preparation for adult life

training & resource pack
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Additions, amendments and updating of the Preparation for Adult Life packs will be made to the web version of the materials at www.leavingcare.org

The What Makes The Difference? project (WMTD), partly funded by the European Social Fund EQUAL initiative, is working to identify ways to improve poor outcomes for older children in care and leaving care in England. To facilitate success, young people from care are at the heart of every part of the project. WMTD is a large partnership involving 60 organisations from national and local government, voluntary and independent sectors, with young people’s charity Rainer as lead partner.

Rainer is the national charity for under-supported young people. We work with thousands of young people and young adults every year who are living at the margins of society. They may be in or leaving care, involved in or on the fringes of crime, out of work, homeless or facing young parenthood without the safety net of a supportive family.

See www.raineronline.org
The National Leaving Care Advisory Service (NLCAS), is a national organisation, supported by young people’s charity Rainer, which is devoted to improving the life chances of care leavers. Its work aims to assist, and where necessary challenge, government, local authorities and other agencies who have a responsibility for developing policy around young people in and leaving the care system. NLCAS undertakes public policy work, information, and advice and specific time-limited consultancy and development projects.

The Fostering Network is the UK’s leading charity for everyone involved in fostering. The organisation’s work is focused on improving foster care and making a difference to the lives of over 60,000 children and young people living in foster care at any one time.

WMTD is partly funded by the European Social Fund Equal initiative. Equal aims to test and promote new ways of combating discrimination and inequalities in relation to the labour market, through transnational co-operation.

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## Glossary

## Appendix
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Every effort has been made to reference all sources of material, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked the publishers will be pleased to make the necessary arrangement at the first opportunity.
What Makes the Difference? (WMTD) was a two-and-a-half year project, partly funded by the European Social Fund EQUAL initiative, which worked to identify ways to improve poor employment outcomes for older children in care and leaving care in England.

WMTD? was a large national partnership of 60 organisations from national and local government, voluntary and independent sectors, with young people’s charity Rainer as lead partner. The involvement of young people from care was central to the success of every part of the project.


Further information on the WMTD project’s work, products and partners can be found at:

www.leavingcare.org
Preparing young people to lead successful adult lives is one of the key tasks that parents have to carry out. When young people are ‘looked after’ by a local authority it is the responsibility of the local authority to ensure that as Corporate Parents, their ‘children’ are being parented in a way that enables them to develop the skills and knowledge that they will need for adulthood.

Outcomes for care leavers (CLs) in employment, education, housing and health indicate significant failings in the preparation and readiness of looked after children (LAC) and CLs for adult life. Messages from WMTD’s work suggest that, for a significant number of young people, preparation for adult life, when they move on from care, is inadequate.

“... some young people can’t really cope on their own, when they get asked to leave care. I think that’s wrong, because they’re just going to go straight downhill.”

As well as the disadvantage faced by being in or from care, young people who belong to other marginalised groups experience additional disadvantages. This can lead to further barriers to education, training, employment, and other opportunities in society.

Information and materials to support preparation work and to help address the barriers faced by a range of disadvantaged groups, including disabled young people, black and minority ethnic young people, young parents, and young offenders, are provided in WMTD’s preparation materials. Further sources of support and information are referenced throughout the materials.

Ensuring that all those who work with CLs are aware of their roles and responsibilities in supporting LAC to develop the necessary life skills, and that they are equipped to carry out preparation work, is essential to improve outcomes for CLs.

Under the Preparation and Planning theme, WMTD worked with 13 local authorities and other partner organisations to develop materials to assist workers in preparing young people for adulthood and moving on from care. They are as follows:

- Preparation for Adult Life training course for workers;
- Preparation for Adult Life training and resource pack;
- Get Ready for Adult Life young people’s pack;
- Get Ready for Adult Life CD-ROM

The Preparation for Adult Life training course and packs were piloted with multidisciplinary groups of workers in the 13 local authorities between October 2006 and February 2007. Young people from these authorities were trained as trainers and delivered the training alongside professional trainers. The training course and packs were amended following feedback from participants, trainers and young people. A further trial of the Get Ready for Adult Life pack was carried out with young people in three of the local authorities between June 2007 and July 2007.

1 Quote from WMTD interviews with looked after children and care leavers (2007)
The Preparation for Adult Life training and resource pack (for workers) and the Get Ready for Adult Life young people’s pack are designed to support the transition process for CLs as they move towards adulthood. These materials should be used as part of a throughcare approach in conjunction with pathway planning.

The long-term needs of LAC, including their needs after they have moved on from care, should be addressed from when they first come into care and should be reviewed on an ongoing basis, so that preparation for adult life and moving on from care is a gradual process rather than a time limited event.

Local authorities have duties under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 (C(LC)A), to assess LAC, to develop and review plans, to ensure adequate support is provided to LAC to meet their needs while they are in care and afterwards, and to prepare them for when they leave care.

As corporate parents, local authorities have a duty to ensure that LAC receive the support necessary to meet their needs and that they receive adequate preparation for adult life. Young people should play a central role in the development of their plans, the identification of their support needs and the decision making around leaving care.

Under Every Child Matters, the Government has identified five outcomes that all children should achieve. Local authorities, as corporate parents, have a particular responsibility to ensure that these outcomes are achieved for ‘their children’ — LAC/CLs. The Get Ready for Adult Life pack contains information relating to the five outcomes and includes all areas that need to be covered in pathway plans, as required by the C(LC)A legislation and guidance.

Two of the barriers to ensuring positive outcomes for LAC/CLs that the Government has identified are the lack of training for staff and the lack of integration between services that work with young people. The Government, through the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) Children’s Workforce unit, is developing a Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for children’s services workers. One of the core areas is Supporting Transitions.

The Preparation for Adult Life training course and resource pack are designed to be used with multidisciplinary groups in a range of settings. They aim to ensure consistency of approach and to equip workers with the knowledge and skills necessary to provide suitable support to LAC/CLs as they make the transition to adulthood.

The Get Ready for Adult Life pack is designed to be used by young people, with workers who have been on the Preparation for Adult Life training course, but can also be used as a stand-alone pack. Sections can be adapted for group work, with young people taking the role of peer trainers.

Work on the pack should be started as early as possible but, where time is limited, it may also be used to provide an overall structure for learning life skills. Areas covered in the pack should be referenced within the young person’s care/pathway plan in order that there is a record of work completed and that progress can be monitored and reviewed.
The role of young people in the training

If we are to improve outcomes for young people in and from care it is important to involve those young people in training the people who provide the services. It is important to recognise that young people are also experts when it comes to the care system and including their feedback as service users is the only way to make effective improvements to services. Involvement in training, as good corporate parents should, will also provide young people with opportunities to gain valuable experience and to learn and develop skills that will help their preparation for adult life.

As we found in our pilot, training young people as trainers to deliver the training is very effective and beneficial for both young people and for workers. The feedback from participants attending the training was very positive regarding young people playing a central role in the training programme. This requires thorough and careful planning to ensure that young people receive sufficient preparation, training and support. Young people can also be involved by providing information for training sessions through feedback on services or by attending the training and doing training exercises with workers. Suggestions for involving young people are included under ‘Adaptations’, throughout the training programme.

Adapting these materials to local requirements

The training can be tailored to individual local authorities/organisations to make it more relevant to participants and to reflect the experiences and views of LAC and CLs receiving services in the local area. Young people can be involved in the training by giving feedback and exercises can be adapted using materials and evidence from services and local areas. Suggestions for this are given throughout the training programme under ‘Adaptations’.

Working with the young people and staff involved at all the different stages of development of the materials has been an enjoyable experience. Their insights and views have helped to shape these materials so that they address issues faced by LAC and CLs when moving into adulthood and provide for identified needs. We hope that you will find them useful.
Guidelines for involving young people

- **Address the relationship between the trainer and the young people and make it known to the participants.**
  Before the training consideration must be given to the nature and level of the young people’s contribution, even where they are co-trainers: will they contribute their own and other young people’s experience or will they do both? There will be differences in levels of experience between the co-trainer and professional trainer, which should be acknowledged to prevent the young people feeling pressurised by unreasonable expectations.

- **Design and planning**
  It is important that the young people be involved in the design and planning of the programme.

- **Boundaries**
  As part of the preparation for training, the boundaries of what the young people will and will not be talking about need to be established.

- **Ground rules**
  At the start of the training, participants should be advised not to ‘quiz’ the young people about their care experience. It must be the young people’s choice whether to talk about themselves and what to say.

- **Support, training, supervision and feedback**
  Generally, young people, particularly those who are still looked after, will need support during the training. One effective way of providing this is to ensure that two young people are involved in the training. Training should be provided to these young people where they will be co-training. Guidance on written and oral presentations and requirements of training should be provided for all young people who will be contributing. There should be an opportunity for the young people to receive supervision before and during the training. Feedback and an opportunity to reflect on the experience is also important.

- **Practical issues**
  Dress, travel and other arrangements/expenses, and payment should be agreed at the beginning.

Further information and materials for training young people as trainers can be obtained from Children’s Rights Officers and Advocates (CROA). www.croa.org.uk
1. assessment, planning and review

Under the Children Act 1989\(^1\) and the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000\(^2\), local authorities have duties to carry out assessments of children in need, to develop plans to meet those identified needs and to review the plans regularly. Local authorities must identify and make provisions to meet the needs of children both whilst they are being looked after by them and after they have left care.

The Children Act 1989 contains key principles that must be applied by local authorities in relation to children looked after by them. These include:

- to consult the child before making any decision about the child, taking into account his/her wishes and feelings (s.22(4)).
- to give due consideration to his/her wishes, race, culture, religion and linguistic background (s.22(5));
- to carry out their responsibilities to children on an inter-agency basis, as a ‘corporate parent’ (s.27).

This approach is child-centred and must be used in all work with looked after children (LAC) and care leavers (CLs). Assessment and planning must therefore be carried out in consultation with the child or young person and should address his/her racial, cultural and other identified needs.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 extended the duty to carry out needs assessments, to develop plans and to carry out reviews for CLs up to the age of 21, or 24 in some circumstances. One of the main aims of this legislation as stated in the guidance\(^3\) on the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 was to delay the discharge of young people from care until they are prepared and ready to leave and to improve the assessment, preparation and planning for leaving care.

Effective assessment, planning and review are vital to adequately prepare LAC and CLs for leaving care. All those who work with them have an important role in this process. In accordance with the principles of the Children Act, LAC and CLs must be consulted and should be fully involved in all assessment, planning and decision-making arrangements for leaving care.

‘Throughcare’ is a process that acknowledges the difference in transitions for young people in care. Their experiences, awareness, understanding and needs differ, therefore what works for one young person may not work for another. Throughcare starts from when the young person or child comes into care and continues until his/her successful transition to independent adult life. A key element of throughcare is ensuring that a young person has as much continuity of care and support as possible and that they only leave care when they are ready to do so. The throughcare approach requires local authorities to fully embrace their responsibilities as corporate parents.

There are standard areas that must be assessed and planned for, as set out in the guidance and legislation for all LAC and CLs. However, some young people have additional or specific needs in these areas, which must be addressed. Disabled young people, black and minority ethnic young people, young parents, young people placed out of borough or the authority, young people in custody and unaccompanied asylum seekers are amongst those groups that may require specific information and support. Information on resources and specialist organisations is provided in this training pack.
**Children in need assessment, care planning and review**

Assessments under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 are carried out using the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their families and are to determine whether a child is ‘in need’ and whether the child or family require services.

In order to promote partnership working, facilitate information sharing between services and to avoid duplication as part of the Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme, a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) has been developed.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has developed guidance and supporting materials for all elements of the Change for Children programme, available from the Every Child Matters website. The expectation is that every practitioner working with children and families knows and understands the Every Child Matters outcomes and the CAF. Training and information on the CAF and on the other elements of the Change for Children programme must be provided by your local authority.

The CAF is designed as a tool for early intervention and may be completed as part of a referral for a specialist assessment such as the Framework for the Assessment of Children In Need and their families. The CAF combines the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need with the main elements of other assessments, including the Framework for the Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review (APIR) used by Connexions. The assessment areas of the APIR will be replaced by the CAF but other specialist assessments will not be replaced or modified.

Assessments under the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their families are generally carried out after a child, young person or family has been referred to social services. If, following the assessment, a decision is made that a child is going to be looked after by the local authority then procedures must be followed relating to placement of the child, review of the placement, visits to the child, care planning and review of the care plan. These are outlined in the regulations and guidance on arrangements for LAC in the Children Act 1989.

The allocated social worker is responsible for developing the plan in consultation with the child and the family, where appropriate. Once the child has been placed, other workers will become involved, such as foster carers, residential social workers or residential school key workers, depending on the placement type.

As one of the workers involved in the care of the young person, your views should be sought, you should be consulted about changes to the care plan and you should be invited to attend or contribute to the review of the young person in your care.

Social workers have the role of co-ordinating the looked after child review and gathering the necessary information. There is a form for young people and a form for carers to give their views on progress of the plan and proposed changes. ‘Review of Arrangements’ reviews must be carried out at least once every six months. Independent reviewing officers chair looked after child reviews or, in some cases, support the young person to chair his/her own reviews. It is the responsibility of the independent reviewing officer to ensure the looked after child and care leaver is central to the review process, that legislation is being followed and that principles such as consultation with the child and family/carers are being adhered to in the interests of the child’s needs being met appropriately. The independent reviewing officer must also record decisions of the review and distribute them to relevant parties.
Pathway assessment, pathway planning and review

When a looked after child is approaching 16 years of age, under the provisions of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, a needs assessment must be carried out. The *pathway assessment* must be completed within three months of the young person turning 16. If the assessment is likely to clash with other important activities occurring in the child’s life, such as exams, the assessment can be deferred (as long as a clear timetable for the assessment to take place is agreed with the young person, his/her carers and family). A *pathway plan* must then be developed, setting out how the young person will be helped to achieve independence.

The Act requires the responsible authority to carry out a multi-agency assessment of the needs of each eligible and relevant child. The assessment will be the basis for the pathway plan, which must be prepared as soon as possible after the assessment is completed. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 regulations 5 to 9 spell out the mandatory procedures and contents of the assessment and plan.

**Needs assessment**

1. Responsibility for co-ordinating the assessment of needs

Each local authority must prepare a written statement setting out how the needs of eligible and relevant children are to be assessed. A copy of the statement must be given to the child and the people consulted. This statement must include information about:

- who will be responsible for co-ordinating and taking forward the assessment
- the timescale for the assessment and who is to be consulted
- how the outcome is to be recorded
- what the child can do if he/she is unhappy with any part of the process or the outcome

2. Timing and recording of the assessment

Preparation can take place before a young person’s 16th birthday when the responsible authority knows that a young person is about to become eligible or relevant, but cannot be finalised until the young person has reached the age of 16. The responsible authority must complete the needs assessment within three months of a young person becoming eligible or a relevant child. A written record should be kept of the information obtained during an assessment, decisions taken and the outcome of the assessment itself.

3. What should be addressed

The process of assessment should be streamlined so the needs assessment takes place at the same time as any special assessments required; for example, concerning a disability or issues of identity, self-esteem, mental health or parenting skills.

