

**REPORT TO: HOUSING, DUNDEE CONTRACT SERVICES AND
ENVIRONMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE - 8 JUNE,
2009**

**REPORT ON: CARE LEAVERS POLICY BETWEEN DUNDEE CITY
COUNCIL'S SOCIAL WORK AND HOUSING
DEPARTMENTS**

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO: 275-2009

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the intention to implement a joint Care Leavers Policy between Dundee City Council's Social Work and Housing Departments [copy Policy attached].

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Housing, Dundee Contract Services and Environment Services Committee:

- 2.1. Acknowledges the Policy.
- 2.2. Recognises the valuable contribution that this Policy will make towards ensuring a co-ordinated and integrated response to the accommodation needs of young people who were previously looked after or looked after and accommodated by Dundee City Council, and who are eligible for aftercare support. This report assists the Council in meeting its corporate parenting responsibility.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. None.

4. MAIN TEXT

- 4.1. Research indicates that care leavers are particularly vulnerable when making the transition to adulthood. Care leavers are frequently over-represented in statistics related to homelessness. Their need for a comprehensive and co-ordinated support package is recognised and addressed in this Policy.
- 4.2. The aim of this Policy is to ensure a co-ordinated response to the accommodation needs of care leavers. It outlines the legal and operational framework agreed between the Departments for providing assessment, planning and appropriate accommodation for young people leaving care. It also provides for care leavers who have found themselves unexpectedly homeless or in significant housing difficulty.
- 4.3. No young person will have to register as homeless in order to access accommodation on leaving care.

- 4.4. The Housing Department's Lettings Centre will ensure the provision of appropriate advice and assistance to young people leaving care in order to prevent homelessness and ensure the transition to suitable accommodation.
- 4.5. The above provision will be based on the best interest of the young person and take their views into account.
- 4.6. In the longer term, sustainability of a mainstream tenancy is the goal.
- 4.7. This policy reflects the aim of each party to strengthen existing services and joint working arrangements detailing the duties and responsibilities of each Department.
- 4.8. All parties are committed to working together to improve outcomes for young people who have been looked after.

5. **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

This Report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management.

See Appendix 1 - Low Equality Impact Assessment.

There are no major issues.

6. **CONSULTATION**

- 6.1. The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance), Assistant Chief Executive, Head of Finance, Director of Education and all other Chief Officers have been consulted in the preparation of this report. No concerns were expressed.

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1. None.

ELAINE ZWIRLEIN
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

APRIL 2009

Committee Report - EQIA Screening

APPENDIX 1

Department: Social Work and Housing

Policy/Function	Equality Group								Evidence	Equality Indicator	Decision	Lead Officer	Target Date
	Age	Dep	Dis	Gen	LGBT	Off	Rel	Race					
Care Leavers' Housing Policy	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	This policy will improve services to a vulnerable group - it will not impact on or disadvantage any other groups.	1 & 6	Low impact initial screening only.	Dave Innes	Ongoing

Explanation of Terms		Possible Decisions	
DEP	People with dependants	SP	Place as an equality action in Service Plan*
DIS	People with disabilities	FIA	Complete a full Impact Assessment
GEN	Gender	ER	Complete an equality screening at next review
LGBT	People who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender		
OFF	People with an offending past		
REL	People with differing religious beliefs		
		* This may include formal service plans, team plans or individual job plans.	

Housing Department
Social Work Department

Care Leavers' Policy





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1. INTRODUCTION

Joint Housing, Social Work and Registered Social Landlord (RSL) Policy for Care Leavers in Dundee.

This Policy refers to care leavers (young people who have been looked after and accommodated or looked after at home or in the community aged 16-21). Currently, between 25 and 30 young people cease being looked after and accommodated in Dundee each year.

Dundee City Council places the health, welfare and development of children and young people at the centre of the planning and delivery of services.

For all of these young people leaving care, Dundee City Council will become a corporate parent, and, as such, will seek to establish positive relationships with other agencies and partners who can play a key role in assisting with improving outcomes for looked after children and young people. As a good corporate parent, the Council will aim to ensure that these young people have as good a chance as any other young person of making a success of their lives.

