfer will be subject to the consent of the young person concerned, proforma to be agreed locally. Information should include a background report containing any relevant information in regard to placing the young person into employment, further/higher education or training and the young person's status in regard to the DWP transfer.

The social worker will apply for a National Insurance Number for those young people who have not been allocated, or not notified of, their number, i.e. usually those young people who have been looked after and accommodated.

Social worker will invite the careers adviser to participate in the appropriate child care reviews at 15½ where post-school options are being discussed.

Social worker will provide reports of care plan meeting as appropriate, in terms of education, employment and training.

Social worker may request (with supporting information) an early careers interview where circumstances deem it necessary or advisable. This would always be the case where a young person was not attending school. Careers Scotland (area) will, where possible, accommodate such requests. The Careers Action Plan to become part of the Child Care Plan.

When working on an outreach basis within Social Work Service premises a room where interviews can be conducted in private, should be provided and access to a telephone.

Encourage care leavers to keep in touch with the Careers Adviser/Careers Office when they leave school. This is particularly important for young people affected by the DWP transfer of resources.

Social Work Services will provide whatever financial information is necessary for the Careers Scotland Careers Adviser to nominated liaison person to discuss the financial implications of the employment, education or training options they are considering.

#### Careers Scotland (area) will:

Provide named Careers Adviser for each residential placement.

Offer each care leaver a careers guidance interview (either at school or agreed location) at 15½.

Offer each care leaver expert, impartial and realistic careers advice operated in the spirit and practice of equal opportunities. Particular regard will be paid to the guidance requirements of young people identified as having special needs.

Provide the young person with a written Career Plan of Action or a Transitional Support Document, which will outline the next steps for the young person and what role individuals or organisations will be required to play.

Provide the social worker with a copy of the Career Plan of Action or Transitional Support Document and any relevant supporting information.

Provide relevant input to any planning meeting or child care review either by reports or attending the care plan meeting at aged 15½.

Encourage the young person to keep in touch at the point of leaving school or their statutory leaving date and to continue to have that contact by regular appointments.

In Careers Scotland (Areas) where there is additional funding for Key Worker Support for vulnerable groups of young people, the looked after and accommodated young person may be offered Key Worker support if this is deemed desirable or necessary by the careers adviser and social worker.

Careers Scotland Careers Adviser will provide (where known) Social Work Services with whatever relevant financial information is necessary to calculate the amount a young person should be paid under the DWP transfer regulations.

Careers Scotland will provide the local authority and Scottish Executive with statistical information on further education, employment and training outcomes for care leavers affected by the new legislation.

#### 1.1.2 Joint Agreement

To transfer appropriate information between Careers Scotland (area) and Social Work Services (dept/area) with the consent of the young person concerned.

From the point of referral on the careers adviser and social worker should inform the other of action being taken to support the young person's transition.

To agree aftercare support for care leavers, both those who are unemployed and those starting further/higher education, training or employment to help the young person sustain their place.

Integrate these new arrangements and any established links between Careers Scotland (area) and Area Teams, Residential (including school) Staff, Young People Support Staff, School Joint Assessment Teams, Future Needs Assessments and Foster Care.

Careers Scotland (area) will provide Scottish Executive with the statistical returns in regard to education employment and training for those young people affected by the DWP transfer. Social Work Services will identify and inform Careers Scotland of those young people who are the subject of the return, ie. those young people affected by the DWP transfer.

Career Scotland (area) and Social Work Services will inform Social Work Services in other local authorities and other Careers Scotland Areas when a young person is about to move into a new geographical area. Relevant information should follow the young person to aid their transition.

Social Work Services and Careers Scotland (area) will assist each other where possible in meeting the targets set in relation to employment, further/higher education and training by Scottish Executive for those young people covered by the DWP transfer.

Regular joint meetings to take place between Lead Officer or implementation officer for Social Work Leaving Care Services and local Inclusiveness Manager for Careers Scotland.

### 1.1.3 Monitoring Arrangements

#### 1.1.3.1 Social Work and Career Scotland to agree targets for outcomes for care leavers

To reduce the numbers of young people for whom being NEET (not in education, employment or training) is a negative experience by 25%.