The essential issues to be addressed in the needs assessment are:

- the young person’s health and development
- education, training or employment needs
- the support available from family and other relationships
- financial needs
- the extent to which he/she possesses the practical and other skills necessary for independent living
- needs for care support and accommodation
4. Relationship between the existing care plan and the needs assessment process

Eligible children will already have had a needs assessment in order to develop their care plan under the Children Act 1989. That assessment should form the basis for the assessment required under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. This assessment will have particular emphasis on the areas that will require intervention to support the young person until the age of 21 or older.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act assessment follows the seven dimensions of the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families. In turn, the framework assesses young people’s needs across the same developmental areas as the Looking After Children materials9, including the care plan.

The CAF identifies categories of children who will require particular care and attention during assessment. They include children and young people:

- in transition, including moving schools, leaving school or leaving care, or moving into young adulthood and the remit of adult services
- with specific communication needs, either because English is not a first language or they do not communicate through speech
- with a long history of contact with social services
- involved in the use of drugs
- about whom there are concerns that they are becoming, or might already be, involved in prostitution
- who are separated from their country of origin (unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people)

5. Whom to involve

- **Children and young people.** The responsible authority must take all reasonable steps to seek out and have regard to the views and wishes of young people and to enable them to attend and participate in meetings about them. Methods of assessment and review must take full account of any communication or cognitive impairment in order to involve young people fully. A flexible and creative approach, which actively engages with young people, will help ensure that the eventual plan is realistic and likely to be met. Copies of the results of the assessment, the pathway plan and each review of the pathway plan must be given to the child or young person and the contents explained in accordance with the level of understanding, unless not reasonably practicable.

Practical assistance, including travel or subsistence costs, should be provided to help young people attend meetings and to ensure the process is young people-friendly.

- **Family and other appropriate people.** The views and wishes of the young person should be central to the decision about whose views the responsible authority should take into account. Other people who should normally be involved include: parents or anyone with parental responsibility, carers, a representative from school or college, an independent visitor, GP or other health professional, the personal adviser or anyone else whom the responsible authority or the young person considers relevant. For young people with particular needs relating to communication or cognitive impairment, there should be at least one person involved in the needs assessment process who has a clear understanding of how they express their wishes and feelings. Family links remain very important to CLs, and for this reason the assessment framework underscores the value of working in partnership with children and their families during this transition period.10
1. The purpose of pathway planning

“The Pathway Plan should be pivotal to the process whereby young people map out their future, articulating their aspirations and identifying interim goals along the way to realising their ambitions. It will also play a critical part in making the new arrangements contained within the Act work...

The authority should work to ensure that the Plan is owned by the young person and is able to respond to their changing needs and ambitions. It should look ahead at least as far as the young person’s 21st birthday and will be in place beyond that where the young person is in a programme of education or training which takes them past that age.”

2. Pathway plans and best practice

The pathway plan should reflect best practice, as follows.

- Young people must have the option to remain looked after until they are ready to leave.
- For eligible children, the pathway plan should complement and be part of the care plan: pathway planning will run parallel to Looking After Children planning, including the care plan, personal education plan, health plan, or Connexions plan.
- Pathway planning should take place early, recognising the need for structure and stability.
- All people with an interest in, or involved in, supporting the young person should be fully involved in the process.
- Pathway planning should be at the young person’s pace and ensure that young people are fully involved and informed about options available.
- Real choice is vital, as a young person’s assessment of need will have identified which options will be most suitable and agreeable to the young person.
- Specialist leaving care teams must be involved at an early point in order to ensure that they offer specialist knowledge to young people and help focus the pathway planning process.

3. Content of the pathway plan

Schedule 1, Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 Regulations shows minimum areas the plan must cover:

- The nature and level of personal support to be provided.
- Details of the young person’s accommodation.
- A detailed plan for education and training.
- How the authority will assist in employment or seeking alternatives to employment.
- Support provided to enable development and maintenance of family/social relationships.
- A programme to develop practical and other skills necessary for independent living.
- Financial support provided, particularly to meet accommodation and maintenance needs.
- Health needs, including mental health needs, and how they are to be met.
- Contingency plans should the plan cease to be effective.

The pathway plan must record key details, such as:

- name, age and contact details of the young person;
- name and contact details of the personal adviser and those of any other person who will be actively involved in delivering aspects of the plan;
- due date for review of the plan.

Other matters, such as arrangements for keeping in touch, should also be recorded.
4. Review of the pathway plan and contingency arrangements

Reviews of the pathway plan must take place if the young person or the personal adviser asks for one, or at least every six months, and arrangements must be made to enable the young person to attend the meetings. The purpose is to check that the goals and milestones are still right and that they are being met. Levels of support should be reviewed to ensure they are adequate and are being delivered according to plan.

The personal adviser would normally take charge of setting up the review and would be responsible for recording the outcomes. It may be appropriate for someone other than the personal adviser to run the review, for instance, the caseholder or dedicated review staff. An independent reviewing officer should review the pathway plan for all young people who are still looked after.\(^{13}\)

Contingency plans should be in place that recognise potential difficulties young people may face and should arrange for appropriate support mechanisms. Planning should be flexible and sensitive to any problems and acknowledge the right of young people to return for support.

Young people should only have one document setting out the services the local authority will provide to respond to the full range of their needs. This is their pathway plan, which should build on the care plan that they should have had since becoming looked after. The pathway plan is a care plan, detailing the services and support needed by young people aged 16 to 21, as a result of ongoing assessment of their needs. It should not be seen as a document in addition to a care plan, still less should it be a ‘cut-down’ care plan.

Young disabled people

LAC who are disabled will often be receiving services from specialist children with disabilities teams or child and adolescent mental health services. This can present difficulties for them in receiving their entitlements under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, especially where the needs assessment and pathway planning process is not joined up with transitional and disability services planning processes.

Key planning recommendations from Whatever Next? Young disabled people leaving care\(^ {14}\)

“1. It is important that all relevant agencies are involved in post-14 educational transition planning. There should be more monitoring of which agencies are invited and those that actually attend transitional reviews, particularly where a child spends time away from home.

2. Subsequent reviews are just as important as the first post-14 review. Representatives from other services, including adult services, should continue to be involved where a young person is likely to require support after leaving school.

3. Practice could be improved by ensuring that related educational, disability and childcare planning for transition are co-ordinated within a single process wherever possible. There should be greater coherence in planning, whether it is health, education or social services that have initiated the process, and irrespective of the primary source of funding.

4. Inter-agency working would be enhanced by the development of a shared planning cycle for transitional reviews with young disabled people, setting out the sequence of activities involved.
This should include mechanisms for monitoring the actual input and involvement of all relevant agencies. Inter-agency transition planning for young disabled people should be specifically resourced, and should include specific arrangements for leaving care.

5. Transitional planning arrangements should always include an assessment of benefit entitlement, even where there is to be continuity of placement. Transitional planning should always include a consideration of direct payments as a mechanism for promoting involvement and independence for young people aged 16 and over.

6. Social life and leisure opportunities are important to young people, and planning should include a consideration of the support required to facilitate continued contact with friends and peers. This should include issues of transport and access, and should not be restricted to the availability of ‘special’ leisure facilities in the locality.”

At age 14 if a young person has a statement of special educational needs (SEN) the education department is required to notify social services. The relevant children’s services department (often a children with disabilities team) must make a decision as to whether the young person is disabled within the meaning of the Children Act 1989. It must notify the relevant adult’s team of all the disabled young people who require transition to adult services. Teams may include sensory impairment, learning difficulties, physical disabilities and HIV.

Within three months of the young person’s 16th birthday, the adult team should start joint working with the children’s services team social worker and the young person's personal adviser to draw up and implement a transition plan. The allocated adult services care manager should attend children in need, looked after child, pathway plan and SEN reviews.

Child and adolescent mental health services should refer young people who have enduring mental health difficulties to the relevant community mental health team at the age of 17. Community care assessments and care plans should be completed by the adult services team or community mental health team before the young person’s 18th birthday.

Often leaving care services are not directly involved in supporting or providing services to disabled young people. Disabled young people are entitled to the same services under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 except entitlement to subsistence support from social services where they are eligible for benefits (this group is entitled to state benefits) and provisions must be made to meet their needs around preparation for leaving care and adulthood.

Barnardo’s has developed a resource pack called Future Positive which provides detailed information on planning for disabled young people.15

**Children and young people placed out of borough or authority**

A significant proportion of LAC are placed outside of their originating borough or authority. In its report, *A better education for children in care*, the Social Exclusion Unit estimated that “one in four live outside of their home authority”.16 This can present issues in the provision of services and maintaining contact with family and social networks. When young people leave care they may wish to live in the authority in which they were placed.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 introduced the concept of the responsible authority to determine who is responsible for providing after-care services to a young person. The local authority that is
looking after an eligible child, or who last looked after the relevant or former relevant child, in most cases is the one responsible for providing him/her with services under the Act. Where a child has been placed out of authority and wishes to remain there, the responsible leaving care service must provide him/her with the leaving care support and services within the authority in which they live. Responsible local authorities may be able to access services on behalf of the young person via the local leaving care service where the young person lives.

A national protocol setting out minimum standards of service to CLs who have moved to another authority has been developed by the DFES and Association of Directors of Social Services.\(^{17}\)

### Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

All unaccompanied asylum-seeking children up to the age of 18 are the responsibility of local authority social services departments. The local authority must carry out a needs assessment and provide the necessary care and accommodation in exactly the same way as for children born in this country. If an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child is accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, he/she is entitled to services under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

Specialist assessments are required if the needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are to be met. The British Association for Adoption and Fostering has produced a book, *Food, Shelter and Half a Chance*, for those charged with responsibility for conducting assessments.\(^{18}\)

The Association of Directors of Social Services and the Home Office immigration department have also agreed guidance that clarifies issues around age assessments of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.\(^{19}\)

Before reaching the age of 18, each young person’s immigration status should be resolved but decisions can take longer than this, which means that it is difficult to plan appropriately.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 guidance states that the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) will not usually seek to disperse those young people to whom the Act applies, and places a duty on the local authority to identify, provide and manage their accommodation, as well as to provide continuing support to the young person in the same way they would for other CLs.

If, at age 18, there is still no decision on the young person’s asylum application, they will not be eligible for welfare benefits. The local authority must then apply to NASS for funding. The local authority will continue to have duties to the young person under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

There are additional difficulties for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children leaving care as their needs as a looked after child or care leaver can take second place to their status as an asylum seeker. Services can encounter difficulties in planning for young people when their future is unknown, and in determining what support can be given to young people when their application has been rejected and they face deportation.

*Legislation and guidance in this area of work is subject to frequent change.* It is therefore essential that a specialist legal adviser be appointed to conduct any work involved in resolving a young person’s asylum status. The Refugee Council can give more information and details of available sources of support. This includes a fact sheet that looks at the support arrangements for 16 and 17 year old unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.\(^{20}\)
The Children’s Legal Centre has extensive information for those working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. It has produced an information note regarding young refugees who were unaccompanied and who have entitlements as CLs under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, but who have exhausted all rights of appeal.21

**Looked after children in custody**

A number of children in custody are, or have been, looked after. It is difficult to identify true figures due to the quality of information and the way information is collected in the relevant authorities. A National Children’s Bureau (NCB) study of LAC in custody, *Tell them not to forget about us*,22 refers to a discrepancy in figures between the DfES and the Youth Justice Board, which quote 4 per cent and 18 per cent respectively. Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities still have duties to LAC whilst they are in custody, which is detailed in the Munby judgment and confirmed in a DfES circular (LAC (2004)26).23

There are differences between the duties owed to a child accommodated under section 20 of the Act and those subject to a care order under section 31. For a child subject to a care order or placed on remand, the local authority that looks after them has continuing responsibilities towards his/her welfare as a corporate parent. Where the child is aged 16 or over and would be an eligible child and entitled to leaving care services contact, the care planning and/or pathway planning and review processes should be continued.

If a child was previously accommodated under section 20, they do not remain a looked after child; however, they should be considered as a ‘child in need’ and have an assessment of needs. Where the young person will need to be accommodated again after his/her release, or is a relevant care leaver, the local authority should remain in touch.

The study highlighted the two different planning systems used by the services as a major difficulty in meeting the needs of LAC in prison. Joint working under the two systems, the DfES looking after children system and the Youth Justice Board remand or sentence planning system, has made corporate parenting difficult. The assessment and planning functions of these systems should be linked and inform each other, giving clear roles to workers and ensuring each is aware of their own responsibilities in supporting the young person.

As workers you may be involved in maintaining contact and support for a young person in prison or providing support/services upon their release. The NCB study gives detailed information on the issues for planning and providing for the needs of young people in custody and contains a model for joint planning and practice.

This guide is aimed primarily at children’s services authorities to support their work with LAC and CLs who are imprisoned within young offender institutions. It will also be relevant for youth offending teams and staff in youth offending institutions. Although the research did not include secure training centres, the messages about effective planning are equally applicable. It is written in recognition of the fact that a significant proportion of children in custody have been in the ‘care’ system at some point and are still entitled to social work support.
Young parents

Where a looked after child or care leaver is going to become, or is, a parent, their needs both as a young person and as a prospective parent or parent should be assessed. Parenting capacity will need to be assessed in addition to independent living skills. If unmet parenting needs are identified, or if the looked after child’s child is considered to be in need, a referral will need to be made to the relevant children’s services team for an assessment. Needs identified in respect of the baby or child and the support required must be provided by the children’s services team.

In some cases, the looked after child or care leaver’s child may be subject to child protection proceedings. In these circumstances, the young child should have a social worker in his/her own right, who, for good practice reasons, should not also be the social worker for the parent. The parent has needs as a care leaver and workers should ensure that the young person is properly supported. It is important that these young parents have independent legal advice and have access to legal representation.

Recent research from the Social Care Institute for Excellence aimed at the prevention of pregnancy amongst LAC and young people identifies key factors associated with teenage pregnancy amongst LAC. These include:

- “Teenagers who become parents are known to experience greater educational, health, social and economic difficulties than young people who are not parents. Looked after children and young people are at greater risk of early pregnancy and social disadvantage than other groups. The prevention of teenage pregnancy among looked after children and young people therefore poses particular problems and may have significant beneficial outcomes.

- The principal risk factors associated with teenage pregnancy, such as socio-economic deprivation; limited involvement in education; low educational attainment; limited access to consistent, positive adult support; being a child of a teenage mother; low self esteem; and experience of sexual abuse, are to be found more often in the looked after population than among children and young people who are not in care.”

Although the Teenage Pregnancy Unit has produced some excellent work around preventing teenage pregnancy in general, there is a shortage of specific research looking at preventing teenage pregnancy in LAC.

Good-quality sex and relationship education has been demonstrated to reduce levels of teenage pregnancy. Unfortunately, the primary carers of LAC, such as foster carers and residential workers, are often unclear about who is responsible for giving information and advice and lack clear guidelines on this matter.
Pathway planning case studies

Introduction
Background information is provided about the young person. All five case studies address the core principles of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and best practice in leaving care. Therefore, they include discussion of:

- eligibility;
- needs assessment and pathway planning;
- personal advisers;
- personal support;
- accommodation;
- education, training and employment;
- family and social relationships;
- practical and other skills;
- financial support;
- health;
- race, culture, and religion;
- contingency planning.