Research indicates that care leavers are particularly vulnerable when making the transition to adulthood. Care leavers are frequently over-represented in statistics relating to homelessness. Their need for a comprehensive and co-ordinated support package is recognised in this Policy.

Dundee City Council's plan is to offer an integrated and co-ordinated service that aims to ensure that no care leaver should be required to register as being homeless at the point of leaving care in order to access appropriate accommodation.

The Policy is designed to ensure that no young person will lack support to achieve independence and stability in the community.

The Policy promotes the principle that care leavers will be provided with the most secure form of tenancy available to them and wherever possible will not require to be provided with homeless accommodation.



2. AIMS

The aim of this Policy is to ensure a co-ordinated response to the accommodation needs of care leavers. It outlines the legal and operational framework agreed between the Departments for providing assessment, planning and appropriate accommodation for young people leaving care. It also provides for care leavers who have found themselves unexpectedly homeless or in significant housing difficulty.

- No young person will have to register as homeless in order to access accommodation on leaving care.
- A range of accommodation and support solutions will be made available to young people on discharge from care and while they continue to receive support from the Throughcare & Aftercare Service.
- The above provision will be based on the best interest of the young person and take their views into account.
- In the long term, sustainability of a mainstream tenancy is the goal.
- This agreement reflects the aim of each party to strengthen existing services and joint working arrangements detailing the duties and responsibilities of each department.
- All parties are committed to working together to improve outcomes for young people who have been looked after.
- The Lettings Centre will ensure the provision of appropriate advice and assistance to young people leaving care in order to prevent homelessness and ensure transition to

suitable accommodation.

Outcomes

The Departments will ensure that a care leaver receives:

- A consistent service.
- A completed Pathway Assessment and Plan with their accommodation views and needs identified.
- Access to accommodation which considers the young person's needs and choices.
- Access to an appeals and resolution service which is understood by them.
- Appropriate support during their transition to independence in the community.

3. **PRINCIPLES**

Statutory responsibilities and good practice highlight the need for good corporate parenting and for this to inform all policies with care leavers.

This statement is based on the key principle:

Every effort will be made to prevent care leavers from becoming homeless.

Tenancy sustainment and the need to help prevent homelessness are crucial. This statement incorporates the following principles:

Social Work Responsibilities:

- Comprehensive Pathways Assessment for all care leavers.
- Thorough preparation prior to allocation of a tenancy.
- Clear support plans identified detailing their nature, extent and duration, and who will provide aftercare support as well as clear review plans.
- Accommodation providers will be advised of the end date of Throughcare & Aftercare support a minimum of one month prior to the final Pathways Review.

Housing/RSL Responsibilities:

- The provision of good quality advice on housing and tenancy options.
- The provision of the best possible accommodation in terms of its suitability, locality and quality.
- Matching care leavers' needs with choice of housing area.
- Wherever possible, provision of a Scottish Secure Tenancy.



- Ensure that, where any issue arises regarding the tenancy, the Resource Worker (whose name is on the rents screen as agent) is contacted in the first instance to allow them to be present during any discussion.
- The provision of security of tenure in other accommodation arrangements, which insofar as is possible, protect an individual's rights.
- Clear and consistent information on matters such as procedures, tenancy rights and responsibilities, referrals, assessments, support, care planning and management arrangements.
- A range of tenancy lease options to be further developed for supported accommodation providers, if it is in the young person's interests.

Social Work, Housing and RSL Joint Responsibilities:

- Tenancy sustainment to be a central focus for both housing providers and support agencies - this will include the early identification of potential problems with tenancies as well as early intervention.
- Promotion of independent advocacy.

4. REFERRALS

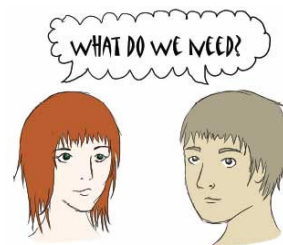
The Dundee City Council Lettings Centre will co-ordinate all Dundee City Council referrals.