An increase in number of young people with additional support needs will be continuing in post-compulsory education or full/part-time training.

Increase in number of disadvantaged disengaged adults (19+), actively engaged in learning and training.

80% of young people of care leavers to have had Careers Guidance input and Career Action plan.

**Careers Scotland will provide, in conjunction with, Social Work Services statistical information on the employment, education and training outcomes of young people who fall within the DWP transfer.**

### Resolution of Disputes

Needs some work

### Agreed priority areas for development:

On-going development of joint procedures and practices to support clients.

Develop a joint approach to career action planning for young people.

Monitor these new working arrangements by means of an annual report including statistical information compiled by Careers Scotland (area).

Promote partnership working including seeking joint funding for projects and enhanced services to client group.

Develop joint staff development and training opportunities.

#### 1.1.3.2 This Service Level Agreement has been signed by

##### Careers Scotland

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

##### Social Work Services

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Throughcare & Aftercare Working Group

### THROUGH-CARE AND AFTER-CARE ASSESSMENT AND ACTION PLANNING FRAMEWORK

#### Introduction

The aim of the throughcare and aftercare assessment and action planning framework is to improve the outcomes for all young people who are leaving care in Scotland. It should enhance and complement existing practice, thereby improving the level of support for young people as they cease to be looked after.

The proposed throughcare & aftercare assessment and action planning approach is multi-purpose. It should:

- identify and meet a young person's throughcare and aftercare needs;
- improve practice by filling gaps in support and service delivery;
- promote a holistic and integrated approach.

#### Key Principles

The following key principles apply to this framework for throughcare and aftercare assessment.

- Young-person centred, guided by the young person's views.
- A positive approach, which focuses on strengths, abilities and aspirations.
- A multi-disciplinary and modular approach, carried out in partnership with other agencies (via both formal and informal arrangements).
- An on-going process, starting at a suitable point for each individual young person.

- Participative and flexible, which encourages young people's involvement.
- Sets realistic and achievable short- and long-term goals.
- Progress and achievements, however large or small are always acknowledged and celebrated.
- Respects privacy and seeks consent for sharing information, on a need-to-know basis.
- Encourages planning and preparation throughout the leaving care process.
- Acknowledges that transitions to adulthood take place in stages, and can often involve steps back to more familiar and supportive environments.

#### The Process

The throughcare and aftercare assessment that is carried out using this framework is central to an on-going and seamless process of supporting young people during their transition to adulthood. The process will begin at an appropriate time for the young person when they are looked after, and will end when they are living more independently and no longer require aftercare support.

It is important to emphasise that the whole assessment and planning process is not linear, but a circular process. Once the process is triggered, it involves an ongoing cycle of: assessing need – agreement – action planning – reviewing – re-assessing need – agreement – new action plan – reviewing and so on.

The key elements of this process are:

#### *Identifying Links to Other Practice*

Links need to be identified with existing practice and procedures, across teams, departments and other agencies to promote a fully integrated approach. Clear links to existing approaches and models of practice are established and maintained, for example with the Looking After Children Action and Assessment Records, housing assessments and other assessment and planning tools or resources.

#### *Looking After Children Action and Assessment Records*

Scottish Local Authorities have, or are in the process of, adopting this approach and the related materials for looked after children and young people. The throughcare and aftercare assessment and action planning process should directly and seamlessly lead on from the Looking After Children procedures.

In particular, material for assessing throughcare and aftercare needs should follow on from the 15+ action and assessment record.

#### *Inclusiveness Assessment Process*

Careers Scotland is currently developing an approach to measure effectively a young person's education, training and employment needs.

#### *Triggering the Process*

A young person's throughcare and aftercare assessment should begin when it is agreed that the appropriate time has been reached, as decided by a Looked After Child Review and LAC action and assessment records. This should be early enough for effective assessment and planning to take place, but also needs to be in line with the young person's maturity and their desire and readiness to look at moving on. The young person may want to trigger the process, if

they decide to consider moving on. A young person's throughcare needs should be discussed at appropriate childcare reviews prior to and during the throughcare and aftercare assessment process.