In addition, the case studies cover issues that arise in working with the following young people:

Case study 1: Arlene Gayle - young black people
Case study 2: Kellie Feeney - out-of-authority placement; rural provision; lone parents
Case study 3: David Roberts - young disabled people
Case study 4: Brian Smith - young people with challenging behaviour
Case study 5: Elani Osman - young, unaccompanied asylum seekers
Case study 1

Arlene Gayle

Background information

Arlene is a young, British African-Caribbean woman. She was accommodated at the age of 13, when her mother had a nervous breakdown and refused to care for her any longer. Her mother is recovering, but still has bouts of depression that lead her to be very inconsistent towards Arlene.

Arlene does not have much contact with her mother at present. She feels angry at her mother’s rejection of her and the way her attitude to her fluctuates.

Arlene’s father left them when she was a baby and has not had contact since then. She occasionally wonders where he might be, but if her mother knows, she is not prepared to tell Arlene.

Arlene does not have any brothers or sisters.

Arlene has maintained contact by telephone with her maternal grandmother, who lives in another part of the country. She is now disabled and cannot travel.

After a difficult first year in care, during which she spent time in two residential units and one foster home, she has now been settled with her present foster carer for two years. She is happy for her to stay as long as she wants.

After a period of not going to school, Arlene has since been attending regularly, and will be taking GCSEs in a few months’ time. She says that if her results are good enough she wants to stay on into the 6th Form. She has a good relationship with her year tutor, who says that if she works hard between now and her exams, she can get the results she wants. She will, however, have to work particularly hard at her maths and science.

Arlene suffers from epilepsy, which is not serious, provided that she remembers to take her medication. With the medication, she has not had a seizure for nearly a year. Her foster carer says that she needs to remind Arlene most days to take her tablets.

Arlene has lots of friends at school, but does not like any but her closest friends to know that she is in care. They hang out at different friends’ homes. In the past Arlene has said that she would like to take her interest in music further by learning to sing, but nothing has come of this.

Arlene has a social worker whom she does not see very often. They communicate by phone and have agreed that, whilst everything is going okay, this suits Arlene. Her foster carer has concerns about Arlene’s practical skills. She says Arlene does little around the house and does not cook. She says that she is very messy and disorganised.
Case study 2

Kellie Feeney

Background information

Kellie Feeney is 16 years of age and of British Irish descent. She entered care at the age of 13, when she was accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

Kellie’s mother is of British Irish descent. She became pregnant at 15 years of age with Kellie’s brother, and then at 19, with Kellie. Kellie’s mother was not married to her children’s father, and Kellie’s maternal grandmother returned to Ireland shortly before Kellie’s mother gave birth to Kellie. Kellie’s mother is now in full-time employment as a secretary. Kellie’s father is Irish, and has several children from other relationships, both older and younger than Kellie. He works full-time as a tailor. He has had no real involvement in the upbringing of either Kellie or her brother.

Both Kellie and her brother were neglected for the majority of their childhood, and were also frequently physically abused by their mother. When Kellie was nine, her brother, with whom she had formed a close attachment, was accommodated.

When Kellie was 12, it was reported to the police that she had been sexually assaulted. No other details are recorded about this, although she says that around this time she began truanting from school and absconding from home. Shortly after this incident, Kellie ran away from home for a period of three weeks. It was on her return home that her mother literally abandoned Kellie to the Social Services Department.

Kellie’s brother is 20 years old. He has left care and lives in his own flat near both of his parents. He is expecting a child with his girlfriend.

Kellie has little contact with her family. She does not want to have contact with her parents, but would like to see her brother and writes to her grandparents in Ireland. She says she would like to see them. Kellie also remains in contact with her close friend since childhood, who lives near her mother.

Kellie got on well with her last key worker from the residential home.

Kellie is generally in good health and attends the local health centre gym once a week with a friend from her part-time job.

When she entered care, the local authority placed Kellie in a short-term residential children’s home, from which she could travel to school and visit friends and family. After three months, they moved her to an out-of-authority long-term placement, which was a one and a half hour train journey from her placing authority. This closed down six months ago. As a result, Kellie has recently moved into a studio flat near the home, in a small village that is miles from the nearest town.
Case study 3

David Roberts

Background information

David Roberts is a young, British, white man who was taken into care under a care order when he was seven years old, following allegations that he had been physically abused by both his father and older brothers. He is described as having learning difficulties and difficulty with verbal communication, but when one knows him, he can make himself understood very well, mostly verbally, but also using Makaton sign language.

David had irregular contact with his mother until he was 12, when his mother discontinued the contact because she said it upset David too much.

David’s father still lives with David’s mother, but rarely acknowledges David’s existence and does not want contact with him. His older brothers have left home.

After a number of placements in residential care units and with foster parents, David settled with his current foster carer when he was 12. He now regards this family as his own, and does not seem to remember much about his birth family.

His foster carer says that generally David has been happy living with them. He likes the same things most children do, but she does not trust him to be out on his own. She says he is easily led, and there are boys living near by who enjoy making fun of him.

David has been attending a local special school, where he has a number of friends who are more able than he. His teachers say he could remain at the school until he is 19.

In the past six months his foster carer has started to find his behaviour more and more difficult. He becomes angry when he is prevented from going out with his friends. When angry he has destroyed household items and has been threatening to his foster carer’s own younger children. He has also started to behave in a way that his carer describes as ‘overly sexual’, although it is not clear what she means by this.

His foster carer has said that she is unsure about whether David can stay with the family. He is getting too big and strong to control, and she is afraid that he may harm her and her children.

David says that he wants to stay with his foster carer and wants to spend more time with his friends outside of school. He thinks that he is old enough to go out on his own, and that he is not allowed to do anything for himself. He wants to have pocket money like his friends.
Case study 4

Brian Smith

Background information

Brian is 16 years old. He is a young, British, white man. He is subject to a care order. He is the only child of Marie, 32, and her previous partner, James, 51. Marie and James met whilst they were living in a residential home for people with learning disabilities. Before Brian was born, Marie and James moved into a flat of their own with floating support provided by the Social Services Department.

Despite the support, Brian was placed on the child protection register at the age of one. James left the family home and moved into a hostel. The Social Services Department continued its support to Marie, and her care of him improved. He remained at home until the age of eight. He was, however, made the subject of a care order.

Marie had a stroke when Brian was eight. She was in hospital for three months, during which time Brian lived with foster carers. When Marie came out of hospital, she could no longer live independently and moved into a residential unit. Brian stayed at the foster carers, but they were unable to care for him on a long-term basis. At age nine he moved to the home of Alison Swaine, a single, permanent foster carer. He had regular contact with his first foster carers and visited his mother regularly.

At the age of 14, Brian committed an indecent assault upon another male pupil of the same age at his high school, and was charged with the offence. The word quickly spread around school and Brian could no longer attend. He was excluded from school by the school governors, at the request of the victim’s parents.

Living close to the school, Alison and Brian were targeted by local youths. She felt she could no longer protect Brian and could not come to terms with his offence, and asked for him to be placed elsewhere. Brian was placed in residential care just after his 15th birthday.

At 15, Brian was charged with, and convicted of, another indecent assault, and was given a 12-month supervision order. He refused to attend school close to his children’s home and was bullied by the other young person who lived there. Brian was very unhappy, spending less and less time at home, despite the efforts of his key worker, Sally, who developed a programme of daytime activities with him.

He was reported as a missing person 21 times in one month. His social worker made an application for a secure accommodation order on the grounds that he was not adhering to his supervision order conditions and was at risk of significant harm. Whilst in secure accommodation, he was contacted by Peter, his personal adviser from the leaving care team.

Brian was released from secure accommodation after three months. He refused to return to his children’s home and ran away immediately. Brian is now on the sex offenders register.
Case study 5

Elani Osman

Background information
Elani is a young man aged nearly 16. He arrived in the UK unaccompanied when he was 14 years old. His family still live in Kosovo. He is of Muslim decent. He was brought to the Social Services Department by a friend of his father’s, whose address he was given before he left Kosovo. Elani has a mobile phone number for him and you think he has spoken to him in the past, but he does not talk about him.

He does not know where his family is. His father disappeared and his mother, brother and sister fled to Albania shortly before he was sent to the UK.

He was accommodated by the local authority under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, and placed in a residential unit, where he has lived ever since. There are six other young people living in the home, one of whom is also Kosovan.

When Elani arrived he spoke no English and refused to speak to anyone except an interpreter, who got to know him very well. He did not like going out and was afraid of being left on his own. He would say nothing about the circumstances of his family or his journey to the UK.

He has applied for refugee status and his case is being dealt with by a local solicitor.

In the past six months Elani has started to be more communicative, but still talks very little about his life at home. There has been no contact with his family. Elani has a SAL document, proving he has applied for refugee status, but there has been no contact from the Home Office or a solicitor since then.

Six months ago Elani started going to school. Since then his English has improved a great deal. The school says that he is very bright but has missed too much education to consider taking GCSEs.

Elani has said that he is interested in animals and misses having livestock around now that he is living in a city.

The staff at the home say Elani is better than he was, but he still gets frightened very easily, often shuts himself in his room and wakes up a lot at night.

He has no contact among the local Kosovan community, which is small. He is not a practising Muslim, and has shown no inclination to get involved in religious life.

Many of these issues have been discussed in previous reviews, but little progress has been made.
Notes, resources and references cited in this chapter:


5. For information on the Change for Children programme, visit the Every Child Matters website at http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/


9. For copies of the LAC materials, visit the Every Child Matters website at http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/


   Available at http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/projects/firstkey/finalreport.pdf

   Available at http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00074

   Available at http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/seu/downloaddocdac1.pdf?id=32

17 Department for Education and Skills National protocol - Inter-authority arrangements for careleavers. London: DfES. 
   Available at http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/9F55FBE7BE917856985F2619A0E929B4.doc


   Available at http://www.adss.org.uk/publications/guidance/ageassessment.pdf


2. workers’ roles

As workers involved in supporting looked after children (LAC) and care leavers (CLs), you are intrinsic to the assessment, planning and review process preparing them for leaving care. You may be involved in helping the young person complete his/her needs assessment or pathway plan, or you may be providing support to the young person to meet his/her needs and prepare him/her for independence under the plan. If you have in-depth knowledge of the young person and have a good relationship with him/her, you may be the best person to help him/her with planning or to represent his/her views if required. However, it is the choice of the young person who he/she wants in this role.

Depending on the setting, other plans not already discussed may be developed as part of the work with the young person, such as action plans or support plans. These will need to be considered as part of the care planning or pathway planning process to ensure that the young person and workers involved are aware of all the services and support that the young person is receiving. This will assist with partnership working. The care plan or pathway plan must specify who is responsible for carrying out tasks identified.

Personal advisers

Local authorities are required to appoint a personal adviser for eligible and relevant children and to continue the appointment for former relevant children. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 Regulation 12 sets out the adviser’s functions. Young CLs should be able to view their personal adviser as someone who is committed to their wellbeing and development on a long-term basis.

Functions of the personal adviser

1. To provide advice (including practical advice) and support
The personal adviser is required to build and develop a network of support for the young person, whose needs will change as time goes on. The extent to which the personal adviser is the main source of advice and support will depend on the young person’s individual circumstances and how much support may be available from other people, such as foster carers, befrienders, independent visitors, mentors, specialist care workers and family networks. The nature and source of advice and support should be agreed and recorded in the pathway plan.

The PA must be the principal point of contact in any matter relating to the pathway plan.

2. To be involved in assessing the young person’s needs and preparing a plan to meet them (pathway plan)
The personal adviser will have a key role in the assessment and pathway planning process, although the young person’s social worker may continue to take responsibility for the management of the process. In that case, the personal adviser’s role is likely to be a negotiating one, ensuring that the plan is realistic and deliverable whilst meeting assessed need.

When the young person leaves care, it is likely that the personal adviser will take over responsibility for updating and reviewing the pathway plan, although local authorities may use dedicated review staff to carry out the reviews for all LAC and CLs.
3. To be involved in reviewing the pathway plan

Pathway plans should be reviewed at least every six months until the young person is 21 years old (or older if the young person is on an agreed education or training course). The personal adviser will have responsibility for agreeing any changes to the pathway plan with the young person and the local authority. For most relevant and former relevant children, the personal adviser will convene the review meetings, linking with other organisations where needed, although authorities may have dedicated review staff to carry out reviews for CLs.

4. To liaise with the local authority to ensure the pathway plan is carried out

The personal adviser should monitor progress in close discussion with the young person and those organisations that have been identified in the plan as required to deliver a service to the young person. The responsible authority must arrange a review if the personal adviser or the young person says that it is needed.

5. To co-ordinate the provision of services and to take reasonable steps to ensure that the young person makes use of such services

The personal adviser is expected to act as a broker to ensure that:

- the range of services identified in the pathway plan is agreed by those responsible for the services;
- services are provided at the right time;
- agencies understand their respective contributions.

The personal adviser needs to involve the young person fully in the making and reviewing of the pathway plan.

6. To keep informed about the young person’s progress and wellbeing

The personal adviser will need to monitor progress through regular contact with the young person and those agencies and individuals who are supporting him/her.

7. To keep written records of contact with the young person

8. To keep in touch

- The responsible authority is required to keep in touch with eligible, relevant and former relevant young people up to the age of 21 (or beyond if the young person is on an approved programme of education or training). This will normally be a role for the personal adviser.
- Where personal advisers lose touch with young people they should take reasonable steps to re-establish contact until they succeed in regaining contact with the young person.
- Personal advisers should be proactive in expressing interest and concern.
- Personal advisers will need to judge the appropriate degree of contact with young people.
- Personal advisers should respect the wishes of young people whilst adopting the spirit of the ‘good parent’ and continuing to convey an interest in the young person’s wellbeing.
Social workers

When an ‘eligible’ young person is referred to a leaving care team, he/she may have an allocated social worker as a looked after child. If it is an 18-plus team then in most cases the young person will be allocated a personal adviser and will continue to have an allocated social worker until he/she formally leaves care.

Local authorities vary greatly in how they organise their support for LAC and CLs. The age at which cases are transferred to leaving care services varies, as does the level of qualification and role of the workers.

It is the allocated social worker’s role to co-ordinate all work with the young person. As the young person moves closer to leaving care, the personal adviser will become the ‘key worker’ for the young person at the same time as the pathway plan replaces the care plan.

The allocated social worker will initially take the lead in the preparation for leaving care. Respective roles, including who will carry out the pathway assessment and draw up the initial pathway plan with the young person, should be agreed with the personal adviser during the early stages of joint working. These tasks could be carried out by either the social worker or the personal adviser. The social worker continues to be responsible for the childcare (care plan) reviews, at which the development of the pathway plan should be discussed with the personal adviser.

A large number of leaving care teams are now 16-plus teams, where full case responsibility is taken at the age of 16, so young people are commonly allocated a worker where the roles of the social worker and the personal adviser have been combined. This has led to issues of conflicting roles, as the same worker can be responsible for requesting and advocating for services, and for providing these services.

The Caerphilly judgment\(^1\) handed down by Justice Munby highlighted this issue as a major concern. Clarity of roles is vital if the needs of CLs are to be met adequately. There must be clear differentiation between the roles of those responsible for conducting needs assessments and those responsible for allocating resources.