Referrals to RSLs will be co-ordinated by a nominated person in each RSL.

RSLs will inform the Dundee City Council Delegated Officer (Social Work) who their nominated person is.

For those care leavers where the Local Authority has statutory responsible and duties, the process of obtaining tenancies will be as follows:

- i. The Pathway Co-ordinator, in conjunction with the young person will, in partnership with others, complete a detailed Pathway Assessment of their accommodation needs in both short and the longer terms. The assessment which will be reviewed at least every six months, will detail the level of support required and the Pathway Plan for providing the support. The appropriate housing provider(s) will be identified. The Pathway Co-ordinator will ensure that their identity is known to both the Lettings Team and to the appropriate RSLs.
- ii. The Pathway Co-ordinator will forward the referral form, the accommodation section of the Pathways Assessment and a copy of the housing application form (the original must be lodged at the local housing office or RSL) to the Delegated Officer (Social Work). The Pathways Assessment will clearly illustrate the level of support to be provided to the young person to sustain the tenancy. Any relevant issues which may affect the young person's ability to manage a tenancy will be highlighted. This will take place at least 6 weeks prior to the care leaver moving on from their present accommodation.
- iii. Where it is considered to be appropriate, a planning meeting will be held at the time of referral. Representation at this meeting will be as follows:
 - **Social Work** - the young person's Resource Worker from the Throughcare & Aftercare Team. The Resource Worker will ensure that housing application form(s) are completed and that the Resource Worker's name is the main contact on the form(s).



- **Housing** - Lettings Centre will co-ordinate housing information and complete application forms if necessary. The Lettings Centre Team Leader will liaise with the District Manager within the area that the young person would prefer to reside permanently to ensure that the young person will be given appropriate priority.
 - Any other agency which will potentially be involved in providing accommodation or tenancy support.
 - The young person and/or any other appropriate person as determined by them.
- iv. The Delegated Officer (Social Work) will pass the referral and assessment to the Dundee City Council Lettings Team or the nominated person in other city based RSLs within 3 days. The Delegated Officer (Social Work) will liaise with the Pathway Co-ordinator if any further information is required within these 3 days. The Pathway Co-ordinator will provide any information required within these 3 days.
 - v. The Lettings Team will consider all referrals and allocate appropriately. If any information is required the Lettings Team will liaise with the Delegated Officer (Social Work). Similarly, the nominated person within RSLs will liaise with the Delegated Officer (Social Work) if further information is required. It will be the responsibility of the Pathway Co-ordinator to ensure that any information about the young person that might influence the choice or location of accommodation is shared with the Lettings Team or RSLs as appropriate.
 - vi. The housing provider should seek to offer a suitable property within 6 weeks. If this timescale is unlikely to be met the Lettings Team or nominated person should indicate an approximate estimate of availability.
 - vii. When an offer is made the opportunity to view the property will remain open for 3 days. An extension may be granted by the Lettings Team/RSL if circumstances prevent the young person from viewing within 3 days. In most cases, the Throughcare & Aftercare Team will provide a Section 29 grant to carry out any necessary decoration and to purchase furniture for the tenancy. The Throughcare & Aftercare Team will assume responsibility for rent payments from the date of entry which was agreed at the time of signing for the tenancy. The housing provider whether RSL or the Housing Department will send invoices detailing the amount of rent due to the Throughcare & Aftercare Team every thirteen weeks.
 - viii. The Lettings Team/RSL will advise the Resource Worker when an offer is made to a young person. The Resource Worker's name will be in the "contact" part of the housing application form to facilitate this.
 - ix. The young person will advise the Lettings Team/RSL within a maximum of 24 hours of viewing if the offer is acceptable.
 - x. Where an offer is refused the Delegated Officer (Social Work) will assess if the offer made has been reasonable. If it is deemed to be unreasonable, the Delegated Officer (Social Work) will liaise with the Lettings Team/RSL and ask for a further offer to be made. In accordance with the letting regulations three offers will be made to applicants.
 - xi. Where there is dispute between Social Work and the housing provider about the suitability of an offer, attempts will be made to resolve the issue. If this fails, a case conference will be held. The Resource Worker, Pathway Co-ordinator and, if it is a Dundee City Council referral, the Lettings Centre Team Leader will be present. If it is an RSL referral, the nominated person at the RSL will be present. If a resolution cannot be sought the matter must be dealt with by either the Senior Officer or Service



Manager for Leaving Care Services, the East District Housing Manager or senior manager at the RSL.