#### *Mapping Personal Goals and Support Needs*

A key step, from the beginning of the process is to support young people to explore, identify and map out their own thoughts about their future. This will assist them in beginning to identify areas for personal development and goals they wish to achieve. This is a key task in finding out where a young person is starting from and to explore their own hopes and fears for the future.

#### *Action Planning*

The process involves establishing, agreeing and setting achievable goals and suitable timescales. This involves identifying the various roles and responsibilities for each individual and agency that is involved, so measurable progress can be made. All action planning should be fully recorded and should be fully accessible for the young person concerned. Senior management have a responsibility to monitor action plans.

#### *Reviewing*

An open forum for discussion needs to be established, which follows on from LAC reviewing process. The aim is to recognise progress, to set new goals or to continue with existing goals. Action points are agreed and future timescales are set, which includes dates for subsequent reviewing opportunities. The focus of reviews will change over time from throughcare needs to longer-term aftercare needs. Attempts should be made to resolve any possible conflicts of interest or disagreements at a review, before further complaints procedures are undertaken. Independent advocacy support should also be promoted.

*Consulting Young People*

Throughout the assessment and planning process, young people must be consulted and fully involved in each stage. This is especially important when identifying and agreeing who is best placed to address certain areas of focus.

*Consulting and Including Parents and Family Members*

Throughout the process, it is vital to include parents and important family members. Where appropriate, they should be encouraged to play their role during the young person's transition to adulthood.

*Contingency Planning*

Throughcare and aftercare planning should identify potential "safety nets" for each individual young person, for times of crisis or if part of their aftercare support should breakdown. Contingency planning should not promote a sense of failure, but instead a safe opportunity to try again.

*Accountability*

The recording of who has agreed to carry out which tasks, how and by when is crucial. This is to ensure that a young person's throughcare and aftercare needs are being fully addressed. When goals are not achieved, reasons for any delays or difficulties should be agreed and recorded too.

*Named Throughcare and Aftercare Co-ordinator*

To maintain consistency during the on-going assessment, planning and reviewing process, each young person should have a named throughcare and aftercare co-ordinator. This person will play a vital role in ensuring that the various areas of focus are being addressed and action plans are being followed.

*A Modular and Co-ordinated Approach*

The format of this framework has been geared towards a modular approach. The various areas of focus can be completed independently by whoever is best placed to carry out this work. The outcomes would then be collated in a portfolio format by one co-ordinator. Alternatively, there may be just one individual who takes forward the assessment and action planning with the young person.

*A Sense of Ownership*

As the young person's throughcare and aftercare assessment takes place, the action plan should promote a sense of ownership for the young person. Young people should have copies of everything that is recorded. The outcomes should be recorded in a young person friendly format, which promotes a sense of value to the goals and achievements made.

*Decreasing Aftercare Support*

The assessment and action planning process will eventually consider when aftercare support should gradually tail off. Aftercare support should not abruptly end, and discontinuation of support should be the result of an action planning agreement. In some cases, it may be necessary to transfer responsibilities for support over to community care services for adults.

*Staff Development and Training*

All relevant support staff and carers must have access to appropriate training opportunities that promote positive throughcare and aftercare work with young people. Training should also address partnership working between the various teams and agencies that may be involved in the assessment and planning process.

### *Monitoring Outcomes*

It will be important to monitor and evaluate the outcomes for young people as they are leaving care. Periodically, anonymous information should be collated for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of the process. National information may also be required on a yearly basis by the Scottish Executive, to monitor service provision across the whole of Scotland.

Performance measures have been identified to track progress in local authorities' provision of throughcare and aftercare services.