This matter was addressed by Mark Burrows, DfES Professional Adviser:

“There must be adequate management supervision of the assessment and pathway planning process for each care leaver. Resource and budgetary accountability should not rest with the individual Personal Adviser. It will be their manager’s role to be accountable for the effective deployment of the services necessary to meet the needs of individual care leavers.” \(^2\)

Foster carers, residential social workers, supported housing workers, supported lodgings providers

In these roles, workers are more directly involved in meeting the needs of LAC and CLs for whom they are responsible, providing accommodation and/or supporting young people in their accommodation. Work that these workers carry out with young people will be crucial in enabling them to develop skills for adult life and to be prepared for leaving care.

A research study by the National Children’s Bureau (NCB) with Essex and Kent Social Services\(^3\), in consultation with young people, lists the following as the roles and tasks of residential carers in the preparation of young people for adulthood, some of which apply to the other settings in which they work:
worker’s roles

• “intervene and protect
• provide shelter, food and warmth in a safe and secure environment
• educate
• act in loco parentis and share and hold parental responsibility
• befriend and advise
• act as a role model
• make decisions
• create opportunities and stimulate creativity
• listen
• equip and enable.”

Connexions advisers

The Connexions Service was established as part of the Government’s agenda to tackle social exclusion by reducing the number of young people excluded from education, training and employment. Its aim is to provide young people aged 13 to 19 (25 for young disabled people) with the advice, guidance, support and personal development they need to prepare them for the transition to work and adult life. It is a universal service with targeted support for vulnerable young people, including LAC and CLs.

It was envisaged that the leaving care personal adviser would generally become the Connexions personal adviser for LAC when they reached the age of 16. However, in practice this is uncommon and Connexions services have been provided in a variety of ways, such as basing Connexions workers in leaving care teams and using Connexions funding to provide services in leaving care teams.

The Green Paper, Youth Matters,\(^4\) proposes a radical change in services for all young people. It calls for a universal youth support service to be available to all young people. With the introduction of children’s trusts, however, it is unclear how this universal support service would interface with specialist services.

What do young people want from workers?

It is not surprising that children and young people are unconcerned about knowledge of legislation and theories when it comes to the things they are looking for in a worker. For children and young people it is the quality and consistency of the relationship that is most important. A study for the British Association of Social Workers looked at the social worker’s role from the child’s point of view.\(^5\) Children stressed the following as being important:

• continuity of the relationship (social worker’s relationship with the child);
• reliability and availability;
• confidentiality;
• advocacy;
• doing things together.

Interpersonal skills and spending time with young people are identified as important in other research with children in this area. Thomas and O’Kane carried out research with children aged between 8 and 12, asking for their views on their ideal social worker.\(^6\) Key requirements were as follows.
worker’s roles

• “Good communication skills - someone who is easy to talk to and understands and explains well
• A good listener - listens to what you have got to say, let you have more say, don’t butt in
• Understanding - understands what you feel and your view of things
• Personal Style - the way they talk, not strict or boring, generally happy, their personality, good sense of humour, friendly, doesn’t lose their temper, doesn’t stare, similar interests, polite, fashionable
• Giving you time - giving you information and time to think about decisions
• Helpful - they help sort things out, get you good foster parents, set boundaries, arrange things, put things into action, can help give you ideas
• Caring - has time for us, kind, calms us down, like a friend, generous, determination, dedication, good at general conversation
• An advocate - willingness to say difficult things on your behalf
• Being fair - they don’t take sides, listen to all sides and negotiate, honesty not favouritism
• Taking you out & treats - visiting and taking you out, giving you chocolate!”

Looked after Children and Care Leavers in WMTD’s peer research study’ highlighted practical, emotional, psychological and social support from workers as being significant, as illustrated in the responses below:

• acceptance
• believed in me
• just being there for me and trying to do things for me
• did all the duties a parent should
• gave me confidence and supported me
• never dismissed my feelings, sat and talked and explained things when I was disappointed
• taught me the skills I needed for life
• made sure I went to school
• helped with education
• gave me a chance when no-one else would
• support, help to make decisions, life skills, finance
• someone to talk to when needed
• talking to me and giving me advice
• giving me general support when times have been hard
• helped me through everything

These findings act as a reminder of some of the things that workers can do which make all the difference to the children and young people with whom they work.
Notes, resources and references cited in this chapter


Further reading and other useful resources


Note: At the time of writing the Government is reviewing the national standards for fostering and residential care.
3. Legislation

The Government has introduced a significant number of pieces of legislation that have fundamentally altered the expectations on local authorities in relation to children and young people in need/looked after by them. This legislation has in turn led to a shift in the expectations on workers and agencies charged with the responsibility of supporting looked after children (LAC) and care leavers (CLs).

The Government’s concerns over the poor outcomes achieved by LAC and CLs have been a catalyst for a number of initiatives and subsequent legislation such as Quality Protects and the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. These have resulted in specific guidance from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Department of Health (DH) in an attempt to ensure local authorities act as good corporate parents to those LAC and CLs for whom they are responsible.

This section of the pack does not seek to give workers ‘chapter and verse’ on all of these legislative changes; rather, it aims to give a brief overview of the legislative context within which workers now find themselves operating and, where appropriate, focus in on the specific statutory responsibilities arising out of these changes and what they mean for workers.

It is worth noting that legislation is subject to interpretation and case law, as well as amendment. Therefore, if workers require specific legal advice regarding an individual’s circumstances such as immigration status, they should seek support from an appropriate professional legal representative.

The following pieces of legislation are fundamental to the practice of those providing support to LAC and CLs. This chapter will signpost to other texts and websites that give specialist knowledge of disability discrimination and community care legislation, as well as more detailed information about the other pieces of key legislation identified below:

1. Children Act 1989
2. Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
3. Children Act 2004
4. Homelessness Act 2002
5. Adoption and Children Act 2002
7. National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990
8. Child Benefit Act 2005

At the time of writing this chapter, the Government White Paper on LAC, Care Matters: Time for Change - was being written. It was published in June 2007.¹ This will have a profound effect on the way services are delivered to LAC and CL’s. As such it may amend earlier pieces of childcare legislation, so professionals should ensure they are aware of any changes this will mean to their own statutory responsibilities as childcare professionals.
Children Act 1989

The Children Act 1989 is the main statutory framework of which professionals involved in working with vulnerable children and their families must be aware. The key principles of the Act include:

- taking into account the views of young people
- consulting with them and keeping them informed
- giving due consideration to young people's race, culture, religion and linguistic background
- reiterating the importance of families and working in partnership with parents
- safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the young people who are being looked after
- recognition of inter-agency responsibility

The Act is important for a number of reasons, particularly because it embodied a change in philosophy, moving from the concept of parental rights towards the rights of the child, whilst emphasising cooperation and the sharing of parental responsibilities. It says that:

- a court or local authority must put children first when making decisions: the first thought must be what is best for that child
- children should be brought up in their own family whenever possible
- children should not be taken away from their family without the family's agreement, unless the child is at risk of substantial harm
- a local authority must give a family help if their child is in need
- a local authority must work together with parents and children
- when children are being looked after by local authorities, they and their parents have rights

Local authorities have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their areas. They can provide accommodation under the Children Act 1989 in a number of ways, as follows.

- Under section 31: the child or young person becomes the subject of a care order. When this occurs a court grants the local authority 'parental responsibility'. This means that the local authority has the same rights and responsibilities in relation to the child as his/her parents have. Any major decisions impacting on the child's life have to be agreed by the local authority.

- Under section 20: the child becomes accommodated by the local authority. This usually involves a voluntary agreement with the child's parents, working in partnership to achieve the best outcomes for the child. It does not convey parental responsibility on the local authority. A young person is able to ask the local authority to accommodate him/her in his/her own right, once he/she reaches the age of 16. The local authority must provide accommodation for any young person aged 16 or 17 if his/her welfare is likely to be 'seriously prejudiced' otherwise, whether or not the young person has previously been in care.

- Courts have a number of other options usually reserved for young people who enter the secure estate– (secure accommodation). Sections 8 and 17 also empower local authorities to request additional court orders to protect the welfare of children in need.

- The responsibilities of local authorities to provide support when children leave care is laid out in section 24 of the Children Act 1989. However, much of this has been amended by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 (see following page).
The primary legislative vehicle for making local authorities take their responsibilities seriously and improve the outcomes for LAC is the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. The Act both amends and supplements the Children Act 1989. The main purpose of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 is to improve the life chances of young people living in and leaving local authority care. Its main aims are:

- to delay young people’s discharge from care until they are prepared and ready to leave
- to improve the assessment, preparation and planning for leaving care
- to provide better personal support for young people after leaving care
- to improve the financial arrangements for CLs

The Act came into force in October 2001. Its key provisions include the following:

- A duty on local authorities to assess and meet the needs of young people aged 16 and 17 who are in care or are CLs. Wherever the young people live, the duty will rest with the local authorities to stay in touch with CLs until they are at least 21 years old.
- Every eligible young person in care should receive a comprehensive pathway plan when he/she turns 16. This plan should map out a clear route to independence.
- Each young person should have a ‘young person’s adviser’ who will co-ordinate the provision of support and assistance to meet the needs of the young person. Particular emphasis is placed on helping the young person into education, training or employment.
- A financial regime for CLs to end the confusing previous system and to ensure they have comprehensive financial support.
- Continuing assistance for CLs aged 18 to 21, especially with education and employment. Assistance with education continues to the end of the agreed programme, even if past the age of 21.

Three new categories of young people were created by this legislation with local authorities having different statutory responsibilities under each category. Consequently, the range of services a young person is entitled to varies according to his/her status under the Act. These categories are:

- **eligible**
- **relevant**
- **former relevant**

A young person’s status under the Act is dependent on three factors:

1. the age of the young person
2. how long the young person was looked after
3. whether or not the young person is still a looked after child

**Eligible child:** a young person who is 16 or 17 years old, who has been looked after for a period of 13 weeks after the age of 14, and who is still looked after.

**Relevant child:** a young person who is 16 or 17 years old, who has previously been looked after for a period of 13 weeks after the age of 14, but who is now no longer a looked after child.

**Former relevant child:** a young person aged 18 to 21 or older, who was previously a relevant or eligible young person immediately prior to turning 18 years old.

An additional group of young people to whom local authorities have responsibilities also exists, i.e. young people qualifying for advice and assistance. These are young people aged 16 to 21 who were looked after for a time between the ages of 16 and 18 in various ways, such as at a residential school, in accommodation provided by an NHS or primary care trust, or privately fostered, but are now no
longer looked after. Relevant and former relevant young people also fall into this category, but as their rights and entitlements are far greater than qualifying young people the other status takes precedent.

* It is important to note that preplanned periods of respite care, lasting no longer than four weeks, do not count towards the 13 week total.

** Relevant young people can lose their relevant status and become qualifying young people if they return to live with someone who has parental responsibility for them. This living arrangement must have lasted for a minimum of six months, and the decision to change status must have been agreed at a pathway planning review.

A key entitlement for eligible, relevant and former relevant young people is the allocation of a personal adviser. The personal adviser’s role is crucial in ensuring that the young person’s needs are identified by a comprehensive assessment and that this is translated into a pathway plan, giving a clear breakdown of the support the local authority has agreed to give to the young person. This must clearly identify the practical, financial and emotional support the young person requires and give a timescale in which to achieve this. The pathway plan must be reviewed at least every six months.

### Summary table of rights and entitlements under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of child or young person</th>
<th>Entitlements under Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eligible child</td>
<td>All the provisions of the LAC system&lt;br&gt;Personal adviser - Part II, Schedule 2, para. 19C.&lt;br&gt;Needs assessment - Part II, Schedule 2, para. 19B(4).&lt;br&gt;Pathway plan and review - Part II, Schedule 2, paras 19B(4) and (5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant child</td>
<td>Personal adviser - section 23B(2).&lt;br&gt;Needs assessment.&lt;br&gt;Pathway plan - section 23B(3) and (4).&lt;br&gt;Accommodation and maintenance - section 23B(8).&lt;br&gt;Assistance to achieve the goals agreed and set out in pathway plan - section 23B(8).&lt;br&gt;Access to the representations procedure.&lt;br&gt;Responsible authority must keep in touch - section 23B(11).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former relevant child</td>
<td>Personal adviser - section 23C.&lt;br&gt;Pathway plan and review.&lt;br&gt;Assistance with education - section 23C.&lt;br&gt;Assistance with employment - section 23C(4)(a).&lt;br&gt;Assistance in general - section 23C(4)(c).&lt;br&gt;Vacation accommodation for higher education or residential further education if needed - section 23C(9).&lt;br&gt;Access to the representations procedure.&lt;br&gt;Responsible authority must keep in touch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifying children and young people aged over 16</td>
<td>The same benefits as under section 24 before amendment to sections 24A and 24B. In addition, the responsible authority must keep in touch as it thinks appropriate in order to discharge its functions under sections 24A, 24B and 24(4).&lt;br&gt;Entitlement to assistance with education and training up to the age of 24 - section 24B(3).&lt;br&gt;Entitlement to vacation accommodation whilst studying for higher education courses or residential further education courses, if necessary - section 24B(5).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This piece of legislation is very clear and prescriptive about the elements of support and preparation that must be available to all LAC and CLs.

The essentials of successful practice for helping CLs have been identified in, and supported by, a substantial body of research findings. These essentials are as follows.

- Provide stable placements, continuity of carers and the maintenance, wherever possible, of positive links with important others.
- Look after young people until they are prepared and ready to leave care.
- Promote and maintain relationships with carers and families, where possible and appropriate, after young people leave care.
- Prepare young people gradually to be ready to leave care, paying attention to practical self-care needs (health, budgeting, domestic skills, and personal and relationship dimensions).
- Enable young people leaving care to realise their potential in education, training and employment.
- Ensure young people leaving care have access to a range of accommodation and the support and skills to maintain themselves in their accommodation.
- Ensure that there is a contingency provision to support CLs in the event of a crisis, including arrangements for respite care.
- Provide or enable ongoing personal support. This may include specialist leaving care scheme support, support by carers and social workers, and support by youth workers, befrienders, mentors or volunteers. This is underlined by the introduction of personal advisers under the Act.
- Where young people leaving care are entitled to claim welfare benefits, ensure that they receive their full entitlements.
- Involve young people in all assessment, planning, review and decision making for leaving care.
- Inform young people leaving care of the available services (including the provision of accessible leaving care guides) and of their right to access their own records.

A number of pamphlets have been published by groups supporting LAC and CLs, detailing young people’s rights under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. The most recent is from the Office for the Children’s Rights Director. It is useful for workers to know the following ten points, identified in this pamphlet, so they can advocate on behalf of young people and feel able to discuss issues that arise.

“10 things the law says care leavers are entitled to when leaving care

1. An assessment of your needs: you have a right to have your needs assessed before you leave care to make sure that you leave:
   - at a time that is right for you;
   - knowing what support you will be getting;
   - understanding what your options are if things do not work out for the best. For many young people, it is important to know that you can stay in care until you are 18 years old, unless you agree that you are ready to leave before.

2. A pathway plan (or ‘leaving care’ plan): you should have a pathway plan, started sometime after your 15th birthday, that you have helped to put together and agree with. This should make clear the help you will be getting in preparing to leave care and what support you will receive after you have left. This should say how your local authority will help you to achieve the things you want in life (such as a place of your own, educational achievement, having your own money to spend, going on a training course or getting the job that you want). This is very important to you, as your pathway plan says exactly what help you should be getting before, during and after you leave care. Once agreed, it should be kept to by all those who have signed it.
When the time comes for you to leave care, you should be able to look after yourself, keep yourself healthy, continue with your learning, enjoy and achieve things in life, stay in touch with family and friends, and be confident about who you are.