Any young person can appeal any decision made in respect of them by accessing the existing Dundee City Council Appeals Procedure for the Throughcare & Aftercare Service.

There shall be no further appeal in relation to this procedure. However, the young person, or someone on their behalf, will be entitled to make representations through the Social Work Department's complaints procedure established under section 5B of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968.

Young people should also be aware that they have the right to contact the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care with any concerns or queries that they might have about the matter including the quality or level of support that they receive. The Care Commission is based at Compass House, 11 Riverside Drive, Dundee DD1 4NY, and the telephone number is 01382 207200.

- xii. The Delegated Officer (Social Work) will ensure that the Lettings Team and relevant RSLs are made aware of all outstanding applications for care leavers.
- xiii. The Delegated Officer (Social Work) and the Lettings Team or nominated person will have regular meetings to discuss current referrals.
- xiv. The Pathways Co-ordinator will review the support for each care leaver at least six weeks, three months and six months after the care leaver has moved into a tenancy.
- xv. The Delegated Officer (Social Work) will initially meet with the Lettings Team Leader, the Principal Officer (Homeless Strategy) and senior managers at RSLs quarterly for the first year and 6 monthly thereafter to review this policy. Personnel attending these meetings may be varied as appropriate.

5. ASSESSMENT

The Lettings Officer and RSLs will allocate accommodation to young people for whom the Throughcare & Aftercare Team has responsibility under the **Children (Scotland) Act, 1995** and **Supporting Young People Leaving Care in Scotland, 2003 Regulations and Guidance**. The Throughcare & Aftercare Team will assess each care leaver's support and accommodation needs via the Pathways Assessment and provide a copy of the accommodation section to the relevant Lettings Officer or RSL. This will include an assessment of the suitability of the care leaver for a permanent tenancy.

6. SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED

Dundee City Council and RSLs will continue to develop a range of supported and permanent accommodation options that are appropriate to the needs of young people leaving care. Dundee City Council and RSLs will ensure that appropriate accommodation is offered, in consultation with the Throughcare & Aftercare Team.



The Throughcare & Aftercare Team will provide a Pathways Assessment for all care leavers that they have statutory responsibilities for.

The Throughcare & Aftercare Team will seek a Scottish Secure Tenancy for care leavers where there is an assessed need for permanent accommodation. Young people should be given the maximum security of tenure appropriate to their accommodation.

LEGISLATION, REGULATION & GUIDANCE

The Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended

Requires local authorities to undertake an assessment of housing needs and conditions in their area and produce a Local Housing Strategy. It is for individual authorities to determine local priorities but their Local Housing Strategy must complement Community Plans and the Homeless Strategy. Local authorities will want to ensure that the needs of their young people ceasing to be looked after are reflected in the Local Housing Strategy.

The Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003

This Act has amended section 25 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. This amendment means that the person aged 16 or 17 assessed as homeless is now included in the statutory definition of applicants to be considered as having a priority need for accommodation. In addition, anyone assessed as homeless who is aged 18 to 20 who was looked after by a local authority when they ceased to be of school age or at any subsequent time will also be considered to be in priority need. However, this legislation should not be used as the main route for accessing accommodation for young people ceasing to be looked after.

- Section 17 details a local authority's duty to provide advice and assistance with a view to preparing a young person for when he or she is no longer looked after by a local authority.
- Section 21 details co-operation between local authorities and other bodies.
- Section 29(1) contains a duty to advise, guide and assist care leavers aged 19 and under.
- Section 29(2) contains a power to provide young people between the ages of 19 and 21 with advice, guidance and assistance unless the local authority is satisfied that the young person does not require it.

Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001

- Section 73 (1) amends Section 29 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 to include duties on local authorities to carry out a pathways assessment of needs of young people who have been looked after and who they have a duty or a power towards under Section 29.
- Section 73 (2) gives Scottish Ministers a power to make regulations on services for young people ceasing to be looked after in Scotland.

Supporting Young People Leaving Care in Scotland 2003 Regulations and Guidance on Services for Young People Ceasing to be Looked After by Local Authorities.

These regulations and guidance came into force on 1 April 2004. They update the provision of throughcare and aftercare support for young people who have been looked after by local authorities in Scotland. They make provision for a range of support to care leavers including accommodation and state that:

- The pathways assessment and plan will have set out what kind of accommodation best meets the needs of the young person and how this is to be obtained.
- Where the responsible authority has assisted a care leaver by providing them with or supporting them in accommodation, the authority must ensure that any such accommodation is suitable. Young people should not be placed in unsuitable bed and breakfast or hostel accommodation. However, it is recognised that some young people will want to stay in accommodation that may not be considered suitable by the authority. These issues should be explored in the pathway plan and the young person's wishes taken into account.
- Accommodation and support services should be flexible and focus on the individual needs of the young person.
- Young people should be given the maximum security of tenure appropriate to their accommodation.

DEFINITIONS OF A CARE LEAVER

The regulations for supporting care leavers use the following terms to describe the categories of looked after young people who are to be supported under these arrangements.

Currently looked after person

A young person who is over school age but less than 18 and who is being looked after or looked after and accommodated by the local authority. The duty is to prepare a young person for when they are no longer looked after.

Compulsory supported person

A young person who is subject to support and assistance under Section 29 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 who is no longer looked after and is less than 19 years.

Prospective supported person

A young person applying for assistance under Section 29 who is 19 or 20 years of age and who has left care over school age.

Discretionary supported person

A prospective supported person (see previous paragraph) who the local authority has agreed to support.

For the purpose of this Policy, a care leaver will be defined as any young person who has been looked after or looked after and accommodated by Dundee City Council who meets the criteria of the legislation above.

It also encompasses those young people who have been referred to Dundee City Council by another authority under the national Policy on the Management of Leaving Care where young people move between local authorities in Scotland.

PERSONAL HOUSING SUPPORT PLAN

Housing Advice Worker: _____

Date of Assessment: _____

Throughcare Worker: _____

Person Information

Name and Gender	
Preferred name:	
Address	
Date of birth	
NI number	
Telephone number	
Employment status and details	
Anticipated leaving date	

Risk Assessment

Assessment criteria	
Recommendation	
Issues	
Comments	

Pathway assessment details

Assessment criteria	
Recommendation	
Issues	
Comments	

CAPACITY TO MANAGE

Finance

--

Independent Living Skills

--

Maturity/Emotional Issues

--

Social Networks

--

Housing Details

Accommodation Type:	
Tenure Type:	
Area Issues:	
Aids and Adaptations:	
Household Composition:	
Comments:	

Professional Contacts

Name:	
Relationship:	
Address:	
Contact number:	

Name:	
Relationship:	
Address:	
Contact number:	

Name:	
Relationship:	
Address:	
Contact number:	

Health Problems/Mobility**Mental Health/Learning Difficulties****Summary of Needs/Recommendations****Follow-Up Meetings/Calls**

Date / Time	Details

Plan & Objectives

--

Client Signature: _____

Support Worker: _____

Date: _____

Copy of Plan Provided: **Yes/No**

Date of Next Review: _____

Mandate

I agree that Dundee City Council, Housing Services can share my details with other agencies and landlords who can provide housing and support.	
Signed: _____	Date: _____

ADDITIONAL PAPERWORK REQUIRED

Review forms

Case discussion forms

Reactivation forms

Update paperwork

Complaints