### *Areas of Focus*

In order to complete a comprehensive throughcare and aftercare assessment, there are several areas of focus that should be addressed. Each of these areas will come under one of the following sections:

#### *(a) Background Information*

- 1. Family History*
- 2. Care History*
- 3. Education History*
- 4. Health Background*

#### *(b) Throughcare Preparation for Leaving Care*

- 5. Health, Well-Being & Identity Profile*
- 6. Family & Social Relationships*
- 7. Social Presentation & Self-Care Skills*
- 8. Community & Social Involvement*
- 9. Accommodation Wishes*
- 10. Further Education, Training & Employment Profile*

#### *(c) On-going Aftercare Support Needs*

- 11. Housing Support Needs*
- 12. Financial Situation*
- 13. Further Education, Training & Employment On-going Needs*
- 14. Personal Support*
- 15. Planning for Unforeseen Events*

Each section or individual area of focus should be completed by the identified person, in agreement with the young person. This could be one person (e.g. social worker, throughcare worker) or it could be more than one person, depending on who is involved with the young person and which areas of knowledge or expertise the person may have (e.g. careers adviser, residential worker, foster carer, accommodation support worker, project worker).

The outcomes of each part of the throughcare and aftercare assessment process should be recorded in a clear and understandable format, with the young person having access to a copy. Each section can be added as it is completed, so that a comprehensive assessment is built which fully informs the action planning process.

The following areas of focus should be included in the throughcare and aftercare assessment, and then addressed in the young person's action plan:

**(a) Background Information**

This section should be drawn from information previously gathered by the young person's social worker. It will be presented in summary, and should only present information that is relevant to the young person's throughcare and aftercare needs. The information recorded should respect the young person's privacy. Where information of a sensitive nature needs to be recorded and shared, the young person should be made fully aware of the reasons for doing so.

**1. Family History**

Who are the principal members of the young person's immediate, extended or substitute family?

What was the family's attitude to their being in care?

How much family contact did they have while in care?

**2. Care History**

At what age and why did they young person come into care?

How many placements did the young person experience and for how long?

What benefits were gained from being in care?

What difficulties did they face while in care?

Are there any specific issues arising from being in care that will impact on their ability to live independently?

Was support provided by any other agency while in care? Has this contact ended?

**3. Education History**

What did the young person attain during their school education?

Did they have any difficulties at school, including specific learning difficulties and/or literacy and numeracy issues?

What was their attitude towards school and learning?

**4. Health Background**

Has the young person had any significant health problems?

Do they have a history of mental health issues?

**(b) Throughcare Preparation for Leaving Care**

These areas should be addressed while the young person is still in care, at the beginning of the throughcare and aftercare assessment process. Assessment and action planning around these areas will continue during the young person's transition to more independent living.

**5. Health, Well-Being & Identity Profile**

Does the young person have any on-going health issues, including mental health, alcohol and substance misuse, eating disorders?

Do they have any physical disabilities?

Are they dependent on medication?

How does the young person cope with stressful situations?

Are they aware of their sexual health needs?

How do they portray their personal identity? (including religious, cultural, and sexual identity)

Do they live a healthy life-style? Are there any barriers to this?

Are they registered with a GP and dentist?

## 6. Family & Social Relationships

What kind of on-going support will any family members provide?

What are the young person's views towards maintaining family contact?

How often do they see family members, who in particular and where does this take place? Are there any barriers?

Who is important to the young person?

What is the young person's contact like with their peers? Is it positive, where does it take place and how often?

How do they relate to others? Are there any difficulties?

## 7. Social Presentation & Self-Care Skills

What are the young person's practical, every day living skills? Are there any gaps?

Can they take care of their personal appearance?

Are they aware of personal and household safety?

Do they present as being self-confident and do they have high self-esteem?

Does the young person communicate well? Do they require any help with assertiveness?

Do they have any behavioural or anger management difficulties?

How do they interact socially?

## 8. Community & Social Involvement

What are the young person's leisure interests and hobbies?

What do they enjoy doing in their leisure time? Are there any difficulties with this?

Are there any barriers to the young person being socially involved in their community?

Do they prefer group or team activities, individual pursuits or both?

## 9. Accommodation Wishes

Where would the young person like to live in the short and long term?

Who would they like to live with?

What kind of accommodation would they prefer?

## 10. Further Education, Training & Employment Profile

What have the young person's future educational needs been identified as?

What further learning wishes does the young person have?

What skills do they have? Are there any gaps?

What vocational interests do they have? How would they like to pursue them? Are there any barriers?

What are the young person's strengths and abilities?

What support is required to make progress?