3. **A Personal Adviser:** children’s social services should make sure that you have a personal adviser. This could be your current social worker or a worker from the ‘leaving care’ team. It is his/her job to keep in touch with you, check that you are okay and help you in getting what you need. To do this the personal adviser must make sure that your pathway plan is followed, reviewed and kept up to date.

4. **A place to live:** your local authority must make sure that you have somewhere “suitable to live”. This means that it has to be right for you and, above all, safe. It is important that wherever you prefer to live, you make sure that your local authority puts this into your pathway plan. You can decide to return home if this is what you and your family wishes.

5. **Financial support:** until you are 18 years old, the children’s social services must arrange for your financial support to help you pay for the things you need to live (for example, for food, clothing, travel, hobbies and for your accommodation). They have to make sure that you are not any worse off than if you were on benefits. Once you are 18, if not in employment or full-time education, you can claim benefits. However, your local authority should continue to give you financial help (for example, towards the cost of your education and training), if that is what they have agreed to do. In order that children’s social services keep to their promises, they should make sure that all agreed support is written into your pathway plan.*

6. **Maintaining relationships:** your personal adviser should help you to keep contact with relatives, and also friends that you have met whilst in care.

7. **Involvement in decisions:** you have a right to be involved in all major decisions, including when you leave care, where you go to live and what support you receive.

8. **To have your say if you are not happy about something:** although you have left care you are still entitled to let children’s social services know and, if necessary, complain if not satisfied with the support you are getting. REMEMBER: you also have the right to have an advocate to help you do this.

9. **To see your files:** the law says that you have a right to see written information that is about you. This includes social services files and many young people would like help in getting access to these.

10. **To know about services you can use:** you have a right to be told, and to be given information telling you, about all the services that you are entitled to use once you leave care (for example, Connexions, children’s social services, health, further and higher education courses and housing advice).*

*Note: since the CSIE guide was written, the law has changed. From April 2006, the Child Benefit Act 2005 provides that income support for CLs and other young people who are studying full time in ‘non-advanced’ and ‘approved’ education will be extended to their 20th birthday (or to the end of the course, whichever is sooner) if they started the course before their 19th birthday.*
The role of agencies and carers in the preparation period

Helping young people to prepare for more independent living is a fundamental task of foster carers, residential social workers and other support staff working with LAC. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 is a guide for those charged with this task. This clearly states that the principles underlying preparation for leaving care should reflect good childcare practice generally, following the principles of the Children Act 1989. Preparation should be regarded as an integral part of the care process. A stable care relationship is an important basis on which to plan the preparation of a young person for leaving care.

Services for young people must take account of the need for young people to make a gradual transition from dependence to independence. The support provided should be, broadly, the support that a good parent might be expected to give. Young people should be consulted and their opinions sought with these informing any discussions and plans for their future.

Well before a young person leaves care, a plan should be formulated, with their full involvement. In the case of an eligible child, this should develop into the pathway plan which should specify the type of help the young person will be receiving and from whom (See Chapter 5 of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 Regulations and Guidance).

For young people who will qualify for advice and assistance only under section 24(1) of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, this plan for continuing care should incorporate contingency arrangements in the event of a breakdown in the young person’s living arrangements after he/she has left care.

Contingency plans should consider what will happen in the event of an accommodation breakdown. Plans should consider previous more supportive placements e.g. previous foster placement, as options that allow the young person to “re-group” before moving again into an independent living scenario.

The services responsible for providing after-care must work together with all the other organisations, agencies and local authority departments to ensure care leavers receive a seamless service. All relevant services; education and housing authorities, the Connexions Direct Service/Careers Service, health authority, should have the opportunity to contribute to the assessment/planning process as the young person reaches the age of 16 and beyond into adulthood.

During the preparation and planning period, a local authority should also take account, where appropriate, of the need to enable young people to relate better to their own family. It has a duty to make arrangements to enable a young person whom it is looking after to live with parents, relatives or friends “unless that would not be reasonably practicable or consistent with his welfare (section 23(6)).”

Even if it is proved to be impracticable or undesirable to make such arrangements, any improvement that can be achieved in relationships between a young person and his/her family is usually to be welcomed and will contribute to the young person’s capacity to cope in adult life. Similarly, general contact with family and friends should be promoted where consistent with a young person’s welfare (paragraph 15 of Schedule 2).”

As with the pathway plan, where it applies, parents should be invited to help formulate a continuing care plan (if they are not estranged from the young person). So too should foster carers, if the young person is leaving a foster placement (whether local authority or private). If the young person wishes it, his/her foster carer should be encouraged and enabled to play a continuing role in his/her support. All preparation for leaving care and the provision of after-care must take account of the religious persuasion, ethnic origin, cultural and linguistic background and other needs of the young person (section 22(5)(c)).
The three stages of preparation

The Guidance accompanying the C(LC) Act 2000 states there are three broad aspects to preparation for leaving care:

1. “enabling young people to build and maintain relationships with others, ...
   [including] sexual relationships ... ;
2. enabling young people to develop their self-esteem;
3. teaching practical and financial skills and knowledge.

Each of these is considered in more detail below. Social services departments, voluntary organisations and children’s homes should ensure that social workers, residential staff and foster carers are trained so that they can help young people to be properly prepared for leaving care.8

Enabling young people to build and maintain relationships

Preparation for leaving care should help to develop young people’s capacity to make satisfactory relationships, to develop their self-esteem and to enable them to acquire the necessary practical skills for independent living.

Enabling young people to develop their self-esteem

Many looked after young people and CL’s have experienced damaging and traumatic pre-care experiences. These experiences can lead to young people feeling worthless and/or guilty because they feel they were in some way to blame for the events that precipitated them being taken into the care system. These feelings can become compounded with the stigma associated with being in ‘care’. Some children may even experience abuse and neglect within the care system itself.

Young people need the opportunity to discuss how they feel about both their pre-care experience and their ‘looked after’ experience. Research suggests that paying attention to young people’s emotional needs is important to help them to benefit from other support available to them, for example, employment opportunities.9 Young people need opportunities to develop and grow and to feel good about themselves. Local authority workers, carers, personal advisers and social workers all have an important part to play in securing and supporting young people to do this.

Managing risk is an important aspect of supporting young peoples’ development. Carers must be supported so they know which risks are acceptable for young people to deal with. Young people might be emotionally hurt if a personal relationship doesn’t work out, however no-one would suggest young people shouldn’t be encouraged to make new relationships! For young people to develop socially and culturally they must have opportunities to grow and experiment.

Practical and financial skills and knowledge

- “Many young people leave care without adequate preparation in practical and financial skills and knowledge. These include:
  - How to shop for, prepare and cook food
  - Eating a balanced diet
  - Laundry, sewing and mending and other housekeeping skills
  - How to carry out basic household jobs, such as mending fuses (which will involve basic electrical and other knowledge)
  - Safety in the home and first aid
- The cost of living
- Household budgeting, including the matching of expenditure to income, the regular payment of bills and avoidance of the excessive use of credit
- Health education, including personal hygiene
- Sexual education, including ... preparation for parenthood
- Applying for, and being interviewed for, a job
- The rights and responsibilities of being an employee
- The rights and responsibilities of being an employer (disabled young people may use direct payments to employ their own personal assistants)\(^\text{10}\)
- Applying for a course of education or training
- Applying for housing and locating and maintaining it
- Registering with a doctor and dentist\(^\text{11}\)

It is vital that preparation for independence is not seen purely as a list of practical tasks that can be ticked off and, once completed, the young person discharged from the system.

The process of preparation should ensure that young people have opportunities to make friends from outside of the care system, so that when they do leave care, they have a supportive network of friends. Looked after young people must be equipped just as their non-looked after peers are, to be able to make and sustain personal relationships. This will require workers to support the young person to ‘network’ into community resources, just as their non-looked after peers are supported by family and friends.

**Children Act 2004**

The Children Act 2004\(^\text{12}\) does not replace or even amend much of the Children Act 1989. Instead it sets out the process for integrating services for children so that every child can achieve the five outcomes laid out in the Green Paper Every child matters\(^\text{13}\), those being:

- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic wellbeing

Besides creating the post of Children’s Commissioner for England, the Children Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to appoint a director of children’s services and an elected lead member for children’s services who will be ultimately accountable for the delivery of those services. It places a duty on local authorities and their partners (including the police, health service providers and the youth justice system) to co-operate to promote the wellbeing of children and young people and to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

It includes a power to set up a new database with information about children, and Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) to replace Area Child Protection Committees, with statutory membership from ‘Board Partners’. This puts the new LSCBs on a statutory footing.

The Act also provides a framework for inspection and joint area reviews. If authorities are deemed to be failing, then new powers of intervention are also provided.

A duty to promote the educational achievement of LAC is also highlighted as a key area for authorities to prioritise and demonstrate that they are doing all they can to raise the educational attainment of
LAC within their authority. It is section 52 of the Children Act 2004 that places a new duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of LAC. The duty is designed to ensure that local authorities take particular account of the educational implications of any decision they make about the welfare of children they are responsible for looking after. The duty applies to all LAC, including those placed out of the authority.

All children and young people who require integrated support from more than one practitioner should experience a seamless and effective service. It is proposed that this will be delivered most effectively when one practitioner - a ‘lead professional’ - takes a lead role to ensure that frontline services are co-ordinated, coherent and achieve the intended outcomes. It is likely that LAC and CLs will require a lead professional to co-ordinate the services a young person and his/her family may need.

What is the role of a lead professional?

The lead professional is not a new role. He/she will deliver three core functions as part of his/her work:

1. act as a single point of contact for the child or family
2. co-ordinate the delivery of the actions agreed
3. reduce overlap and inconsistency in the services received

A lead professional is accountable to his/her home agency for the delivery of the lead professional functions. He/she is not responsible or accountable for the actions of others.

Who will lead professionals work with?

Lead professionals will work with children and young people with additional (including complex) needs, who require an integrated package of support from more than one practitioner.

Who should be the lead professional?

The role of lead professional can be taken on by many different types of practitioners in the children’s workforce, as the skills, competence and knowledge required to carry out the role are similar regardless of professional background or job. The role is defined by the functions and skills, rather than by particular professional or practitioner groupings.

What skills and knowledge are required in a lead professional?

Lead professionals need the knowledge, competence and confidence to:

- develop a successful and productive relationship with the child and family, and to communicate without jargon
- organise meetings and discussions with different practitioners
- use a ‘Common Assessment Framework’ to develop support plans based on the ‘Every Child Matters’ outcomes
- co-ordinate the delivery of effective early intervention work and ongoing support
- work in partnership with other practitioners to deliver the child’s or young person’s support plan

The statutory guidance on the Children Act 2004 (section 10, inter-agency co-operation, and section 11, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children) sets out clear expectations for the implementation of the lead professional role. 14, 15
Homelessness Act 2002

There are a variety of reasons that make CLs more vulnerable to becoming homeless. Despite a gradual increase in the numbers of CLs remaining looked after until their 18th birthday, around 8,500 16 to 18 year olds leave care every year. Despite intensive initiatives by the Government, CLs still have lower rates of educational attainment and participation in further education after the age of 16 than their non-looked after peers. They also have higher levels of unemployment and welfare benefits dependency once they are eligible to claim mainstream benefits at the age of 18.

CLs have to learn to live independently at a younger age than most other young people. Children often enter the care system as a result of the breakdown of their birth family. Some will have experienced physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or neglect. For this reason, CLs often lack the emotional and practical support from families that other young people can rely on. Even if a high level of support is provided by social services during the leaving care period, it is likely to be limited in the longer term. Research has shown that up to 20 per cent of those in care experience homelessness within two years of leaving. Between a quarter and a third of all people sleeping on the streets have spent time as children being ‘looked after’ by local authorities.\(^{16}\)

The Homelessness Act 2002\(^{17}\) has significantly changed the way in which homelessness in England and Wales is tackled. The Act’s main features are:

- a new duty on local authorities to carry out a review of homelessness in their area
- a new duty on local authorities to publish a strategy to tackle and prevent homelessness
- a new duty to provide settled accommodation for unintentionally homeless people in priority need
- reforms to the framework by which councils allocate housing

Councils are now obliged to take a strategic approach to tackling homelessness in all its forms. Particular emphasis must be placed on preventing homelessness.

The Homelessness Act 2002 repeals the main duty in the 1996 Housing Act, which required local authorities to provide temporary accommodation for priority homeless people for only two years. The 2002 Act removes this time limit and replaces it with a requirement to provide temporary accommodation until the applicant has been provided with settled accommodation. This is of particular relevance to CLs because the Homelessness Act 2002 also extended the groups of homeless people with a priority need of accommodation to include:

- 16 and 17 year olds;
- CLs aged between 18 and 20;
- those who are vulnerable as a result of having been in care, the armed forces or prison, or as a result of fleeing violence or the threat of violence.

The inclusion of CLs on the priority needs list means that the number of CLs who become homeless should, in theory, have lessened. However, the disputes between social services and homelessness sections within housing departments still occur. This has been tackled in some local authorities through joint protocols between housing and children’s services. In addition, a new code of guidance\(^{18}\) for local authorities has been published to replace the previous one, which recommends that bed and breakfast accommodation (B&B) is not likely to be suitable for 16 and 17 year olds. However, it steers away from an outright ban on councils making use of B&Bs for this group.
Supporting People

The Supporting People (SP) programme provides housing-related support to a wide variety of people in particular circumstances. Groups helped under this scheme include young homeless people, people with mental health problems or disabilities, women fleeing domestic violence, and people with learning disabilities. The programme requires that housing and social services departments work in partnership with their health department and probation services to address the housing and support needs of vulnerable people. Although eligible and relevant CLs are not entitled to SP support, once they reach 18 years of age they are able to access SP funding. This can be an extremely important way of funding either fixed housing support or as part of a supported housing project or floating support that helps maintain young people in their own tenancies.

Adoption and Children Act 2002

A significant number of young people enter the LAC system or require support because of adoption breakdown. The Adoption and Children Act 2002 places a responsibility on local authorities to ensure adequate support services are available to assist families and young people going through difficulties as a result of an adoption. Support for adopted young people and their families must now be made available.

The role of ‘special guardianship’ is introduced, which offers the possibility of long-term support and stability for those young people for whom adoption is not an option. Under section 24 of the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Children and Adoption Act 2002, local authorities children’s services will continue to have a responsibility for providing advice and support to children aged 16 and above under special guardianship and residence orders. In many local authorities this function will be undertaken by their leaving and after-care services.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 aims to end the discrimination that many disabled people face. This Act gives disabled people rights in the areas of:

- employment
- education
- access to goods, facilities and services
- buying or renting land or property

The Act also allows the Government to set minimum standards so that disabled people can use public transport easily. It defines a disabled person as someone with “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities” (Part 1, section 1).

In relation to the education of disabled people, the Act states that each county, voluntary or grant-maintained school’s annual report should include a report containing information on the arrangements for the admission of disabled pupils. Schools are required to take steps to prevent disabled pupils from being treated less favourably, and details of the facilities provided to assist disabled pupils’ access to the school must be given.
The Disability Discrimination Act 2005

In April 2005 a new Disability Discrimination Act was passed by Parliament, which amends or extends existing provisions in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, including:

- making it unlawful for operators of transport vehicles to discriminate against disabled people
- making it easier for disabled people to rent property and for tenants to make disability-related adaptations
- making sure that private clubs with 25 or more members cannot keep disabled people out, just because they have a disability
- extending protection to cover people who have HIV, cancer and multiple sclerosis from the moment they are diagnosed
- ensuring that discrimination law covers all the activities of the public sector
- requiring public bodies to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people

Some of the new laws, including the increased protection for people with HIV, cancer and multiple sclerosis, came into force in December 2005. The Disability Rights Commission was set up by the Government to secure civil rights for disabled people and produces guidance on which aspects of life are covered by anti-discrimination law for disabled people.

National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990

Key points of the Act:

- Local authority social services departments have overall responsibility for community care.
- Local authorities must produce and publish community care plans.
- Local authorities must assess people who they think may be in need of community care services.
- Local authorities must arrange for the provision of care.
- Local authorities must encourage and promote the development of private and voluntary agencies by purchasing care and/or services from them.
- Local authorities must establish a complaints procedure.

Key objectives of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990

Community services: where possible services should be provided in the home or local community.

Services for carers: family, neighbours or friends provide most community care. The work that they do often goes unrecognised. Many need financial help and need to be considered when an individual’s needs assessment is being made.

Assessments for care: there was concern that large sums of money were being spent on residential and nursing home care without a proper assessment of need. The Government thought this was not always the best use of resources. Your local authority is now solely responsible for assessment of need.

A “mixed economy of care”:

- the Government takes the view that better services will result from increased competition among a variety of providers. Your local authority must show, in its community care plan, that it will encourage the independent sector to provide these services. Because of differing local circumstances, between inner city and rural areas for example, the mixed economy of care will look very different in different local authorities.

A clear demarcation of responsibilities:

- since April 1993, local authorities have had the responsibility to assess people’s needs and care management. This includes the allocation of funds for places in nursing and residential homes as well as other services, such as domiciliary care.

Value for money: one of the Government’s principal policy objectives was to remove the financial incentive for people to be placed in care homes when they were able to claim benefit from what was then the Department of Social Security.
Community Care (Direct Payments) Act 1996

The Community Care (Direct Payments) Act 1996 empowers local authority social services departments to make direct cash payments for community care services. In April 2003, it became mandatory to offer the direct payments scheme to people who fall within certain rules in England, although in Wales direct payments are discretionary.

Direct payments are available to carers and disabled people over the age of 16 who have been assessed as needing services. Local authorities must consider every application for a direct payment on its own merit. They may make a direct payment as well as arrange some services themselves.

Any person who receives direct payments must be willing and able to manage them (alone or with assistance). Day-to-day control of the money and the care package passes to the person who is best able to ensure that it will be spent properly on the most appropriate services for the person. People receiving direct payments can ask a carer or another person to manage them and to act as the person’s agent.

Looked after children in custody: Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in custody (DfES Circular LAC (2004)26)

In this circular, the DfES has clarified the responsibilities of local authorities in relation to young people if they are remanded or sentenced to a custodial sentence whilst under the care of local authorities. If a young person is the subject of a care order under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 then they will remain a looked after child whilst on remand or in custody. However, a child looked after under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 will no longer remain a looked after child whilst in custody or on remand – unless they are remanded into the care of the local authority.

Child Benefit Act 2005

This legislation is particularly important to young people in full-time, non-advanced education or further education. Previously, young people over 18 were not able to claim income support if they were studying these types of courses. In many circumstances this meant young people had to drop out of these types of courses once they reached 19 years of age, because they had no means of support.

The Child Benefit Act 2005 introduces the concept of a qualifying young person. A qualifying person can continue to receive income support until he/she either finishes his/her course or reaches 20 years of age (whichever comes first).

A ‘qualifying’ young person includes a person who is 16 years old (and whose birthday falls before 31st August) and who is undertaking a course of full-time education that is not advanced education, or who is undertaking approved training not provided through a contract of employment. People who are over the age of 16 and undertaking full-time non-advanced education or approved training must have commenced their course or training before reaching the age of 19 and must be under the age of 20.

This means young people can continue to receive income support and therefore housing benefit and education maintenance allowance, while they continue in non-advanced, full-time study until they turn 20 years old, as long as they commenced the course prior to turning 19 years old. This will benefit those young people who want a second chance to catch up on missed periods of study.
National protocol for inter-authority responsibilities/assistance for care leavers who move between authorities

The protocol was developed to offer guidance to local authorities to ensure minimum standards of leaving care services for CLs who move between authorities and where the responsible authority has difficulties in delivering the service directly because of the distances involved. This will be particularly relevant when LAC are placed out of authority and decide to continue living in their new community.

Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000

This Act came into force in England in April 2001 (late 2001 in Wales). It allows young disabled people aged 16 and 17 to receive direct payments for the first time. This means that if a young person has been assessed as needing a service, the social services department can make a cash payment to let the young person arrange and pay for his/her own care services. The young person’s parents or another third party can also manage direct payments on behalf of the young person.

The Act also gives carers an independent right to request an assessment whether or not the disabled person is being assessed. The assessment is of the carer’s ability to care. Social services must then decide whether or not the carer has a need for services such as respite care, help with housework etc.

Contact details for useful organisations

Transition Information Network
This is for:
- teenagers and young people in the UK who have an impairment or disability and who are wondering what opportunities and services there should be available when they leave school
- parents, carers and professional workers, who will probably want to use it too!

http://www.myfuturechoices.org.uk/

Disability Rights Commission
The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) is the statutory body set up by the Government to help secure civil rights for disabled people.

http://www.drc-gb.org/

The Howard League for Penal Reform
Extremely useful website and details of an advice line for those working with young people in custody.

http://www.howardleague.org/

Refugee Council
The Refugee Council is the largest organisation in the UK working with asylum seekers and refugees. It not only gives direct help and support, but also works with asylum seekers and refugees to ensure their needs and concerns are addressed. Extremely useful advice line details are available from the website, at

http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/

The National Youth Agency
http://www.nya.org.uk/
Handout

Legislation Quiz

1. Name three key principles of the Children Act 1989.

2. What is the purpose of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000?

3. Which football team is at the top of the Barclaycard Premiership table?

4. What are the main aims of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000?

5. Name and define the three new categories of young people created within the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

6. What single is currently at number one?

7. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 requires which young people to have an allocated personal adviser?


9. Which television programme currently has the highest ratings?

10. What are the Every Child Matters’ five outcomes?
Notes, resources and references cited in this chapter

1 At the time of writing the Government is considering how it can best achieve a fundamental improvement in outcomes for LAC and CLs. New government policy will be introduced to bring about fundamental changes to local authority responsibilities towards these young people. Department for Education and Skills (2007) Care Matters: Time for Change. Norwich: TSO. Available at: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/timeforchange/


16 See www.shelter.org.uk


19 “More information on the Supporting People programme can be found at http://www.spkweb.org.uk/”


4. the needs of looked after children and care leavers

Young people who enter the looked after children (LAC) system and remain either voluntarily accommodated or looked after as the result of a court order (such as a care order under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989) will have already experienced significant traumatic events within their lives.

It could be argued that the threshold for children and young people to become LAC has risen significantly over the past 20 years. Local authorities have established stringent gate-keeping procedures to stem the tide of young people who were entering the care system during the late 1980s.

The emphasis local authorities put on child protection rather than preventive interventions to assist families in difficulties leads to many dysfunctional families reaching a crisis point that necessitates the reception of children into the care of the local authority. It could also be argued that, because children and young people remain in damaging family environments for longer, by the time children have been received into care, the impact of their abuse and neglect has already caused significant disturbance to their emotional and physical development.

**Attachment issues**

What is attachment and why is it important?

The concept of attachment has come to dominate social work thinking about childcare over the past 20 years. From infancy, children attach themselves emotionally and psychologically to a primary care provider. This attachment is a basic human need. A positive attachment - one of trust and security - results from the primary care provider’s consistent and satisfactory responses to the child’s physical and emotional needs. A harmonious sequence of responses between child and care provider establishes the basis of an individual’s internal working models for forming and sustaining relationships.

A positive and secure attachment is also crucial for the development of a healthy sense of self-identity and to regulate mood and impulse control. These, in turn, help a child to develop good emotional balance and resilience to stress.

A child who has formed a secure attachment will develop:

- the confidence to engage in exploratory behaviour and will learn from that about the surrounding environment and his/her own self;
- a sense of self as competent and effective, bolstering confidence for the development of physical and social skills, which lead to independence and autonomy.

Secure and selective attachment is also associated with good outcomes in child development. Conversely, depriving the child of opportunities to develop a secure and selective attachment is associated with adverse effects in cognitive, social, emotional and moral development.

**Attachment theory and attachment problems**

Attachment theory is a theory, or group of theories, originated by John Bowlby about the psychological tendency to seek closeness to another person, to feel secure when that person is present, and to feel anxious when that person is absent. Bowlby proposed that attachment is a developmental process that has evolved over time. Its primary purpose is to ensure young children maintain proximity to a familiar person as a way of ensuring their safety.
Bowlby suggests children who are adopted after the age of six months are at risk of attachment problems. Normal attachment develops during the child’s first two to three years of life. Problems with the mother-child relationship during that time, or lack of opportunity to bond with a care giver, or breaks in the consistent caregiver-child relationship interfere with the normal development of a healthy and secure attachment. There are wide ranges of attachment difficulties that result in varying degrees of emotional disturbance in the child. One thing is certain: if an infant’s needs are not met consistently, in a loving, nurturing way, attachment will not occur normally and this underlying problem will manifest itself in a variety of symptoms.²

Erik Erikson suggested that healthy child development depends on appropriate adult responses to the child’s needs as they develop and grow through defined stages. If an infant’s physical and emotional needs are met in a consistent and caring way, he/she learns that his/her mother or caregiver can be counted on and develops an attitude of trust in people. When the first 18 months of life attachment cycle is undermined and the child’s needs are not met, an infant may become fearful and learn not to trust the people around him. Mistrust begins to define the perspective of the child and in direct consequence; the child may become wary of others. As a consequence effective attachment behaviour can be seriously impeded, resulting in attachment problems.³ If the developmental stages following these first crucial 18 months continue to be distorted and delayed, common symptoms emerge.

Addressing attachment issues
Many LAC have problems in making attachments arising from their experience of neglect and abuse. Some children in care have post-traumatic stress disorder as well as attachment disorders and they may have many other neurological and developmental disabilities as well. The co-occurrence of these conditions can lead to severe emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Those working with such children face many challenges, such as:
- providing children with safe and nurturing environments
- managing the children’s relationships with members of their family of origin to support future resolutions with their parents
- At times, when returning the child to his/her parents is not possible, supporting the child in forming new attachments to foster parents or other care providers

Behaviours associated with attachment disorders
The behaviours associated with attachment disorders are many and varied. In some instances the effects last into adulthood. They include:
- eating and sleeping problems
- social skills deficits
- learning difficulties
- attention deficits
- aggressive outbursts
- mood disorders
- adjustment disorders
- difficulties with transition
- relationship problems
- neurological problems and developmental difficulties
People with a history of attachment problems may also have a multitude of mental health difficulties and maladaptive forms of behaviour. These can include:

- difficulties with mood and impulse control;
- substance and alcohol abuse;
- engagement in risky or antisocial activities;
- failure to maintain relationships;
- poor parenting.

It is therefore essential that LAC have case workers and carers who are sensitive to their needs and have the appropriate resources to meet them.

Placing a child in care away from home is fraught with complications and multiple placements are all too often a reality in the looked after system. With each breakdown of placement, the child experiences rejection, his/her distrust in care providers is reinforced and coping abilities are further eroded. Even in the best of circumstances, in which there is continuity with a foster family, children attach to their new care providers only to realise that in late adolescence they will be discharged from care and the nature of their relationship with their care providers will change dramatically and may, on occasions, even end entirely. This realisation can result in a significant crisis and may reverse some of the gains achieved while in care. The need to belong is overwhelming and children and young people whose attachment capacities have been compromised may face the transition to adulthood, confused and alone.

It is crucial that those working with LAC are aware of the significance of attachment disorders. Above all, it is vital that children are safeguarded with placements that are safe, nurturing and long term.

**Separation and loss**

We all experience loss at some point in our lives. It may involve bereavement, or a significant person no longer being as accessible to us as they once were. For adults, the experience of loss and the emotions it generates can be difficult to work through. Having the opportunity to prepare for an impending loss allows us to feel we have some sense of control over the situation. For youngsters who do not have the chance to exchange goodbyes or receive permission to move on, it is more likely they will sustain additional damage to their basic sense of trust and security, and to their self-esteem. This can affect their ability to initiate and sustain strong relationships in the future.

“There are distinct phases of mourning, grief, has several components: yearning and pining; searching; dealing with sadness, anger, anxiety, guilt, and shame; experiencing disorganization and despair; and finally beginning the job of reorganization.

Each phase helps the child recover from the loss, accept what has happened, and move toward healing. Although children may have a mixture of these feelings, shifting among them over time, it is not unusual for one reaction to predominate at first, and then for the child to begin work on another as the first subsides. Some children feel overwhelming anxiety or sadness first, while others begin with anger or guilt.

Whether the feelings are mixed or successive, each component of grief must be worked through, and none suppressed. This can be a lengthy though intermittent process, taking as much as two to three years in adults and longer in children. Older children may need more time than preschool children, and adolescents can be especially vulnerable to separations and losses, because so much in their lives is already in flux.”

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In addition, research indicates that serious ambivalence or internal conflicts about the relationship with the lost person severely complicate the grief process, extending the time it may take to move through it. This is especially relevant for young people who have lost their families because of having to move away from the family home into the LAC system as the result of child protection issues or concerns about neglect or abuse. The young person may be relieved to be away from the home situation and have ambivalent feelings about one or more of their primary caregivers.

For those young people who have experienced significant loss, any new loss can cause them to relive the difficult emotions associated with their first loss. For example, a young person who has been well settled in a foster placement or children’s home may begin exhibiting rejecting behaviour towards his/her carers. The trauma of loss can be so painful for some young people that they either protect themselves by avoiding making close relationships with their new caregivers or they ‘sabotage’ their placement, rejecting caregivers before they themselves can be rejected.

Resilience

Resilience: what is it and how can it be promoted?

It is a term used in psychology to describe the capacity of people to cope with stress and catastrophe. It is also used to indicate a characteristic of resistance to future negative events. Unfortunately, the conditions that promote resilience in children and young people may not have been available to many of the young people in the LAC system. The significance and consequences of this can be far-reaching. Young adults without resilience are far less able to motivate themselves or deal with adversity than their peers who experienced the prerequisite conditions to promote inner strength.

Young people lacking in resilience struggle with the day-to-day situations that can arise in the workplace or classroom. An example of this can be seen when a non-resilient child is faced with a difficult task. The resilient child sees the task as a challenge and works to complete the task. Once the task is complete the child is further rewarded by an increase in his/her self-belief that he/she can overcome obstacles and challenges. The non-resilient child is likely to give up at the first hurdle, which in turn sets up a negative spiral where the child believes he/she cannot achieve and so avoids taking on new challenges.