### *(c) On-going Aftercare Support Needs*

These sections are especially relevant once the young person is moving out of their care placement. Each area should continue to be addressed and reviewed, until the time when it is agreed that the young person no longer requires aftercare support.

**11. Housing Support Needs**

How does the young person view their housing support needs?

What are the support worker's views about on-going support and accommodation that may be required?

What kind of supportive accommodation is most suitable for the young person?

What range of suitable accommodation is available in the chosen area?

**12. Financial Situation**

What are the young person's current sources of income? Will this change in the future?

What are their current financial support needs? (including leisure, family contact, clothing, training & employment, bills, etc.)

Is there any additional financial support required in the future? When and how should this be accessed?

Does the young person have a bank account? Do they save regularly? Are there any barriers to this?

What are the potential financial needs in a crisis?

Will they be looking to claim benefits? Are they eligible?

**13. Further Education, Training & Employment On-going Needs**

Is the young person attending a further or higher education course? What progress are they making?

Are they participating in vocational training? What have their achievements been?

Are they currently employed? (full time, part time or voluntary work)

What are the young person's educational, training and employment aspirations and goals?

What support is needed to help them achieve their goals?

**14. Personal Support**

What personal support does the young person require?

Have there been any difficulties in gaining this support?

Who is best placed to offer personal support? Who does the young person prefer?

**15. Planning for Unforeseen Events**

Who can the young person contact for support in a crisis or emergency?

Is there support or advice available outside working hours?

**Developing Good Practice**

To translate this policy into good throughcare and aftercare practice, the following areas should be applied:

- Consult existing information on assessment principles, policies and practice. This information may relate to current national and local developments, or existing practice and procedures within your organisation.

- All those involved in a young person's care should be made aware importance and benefits of the throughcare and aftercare assessment and action planning process. This should include access to training and development opportunities.
- Work in partnership with staff and carers in other teams, departments and agencies, to decide together who is best placed to carry out particular areas of focus with a young person.
- A young person's consent must be sought in order to gather or share any relevant information. The reasons should be fully explained and consent should be recorded in writing. Exactly who needs to be contacted, informed or involved should be carefully considered.
- When producing and carrying out assessments and action plans, all terminology used should be in plain language and must be clear and understandable for all those involved. Efforts should also be made to produce and record relevant information in the most appropriate language or format (e.g. Braille) as determined by the young person's needs. Documents should be produced in a format that is appealing to young people, which does not disempower them.
- Whilst the throughcare and aftercare assessment is initially triggered by a review decision, this should happen when all parties are in agreement. It should be acknowledged that the young person themselves may initiate these discussions themselves.

### Future Action

Further work will be required to translate this guidance into tools for using in practice. This will consist of:

1. Additional consultation with front-line practitioners and service providers to gain their views on how this framework can be effectively developed and applied in practice.
2. Consultation with young people with experience of leaving care, to ensure that the approach is appealing and beneficial to young people.
3. Decide on appropriate terminology and a suitable format for the framework, which promotes a positive approach, records achievement, avoids jargon and is easy to use.
4. Establish clear links with the LAC 15+ materials and the LAC Steering Group, to determine how the assessment and action planning framework will be integrated in practice.
5. Produce a useful and accessible working tool, which can be easily applied across the whole of Scotland.
6. Consider and address the training and staff development needs, so that good practice can be reinforced.

## THROUGH-CARE & AFTERCARE ASSESSMENT & ACTION PLANNING

### Young Person In Care

LAC Materials – Action and Assessment Records

Child Care Reviews  
or  
Children’s Hearings  
or  
Courts

Throughcare Preparation & Planning  
Named Worker (throughcare co-ordinator)

Final Child Care Review  
“Looked After” status ends

Named Worker (aftercare co-ordinator)

On-going Assessment of Aftercare Needs

Aftercare Reviews and Action Planning

Support ends when an Aftercare Review reaches that decision

Decide who is best placed to meet any on-going needs

Flag up Throughcare Needs

Referral to Throughcare Team

Children & Families social worker

Other named worker to hold responsibility

Throughcare and Aftercare Assessment Begins:

*When:* triggered by review, prior to leaving care

*Who:* Named worker (co-ordinator), Multi-disciplinary approach

*How:* Follow framework and guidance

If necessary, register to potentially require financial maintenance support (for forward planning/budgeting)

### Young Person No Longer In Care

Financial Responsibilities for certain 16 & 17 year olds

Aftercare Plan

Remove young person from Financial Maintenance Support Register on 18th Birthday

On-going S.29 and S.30 responsibilities

21 Years +

## Lead Implementation Officer: Roles and Responsibilities

### Background

Since 1996 with the implementation of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, local authorities have had clear duties under Section 29 to advise guide and assist any young person in their area under 19 who was in care when he or she left school or at any subsequent time, unless they are convinced that his/her welfare does not require it.

In addition new powers to strengthen throughcare and aftercare, introduced under the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001, reinforce local authority obligations in respect of young people leaving care. Local authorities will be required to carry out individual needs assessments. In doing so and maintaining a record of this, local authorities will incur an obligation to meet those needs. In addition, certain Department of Work and benefits will be withdrawn from some of those young people.

The Throughcare and Aftercare Working Group (the Working Group) has considered the implications for ensuring parity in terms of quality, service standards and outcomes for young people leaving care.

There is a need to ensure that sufficient measures are in place across local authorities in Scotland to provide equal access/ consistency of service provision to young people leaving care. In order to meet this target it will be necessary to ensure that local infrastructures are consistent across the country and are "fit for the purpose". Adequate support systems must be put in place/improved, as required. Core responsibilities and minimum standards will be issued in accompanying guidance.

The Working Group will report their findings and recommendations to the Minister for Education and Young People in July 2002. Consultation will follow. An Implementation Plan has been produced which requires local authorities to confirm arrangements are in place across a range of identified functions, prior to full implementation of the new financial regulations in April 2004.

### Lead Implementation Officer

Each local authority has identified a lead officer who will be responsible for ensuring the successful implementation of these new responsibilities. The Lead Implementation Officer will liaise with the Scottish Executive and the Working Group on a regular basis. Joint meetings will be held at key stages of implementation with opportunities to discuss progress or any difficulties encountered. A number of core themes have emerged that will require to be considered at a local level by the Lead Implementation Officer and jointly at a national level by the Lead Implementation Officer's Group and the Working Group. The following questions are those we would expect Lead Implementation Officers to address and take forward.

### Infrastructure

Are current arrangements sufficient to ensure quality services are provided to young people leaving care in his/her area?

What systems are in place to ensure young people have a choice as to whom within the local authority is their contact for accessing support? (i.e. ensuring there is a safety net for those young people estranged from the looked after system)

Where appropriate, does the local authority have a discrete leaving care service/team in place?

Are current arrangements sufficient to absorb new responsibilities in relation to assessments, ongoing contact and support arrangements for young people?

What, if any, service and/or resource changes will need to be made?

Are adequate Inter-agency planning structures in place, including Social Work, Education, Housing Providers, Careers, Health the Voluntary Sector, etc.?

### Systems

Are current information systems/databases up to date and capable of identifying the young people who meet the criteria for support?

Are current payment systems robust enough to deal with BACS bank payment systems and/or cash payments where required?

Will systems enable "tracking" of young people and identifying outcomes?

Will systems "flag" when young people are no longer eligible for financial support (get jobs, resettle at home, etc.)?

Are current systems sufficient to identify whether Performance indicators have been achieved? (core Performance indicators to be included in guidance)

### Assessment

Are current assessment frameworks appropriate to assess the needs of young people leaving care?

(a) to return home?

(b) to live independently?

Is there a need to update/revise materials?

Are materials/processes multi-disciplinary in approach?

Is there a need to develop a financial assessment tool?

Are young people views/preference central to current assessment processes?

Have the views/preferences of young people been taken into account in developing assessment frameworks?

Is there a need to develop a joint protocol/ reciprocal arrangements with other local authorities?

### Complaints

Are complaints procedures responsive, easily understood by young people and do they promote speedy resolutions?

Will current procedures suffice or will new ones need to be created?