What parents and caregivers can do

Parents and caregivers promote resilience in the child when they:

- provide unconditional love and positive regard;
- express love verbally and physically in age-appropriate ways;
- use limits, calming behaviour and oral reminders to help the child manage and modulate feelings, especially negative feelings and impulsive responses;
- model consistent behaviour that communicates values and rules, including helpful resilience factors;
- clarify the basis for rules and expectations;
- praise accomplishments and desired behaviour, such as sticking with and finishing a difficult homework assignment;
- provide opportunities for the child to practice dealing with problems and adversities through exposure to manageable adversities and role-play; they provide guidance in the process, drawing on appropriate resilience factors;
- encourage communication so issues, expectations, feelings and problems can be discussed and shared.
They also:

- balance autonomy with available, but not imposed, help;
- modulate consequences for mistakes with love and empathy so that the child can fail without feeling too much stress or fear of loss of approval and love;
- communicate about and negotiate growing independence, new expectations and new challenges;
- encourage the child to accept responsibility for the consequences of his/her behaviour while communicating confidence and optimism about the desired outcome;
- encourage and model flexibility in selecting different resilience factors as a response to an adverse situation, for example, seeking help instead of continuing alone in a very difficult situation, showing empathy instead of continuing with anger or fear, or sharing feelings with a friend instead of continuing to suffer alone.

Opportunities arise in day-to-day living situations that enable caregivers, key workers and other workers to promote resilience in the young people towards whom they have a responsibility. It is important that these opportunities are used constructively, so that shared time and space actually becomes therapeutic for the young person. Many carers forget or fail to understand that they are a valuable resource for the young person in their own right!

Checklist for children

The following items were used in the International Resilience Project as a checklist for perceptions of resilience in children.6

- The child has someone who loves him/her totally (unconditionally).
- The child has an older person outside the home he/she can tell about problems and feelings.
- The child is praised for doing things on his/her own.
- The child can count on his/her family being there when needed.
- The child knows someone he/she wants to be like.
- The child believes things will turn out all right.
- The child does endearing things that make people like him/her.
- The child is willing to try new things.
- The child likes to achieve in what he/she does.
- The child feels that what he/she does makes a difference in how things turn out.
- The child likes himself/herself.
- The child can focus on a task and stay with it.
- The child has a sense of humour.
- The child makes plans to do things.

Family protective factors promoting resilience

- Caring relationship of a family member
- Warm, structured and positive discipline practices
- Parental monitoring and supervision
- Support from extended family
- Good health and good prenatal care
- Opportunity for children to contribute to the family goals
- Listening and talking to children
• Stable environment and home
• Responding to and accepting children’s behaviour
• Providing toys and materials
• Providing safe places for exploration and privacy
• Providing positive experiences for children in the community
• Teaching children effective and appropriate problem-solving skills
• Family members who show respect for other relatives and adults
• Quality family time with each other

Stigma and spoiled identity

The impact of stigma and spoiled identity on children and young people
Bruce Link and fellow Columbia University colleague Jo Phelan define stigma as: “... when a person is identified by a label that sets the person apart and links the person to undesirable stereotypes that result in unfair treatment and discrimination.”

In an effort to further Goffman’s definition of stigma, Link and Phelan propose that a stigma arises as a product of four social processes: first, people distinguish and label human differences. Secondly, dominant cultural beliefs link labelled persons to undesirable characteristics (to negative stereotypes). In the third social process, labelled persons are placed in distinct categories so as to accomplish some degree of separation of ‘us’ from ‘them’. In the fourth, labelled persons experience status loss and discrimination, which leads to unequal outcomes. Link states: “We apply the term stigma when elements of labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss and discrimination co-occur in a power situation that allows the components of stigma to unfold.”

Components of stigma
• Distinguishes differences and labels person
• Undesirable characteristics are assigned to labelled person
• Labelled person is placed in distinct ‘us’ versus ‘them’ category
• Labelled person experiences status loss and discrimination

We can see this process in action when we consider a young person becoming a looked after child. The two most commonly held public perceptions of a looked after child are that he/she is either: a poor orphan who has no parents (through no fault of his/her own) and should therefore be deserving of our sympathy, or, alternatively, that, he/she has been removed from his/her family because he/she is out of control and somehow inherently bad and is in need of a strict and punishing regime to get him/her back ‘on the straight and narrow’.

Unfortunately for many young people the labelling process may have begun while they were still living at home. They may have already experienced being the scapegoat for their family’s dysfunctional pattern of operating.

This situation can then be compounded by their removal from the family home. They internalise their label as ‘the problem’ and may then act out their label by becoming involved in deviant behaviour. For many young people the acceptance of their peers can become hugely significant. If the only positives they receive are from their peers because of negative or deviant social behaviour then there is little incentive to give up such behaviour.
If accommodated in a children’s home or hostel, the reaction of local neighbours, shopkeepers and community members may reinforce the view the young person has of him/herself. Many such accommodation resources become wrongly blamed by the local community for any and all criminality within the local area. For a young person banned from using local shops or facilities purely on the grounds that he/she lives in the local children’s home, the situation does very little for that individual’s feeling of self worth!

Young people may have acquired and internalised other negative labels by virtue of their ethnicity, sexuality, disability, criminality, non-attendance at school, learning difficulties, asylum seeker status, mental health issues and so on.

Self-esteem

Workers have a crucial role in helping young people understand the situation they find themselves in. They need to give the young person opportunities to rebuild and develop positive self-esteem. The Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities and Dr. Robert Brooks compiled a list of ways parents, significant adults and workers can develop positive feelings of self-worth in their children or the children they work with:

1. Help the young person feel special and appreciated.

Research indicates that one of the main factors that contributes to a child developing hope and becoming resilient is the presence of at least one adult who helps the child to feel special and appreciated; an adult who does not ignore the child’s problems, but focuses energy on the child’s strengths. If you are a key worker, one way for you to do this is to set aside ‘special times’ during the week for you to spend with the young person. During these special times, focus on things that the young person enjoys doing so that he/she has an opportunity to relax and to display his/her strengths.

2. Help the young person to develop problem-solving and decision-making skills.

High self-esteem is associated with solid problem-solving skills. For example, if the young person is having difficulty with a friend, you can ask him/her to think about a couple of ways of solving the situation. Do not worry if the young person cannot think of solutions immediately; you can help him/her to reflect upon possible solutions. Also, try role-playing situations with the young person to help demonstrate the steps involved in problem solving.

3. Avoid comments that are judgmental and, instead, frame them in more positive terms.

For example, a comment that often sounds accusatory is: “Try harder and put in more of an effort.” Many young people do try hard and still have difficulty. Instead, say: “We have to figure out better strategies to help you learn.” Young people are less defensive when the problem is cast as strategies that need to be changed rather than as something deficient with their motivation. This approach also reinforces problem-solving skills.

4. Try to be empathetic.

Many workers can get frustrated, if the young person is having difficulty with learning. It is best to be empathetic and say that you know he/she is having difficulty; then you can cast the difficulty into a problem to be solved and involve the young person in thinking about possible solutions.

5. Provide choices for the young person.

For example, encourage young people to take an active part in making decisions that impact on their lives. Many young people come from backgrounds where this has never happened before. Learning how to make decisions is fundamental if the young person is to begin to take control of his/her life.
6. Do not compare young people in a negative light.

It is important not to compare young people in a negative light. All young people have different strengths and weaknesses; often, the development of strengths is dependent on the learning opportunities young people have been afforded.

7. Highlight young people’s strengths.

Unfortunately, many young people view themselves in a negative way, especially in terms of school or education. Make a list of the young person’s ‘islands of competence’ or areas of strength. Select one of these islands and find ways of reinforcing and displaying it.

8. Provide opportunities for young people to help.

Providing opportunities for young people to help is a very concrete way of displaying their ‘islands of competence’ and of highlighting that they have something to offer their world. Helping others certainly boosts a young person’s self-esteem.

9. Have realistic expectations and goals for the young person.

Realistic expectations provide the young person with a sense of control. The development of self-control goes hand-in-glove with self-esteem.

10. Young people need to have appropriate information.

Having realistic information can give young people a greater sense of control and a feeling that things can be done to help their situation.

Mental health of looked after children and care leavers

When we look at the range of issues faced by LAC and care leavers (CLs) it really is not surprising that they are more likely to suffer from mental health difficulties than their non-looked after peers. Research shows that more LAC have mental health problems than other young people, including severe and enduring mental illness. But their mental health needs are frequently unnoticed and unmet.

The most common range of disorders affecting LAC and CLs can be classified as: emotional disorders, conduct disorders and a hyperkinetic disorder.

Emotional disorders include separation anxiety, specific phobias, social phobia, panic, agoraphobia, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and depression.

Conduct disorders are characterised by aggressive, disruptive or antisocial behaviour. Physical aggression (usually initiated by the child) can take the form of bullying or cruelty to animals. Destruction of other people’s property (possibly including fire setting) and covert stealing is common. This can range from ‘borrowing’ others’ possessions to shoplifting, forgery, car theft and burglary. Children with a conduct disorder are more likely to truant from school, cheat at their school work or display callous behaviour.

Hyperkinetic disorder is a diagnosable condition recognised by health professionals as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). It is one of the most common mental disorders among children, characterised by being unable to sit still, plan ahead or finish tasks, being easily distracted or inattentive.
Many children go in and out of care and frequently change their placement. The prevalence of mental health problems tends to decrease with the length of time in a placement, suggesting, not surprisingly, that stability and continuity of care is a significant factor in a child’s mental health.

The young people most at risk of developing mental health problems are those who have experienced or face adversity. Dogra, Parkin, Gale and Frake, in *A Multidisciplinary Handbook of Child and Adolescent Mental Health for Front-line Professionals*,¹³ describe the groups most at risk, the risk factors and the protective factors in mental health. Those most at risk are young people who:

- have experienced abuse
- are in care
- are homeless
- are young offenders
- are excluded from school
- have physical disorders
- are refugees

Young people who are looked after may belong to one or more of these groups at different times. Some young people may even face all of these issues. It is clear that looked after young people face major difficulties in developing and maintaining their mental health. Workers can help young people by encouraging and supporting their development of protective factors.

**Risk factors**

**External to the individual**

- Lack of stable placement
- Lack of appropriate parenting
- Parental illness (especially mental illness)
- Domestic violence
- Experiencing abuse (physical, sexual or emotional)
- Low socio-economic status

**Individual factors**

- Poor strategies to cope with stress or difficulty
- Poor educational attainment
- Poor peer relationships
- Developmental delay
- Physical health problems

**Protective factors**

- High intellectual ability and academic success
- Easy temperament
- Developing a warm and confiding relationship with a trustworthy and reliable adult
- Having special skills or a particular talent
- Healthy peer relationships and friendships
- Supportive family that is able to manage change
Although there are many factors that are well established as increasing young people’s vulnerability to mental health problems, there are also many protective factors that need to be considered and supported. These include a young person’s attributes, his/her relationship with a range of others, including his/her family and peers, and the availability of support networks, such as befriending schemes. Any assessment of a young person’s needs, whether formal or informal, should therefore focus on his/her strengths and skills as well as his/her difficulties.

If you need any information about mental health issues that a young person in your care is experiencing then contact the listed organisations at the end of this chapter or speak to your supervisor for advice. Some young people will have serious mental health issues that need professional intervention. Where you have major concerns about a young person’s mental health you should speak to your supervisor or a health professional.

Tips on keeping mentally healthy

Talking
Encourage the young person to share his/her feelings and concerns with someone he/she can trust; perhaps a friend, parent, teacher, relative, school nurse, counsellor or worker, GP or even a helpline.

Help the young person get informed
Make sure the young person knows where and how to get appropriate and accurate information. Some sources may include his/her GP, parents, teacher, school nurse, youth counsellor or worker, Brook, Youth Access, ChildLine or other helplines, library or the local town hall.

Encourage the young person to look after his/her health
Helping the young person maintain his/her physical health will also assist him/her with any mental health issues. If the young person is getting enough sleep and exercise as well as a balanced diet, then he/she will look better and feel better about him/herself.

Enjoy yourself
Try and ensure the young person has time to relax and participate in things that he/she enjoys doing, such as seeing friends, listening to music, playing sports and other things he/she likes doing outside of school, college or work.

Build up the young person’s confidence
Help the young person find positive ways to feel good about him/herself and his/her capabilities. Sit down with the young person and help him/her write down all the things he/she is good at, such as listening, swimming, football, art, music and so on. Encourage and support the young person to try out new activities.

Belief in him/herself
Help the young person to identify and take on manageable but challenging tasks and support him/her in completing these.

Help the young person to value him/herself
Remind the young person that he/she is important and has unique qualities and gifts.
Notes, resources and references cited in this chapter

   Available at http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1989/Ukpga_19890041_en_1.htm


   Available at http://resilnet.uiuc.edu/library/grotb95b.html


11. Adapted from the Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities. See http://www.ldonline.org


Further reading and other useful resources and websites

Highly recommended:


A booklet written to promote good practice in young people’s mental health for parents or professionals working with them. Available at http://www.mentalhealthcare.org.uk/download/youngpeople/Adolescent_Mental_Health_Guide.pdf

YoungMinds, a mental health charity for children and young people: www.youngminds.org.uk

Mind, the UK’s largest mental health charity: www.mind.org.uk
5. working with young people

It is important to know about the legal and professional requirements of your job and to have an understanding of the needs of looked after children (LAC) and care leavers (CLs). However, it is also crucial that you reflect on your role as a worker and are aware of how your attitudes and values affect interactions with young people.

The quality of the work we carry out with young people is as much about what we bring to the task as it is about the young person. It is important that workers consider their values, views and experiences and how they shape the work they do with young people. It is also vital that workers adopt ways of working that are the most likely to be positive for the young people in their care.

Relationships are often the key to progress with young people. Where a good relationship is built with a young person, this will increase the chance of effective work being carried out with him/her. Communication is also central to working with young people. Knowing how to communicate effectively in all ways, and, most crucially, knowing how to listen, can greatly enhance relationships.

Understanding how young people develop during adolescence can help to put young people’s behaviour in context. Staying out late, blowing all their money and not keeping their rooms tidy are things that lots of young people will do and that workers will probably have done in their younger days! LAC and CLs are young people first, so they will be going through the same things other young people are experiencing; the difference is that they will often be facing additional challenges or difficulties.

In this chapter we will look at:

- values
- anti-discriminatory practice
- communication
- boundaries
- relationship building
- child/person-centred approaches
- the personal impact of work
- child development
- managing risk

This will hopefully provide a foundation for good practice in working with young people. Further training, resources and information should be available from your service or organisation to assist in more specific areas, such as working with particular groups of young people.

Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the children’s workforce

As part of the Change for Children programme, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has developed a ‘Common Core of Skills and Knowledge’.¹

The Common Core covers the essential skills and knowledge that all workers should have to enable them to work effectively with children and young people. Some are more relevant for work with younger children but many of them are required for work with any age group. The relevant skills and areas of knowledge from the Common Core are referenced at the start of each section in this chapter.

As the Change for Children programme is implemented, there will be an emphasis in services and organisations on assessing the capacity of their workforces in line with the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge. Many will be providing training and development opportunities to staff to ensure that the standards for the children’s workforce are met.
Values

DfES Common Core link:
Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child

Knowledge:

Self-knowledge

Know that assumptions, values and discrimination can influence practice and prevent some children and young people from having equality of opportunity and equal protection from harm.