Young people should not be penalised in their support whilst awaiting resolution of complaints processes. The authority will be required to make emergency payments available as an interim arrangement. Are current systems adequate to cope with such circumstances?

Do young people who wish to make complaints have access to Children's Rights/ Advocacy workers?

### Disputes

Inter-authority/inter-agency disputes will be dealt with within current National procedures in those few cases where local resolution is not possible.

Have protocols for resolving such disputes been developed locally?

## Young People

Are all young people leaving care aware of the implications for them of the proposed developments, including where appropriate benefit withdrawal?

Does your local authority have sufficient mechanisms in place to ensure that all young people have genuine opportunity to contribute to consultation on proposed developments?

Have young people been helped to express their views about the proposed changes and if they wish, to become involved in the proposed consultation exercises?

Are young people aware of their rights?

Have the views of young people been sought in relation to e.g. the nature of their involvement in consultation exercises/ publicity materials, etc.?

## Training

TAWG will provide guidance on National training tools relating to assessing aftercare needs, resolution procedures and finance.

Have all appropriate local authority staff received training on all of the above plus any information systems put in place locally?

## What Young People Should Expect When Leaving Care

### Entitlement

You, your family and your carers will be made aware of what throughcare and aftercare support and services you will be entitled to.

Prior to leaving care, you will be given clear and understandable information about your rights, available services and where to go for on-going support and advice.

### Throughcare Preparation

You will be sensitively supported and encouraged to plan for the future, well in advance of the time that you will actually leave care.

Your care plan and reviews will look at your future throughcare and aftercare needs, and your views will be taken into account.

Before leaving care, you will be able to develop adult living skills, which should include preparation for more independent living.

### Aftercare Support

You will play an active part in deciding your aftercare plan that will be produced following a thorough assessment of your on-going aftercare needs.

When leaving care, you will have a keyworker who will be your main point of contact for advice, information and accessing support.

You will be encouraged to keep in contact with your previous carers after you have left care.

After leaving care, you will receive on-going support from your local authority, which may also include financial support instead of benefits if you are 16 or 17 years old.

When receiving financial support from the local authority, you should be no worse off than if you were receiving benefits, and you will be supported to maintain an agreed and acceptable standard of living.

Wherever possible, you will be given more than one option for kind of accommodation you wish to live in.

You will be given support to lead a healthy lifestyle and to have any health problems addressed.

You will receive support to access education, training and employment opportunities, especially through your local careers services.

If you move to another area, you will be entitled to a similar level of throughcare and aftercare support and you will not face delays in gaining the support you need.

### Resolving Difficulties

You will have the right to speak out if you are unhappy with any of your throughcare and aftercare arrangements, and you will be supported to make complaints or appeal decisions.

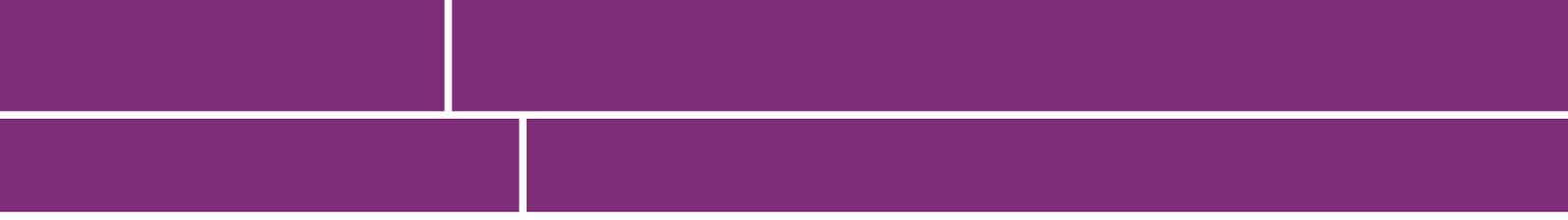
You will be able to request another keyworker if you do not have a good relationship with the one you have.

Any difficulties or complaints will be swiftly dealt with and you will receive appropriate feedback on how issues will be resolved.

### Having Your Say

You will be given opportunities to have your say about your experience of leaving care, the quality of throughcare and aftercare support, and what services are needed for young people leaving care.





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