As a worker, you need to be aware of how your own attitudes and values affect your work with young people as they become adults. Most carers and people who work with teenagers are motivated by personal experiences that enable them to empathise with young people’s concerns. While this can be a strength, it is vital to support the young person through analysing their individual needs and how they can be met, rather than making assumptions based on your own experiences or values.

Values are simply what we believe in, our ideas about:
- what is right and wrong behaviour
- how people should relate to each other
- how society should be organised

Values may come from family and friends, religion, school, work, the media or our ethnic group or culture. People’s values motivate their work as well as often providing a framework for their personal lives. It can be very helpful to talk about values and think about what they are and how they influence our work. Helping young people to understand their own values and ideas about the world can be useful in establishing a rapport and developing a working relationship with them.

Sharing the same values will often bring people closer together. However, two friends, colleagues or family members may not hold the same views on a particular subject. This can be a challenge, particularly if the subject is very close to the heart of one or both of them.

Adults have ways of living with and managing differences in values. A starting point is to respect the other person sufficiently to take their values seriously, even when you are unable to accept their value base. Sometimes, adults are not willing to treat young people’s values seriously, even though that is a requirement for successful work with them.

As a worker, you will often have occasions when you will disagree with the young person’s point of view. Though you may find this difficult, try to remember that their views are not necessarily wrong but are part of their attempt to make sense of the world in which they live.

However, some values held by young people should not be accepted, particularly if they are discriminatory or lead to illegal activities. As they develop their own set of values, try to give them calm explanations about yours, while showing respect for alternative, positive ones. Help them to distinguish between helpful and unhelpful values.

Everybody has personal preferences, likes and dislikes, including our feelings towards different young people. Our awareness of these preferences enables us to minimise any damaging effects they might have. For example, liking one young person more than another is normal; but if you are to give them all an equal opportunity, your preferences must not be allowed to influence your actions.
Anti-discriminatory and non-oppressive practice

Many groups in society face discrimination and oppression on the basis of factors such as disability, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, language and poverty. Children in care are more likely to come from some of these groups.

The Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr) provides the following information on looked after children:

“Ten point fact-file on looked after children”

1. By far the most common reason that children enter care (63 per cent) is abuse or neglect. One in ten were taken into care primarily as a result of family dysfunction, eight per cent because of absent parents, five per cent because of an adult’s disability or illness, seven per cent because of family stress, four per cent because of the child’s disability and two per cent because of socially unacceptable behaviour.

2. More than a third (38 per cent) of looked after children have been in care for two and a half or more years. Almost three quarters (74 per cent) of looked after children have been in care for more than 12 months.

3. The average period spent in care is 781 days.

4. Just over one in five looked after children (27 per cent) have a statement of special educational needs, compared with three per cent of the overall population of children.

5. Four per cent of children are looked after primarily because they are disabled. There are over 13,000 disabled children who are in social care or specialist school residential placements (excluding foster care).

6. Almost half (45 per cent) of looked after children have a conduct or emotional disorder or hyperactivity, compared to one in ten (10 per cent) of the overall population. Looked after children are seven times more likely than other children to experience mental health problems.

7. Twenty per cent of looked after children are from black or minority ethnic groups, compared with almost eight per cent of the population as a whole. Eight per cent are black, two per cent are Asian and eight per cent are of mixed ethnicity.

8. There are almost 3,000 unaccompanied asylum seeking children being looked after. They are heavily concentrated in London and the South East: 69 per cent of these children were looked after in London and 16 per cent in the South East. Many unaccompanied asylum seeking children are highly motivated, but they may have additional educational needs such as English language support. Evidence suggests that these children face additional barriers to education and their immigration status may complicate and limit their entitlements.

9. Only 58 per cent of looked after children reached age seven at the level expected in English and maths, compared to 86 per cent of the rest of their classmates. At 11, only 44 per cent were at the level expected, compared to 80 per cent of their peers; and at 16, only one in ten achieved five or more GCSEs grade A*-C, compared to more than half of all children. Just one per cent of looked after children go to university, compared with 42 per cent of other young people.

10. More than one in ten looked after children miss more than 25 days of school. Most children in care of compulsory school age are in stable places in mainstream schools, but one in four is educated in non-mainstream settings or at home. Children in care may miss school because they do not have a place, they have been excluded, or they do not attend.”
Those who are or have been in care often face additional discrimination because of their care experience.

People who are discriminated against are disadvantaged in society. Workers need to be aware of the forms and effects of discrimination and must ensure that their own actions are non-discriminatory. This knowledge will enable you to have a fuller understanding of the young person’s circumstances, which will lead to more effective work being carried out.

Anti-discriminatory practice is crucial for good practice. The consequences if workers do not develop anti-discriminatory practice are described by Neil Thompson:

“If we practice in ways that take no account of discrimination, we may find that we are actually doing more harm than good. That is, instead of our work empowering people and promoting equality, it can actually have the opposite effect by taking away people’s power and control and reinforcing, or even exacerbating, existing inequalities. For example, if a worker does not take account of racism in working with black service users, then the actions and attitudes of the worker may make the service user feel even more devalued and alienated in a white-dominated society.”

Power issues are linked to discrimination and oppression. Dominant groups in society have more power than minority or marginalised groups. The powerful position of dominant groups can lead to the oppression of other groups, either actively or passively.

As a worker you will generally have more power than the young people with whom you are working and you must be careful that your actions are not disempowering. Working in ways that actively empower young people can help to minimise this risk as it will provide an opportunity for young people to put their views across and be listened to. If young people are empowered they will have more control over their lives. As described in the transitions chapter, being in control can increase the chances of young people in care coping with and making a success of adult life after leaving care.

Adopting specific approaches to working with people and following key principles, such as valuing diversity and working holistically, will help to prevent discriminatory practice. Valuing diversity means recognising and valuing the whole range of differences between people in society. Doing so will enable us to value each individual in his/her own right. Working with young people holistically means looking at and addressing all their needs and becoming familiar with all their experiences, which will include their experience of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality and poverty.

Nigel Thomas outlines three key principles to be followed in working with difference and diversity:

Respect
Respecting each person as an individual: their background and their experience of life, family and culture, and accepting their differences in looks, lifestyle, abilities, beliefs and values. This includes those who are unsuccessful in their lives because of personal issues or disadvantages.

Recognition
Acknowledging and responding to differences so people have equal chances. For example, regarding access to public buildings it needs to be recognised that not everybody is able-bodied, and action needs to be taken to prevent the exclusion of people who cannot climb stairs without assistance.

Openness
Readiness to learn about people’s lives, experiences, cultures, histories, beliefs and languages, and find new ways to make services available to people with different needs or ways of communicating.

These principles should be followed when working with all young people.
Communication

DfES Common Core link:

Effective communication and engagement

Skills:

*Listening and building empathy*

- Establish rapport and respectful, trusting relationships with children, young people, their families and carers.
- Communicate effectively with all children, young people, families and carers.
- Build open and honest relationships by respecting children, young people, parents and carers and making them feel valued as partners.

Knowledge:

*How communication works*

- Know that communication is a two-way process.
- Know how to listen to people, and make them feel valued and involved.
- Be aware of different ways of communicating, including electronic channels, and understand barriers to communication.

*Importance of respect:*

- Be self-aware: know how to demonstrate a commitment to treating all people fairly; be respectful by using active listening and avoiding assumptions.

How we communicate with children and young people will affect the nature and quality of the relationships that we build with them. This in turn will influence our effectiveness as workers.

There are many communication skills - verbal, non-verbal, language, listening, responding - that workers should aim to develop. Responding to the individual communication needs of young people in your care and developing general skills in communication is essential. Children and young people must be consulted with, listened to and kept informed about decisions affecting their lives. These principles are enshrined in the Children’s Act 1989, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international agreements, pieces of UK legislation and statutory regulation. Workers must follow these to meet statutory obligations and to ensure children’s rights are upheld and protected.

Effective communication and engagement is one of the six areas of the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge. The DfES outlines the importance of communication in the *Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children’s Workforce* prospectus:

“Good communication is central to working with children, young people, their families and carers. It is a fundamental part of the Common Core. It involves listening, questioning, understanding and responding to what is being communicated by children, young people and those caring for them. It is important to be able to communicate both on a one-on-one basis and in a group context. Communication is not just about the words you use, but also your manner of speaking, body language and, above all, the effectiveness with which you listen. To communicate effectively it is important to take account of culture and context, for example where English is an additional language.”
Listening skills
People often think that listening is straightforward and is not something they need to pay attention to; however, proper listening is a skill that needs to be developed. We may physically hear what a young person is saying but do we actually listen and understand?

Pamela Trevithick outlines 20 basic skills involved in listening:8

- “Being as open, intuitive, empathetic and self-aware as possible.
- Maintaining good eye contact.
- Having an open and attentive body orientation and posture.
- Paying attention to non-verbal forms of communication and their meaning.
- Allowing for and using silence as a form of communication.
- Taking up an appropriate physical distance.
- Picking up and following cues.
- Being aware of our own distracting mannerisms and behaviour.
- Avoiding making vague, unclear and ambiguous comments.
- Being aware of the importance of people finding their own words in their own time.
- Remembering the importance of the setting and general physical environment.
- Minimising the possibility of interruptions and distractions.
- Being sensitive to the overall mood of the interview and adapting questions as appropriate.
- Checking out and seeking feedback wherever possible and appropriate.
- Being aware of the importance of timing, particularly where strong feelings are involved.
- Remembering the importance of tone, particularly in relation to sensitive or painful issues.
- Avoiding the dangers of preconceptions, stereotyping or labelling, or of making premature judgements or evaluations.
- Remembering to refer to theories that are illuminating and helpful and also, where appropriate, to explain, in an accessible language, theories that may aid understanding.
- Being as natural, spontaneous and relaxed as possible.”

Non-verbal communication
Other ways in which we communicate, apart from through speech, include through body language, tone of voice and touch. Research suggests that non-verbal communication is as important as, or more important than, verbal communication. Trevithick refers to Kadushin’s breakdown of non-verbal communication forms:9

- “chronomics (time keeping, such as likelihood of people being too early or late), preparedness
- smell (emotional states communicated through subtle changes in body odour)
- touch (handshaking, hugs. These tend to be defined according to situation and cultural norms)
- artificial communication (the language of the physical setting, such as how the home is arranged, and personal presentation, such as personal dress and choice of clothes)
- proxemics (communication through space and distance; the distance people need in order to feel comfortable)
- body language kinesics (visual communication through the face, eyes, hands, arms, feet and legs)”
There are many factors involved in communication and as workers you need to be aware of the different ways in which you express yourself to young people and what effect this may have on the young person.

To further develop your communication skills you may receive training from your organisation or service. There are also resources available on general communication skills for work with young people, as well as specific skills for work with disabled young people, black and minority ethnic young people and asylum seeking and refugee young people. Further details are at the end of the chapter. There are also resources available on general communication skills for work with young people, as well as specific skills for work with looked after children and refugee children which are outlined in Naomi Richman’s *Communicating with Children*.10

Whilst there may be areas of communication where you will need to seek additional input, there is an important area that workers can address by themselves: relationship building. The basis of our relationships with young people and our approaches to working with them will help or hinder effective communication.

**Relationship building**

Relationships based on trust and honesty and using a child-centred approach have been found to be most effective. If young people develop trust in the worker and believe that they have their best interests at heart, they will be more likely to engage positively with them.

This type of relationship is at the heart of person-centred counselling and there are three requirements, as stated by Carl Rogers:11

1. empathy (working to understand the client’s situation and frame of reference)
2. congruence (being genuine and transparent in the relationship)
3. unconditional positive regard (ensuring preconceptions and judgements are not acted upon)

Using this approach will mean starting from where the young person is at: accepting them and valuing them for who they are and not judging them. This is good practice for working with young people.

Thomas and O’Kane developed a mnemonic based on research with children in care,12 which is useful for workers to help remember the important points for communicating with children:

‘**TRANSACTS**’ - key points in communicating with children and young people

*Time* - It is essential to have enough time to spend with a child; they do not necessarily want to talk ‘by appointment’. Time also means working at the child’s pace, allowing them to stay in control.

*Relationship, trust and honesty* - children communicate best with people with whom they have relationships of warmth and trust. It is important to be friendly and open, empathetic and above all ‘straight’ with children.

*Active listening* - the skills of ‘active listening’ developed in counselling can be helpful in work with children. This means responding to cues, restating and drawing out the meaning of what the child is saying, combined with the expression of warmth, empathy and acceptance.

*Non-verbal communication* - an adult’s tone of voice, facial expression, body language and even style of dress can affect how children communicate.

*Support and encouragement* - children need support and active encouragement to speak up, especially when they have something difficult to or negative to express. An adult may sometimes need to offer to express a child’s views for them. Children don’t like it when they feel they are being judged or criticised, and they don’t like to be put ‘on the spot’.
Activities - many children find it very boring to ‘just sit and talk’. Games, writing, drawing and other activities can be used to make the process more interesting. Life story work can be an excellent way to involve children in reflecting on their situation.

Choice, information and preparation - children must have a choice about whether and how they participate in a decision-making process. They are more able to have their say if they have been prepared for the discussion and given time to think about things beforehand.

The child’s agenda - it is important to give children the space to talk about issues that concern them, rather than just having to respond to adult’s questions.

Serious fun! - the fact that serious matters are being discussed doesn’t mean that everyone had to be po-faced. Most children find this alienating; some find it threatening. If decision-making processes can be made more enjoyable, children are more likely to get involved.”

Boundaries
The relationships that workers develop with young people need to have clear boundaries. Although workers may build close relationships with young people, the relationship should always be professional. A worker giving a young person his/her home telephone number, loaning or giving the young person his/her own money, meeting with the young person in a non-work setting or burdening the young person with his/her own problems are activities that generally are considered to be outside the boundaries of the professional relationship. This, however, will depend on the role of the worker. Young people live with foster carers as part of the family, so some of the examples would be appropriate in this context.

As a result of earlier experiences, young people in care may seek to replace or develop a parental or familial relationship with a worker. Workers do have a responsibility to act as a good parent would, but must be mindful that they are not the parent and that they need to act in ways that ensure that young people understand this. By maintaining boundaries, workers will help young people to be clear about the nature of the relationship.

Even though the relationship is professional, workers can still show the young person that they are important and they matter, by demonstrating the qualities listed above and by taking an interest, by being concerned and by caring for and supporting the young person.

Guidelines about what is appropriate and what is inappropriate in your work with young people will be available from your organisation or service. You should speak to your supervisor if there is anything that you are not sure about or if you have any concerns.

Personal impact of work and workers’ support

DFES Common Core link:
Child and young person development

Knowledge
Be clear about your own job role.
- Know how to obtain support and report concerns.

Know how to reflect and improve.
- Be aware that working with children and young people may affect you emotionally and know some sources of help in dealing with the impact of this.
Working with people, especially traumatised or vulnerable young people, which will often be the case with LAC and CLs, is likely to have an effect on you. Young people may have difficulties expressing their feelings and may communicate their distress in ways that are difficult to handle.

They may transfer onto workers, feelings they have about other adults in their lives. They will be going through difficult situations and will be experiencing a range of feelings and emotions. As a key adult in that young person’s life some of his/her reactions to these feelings may be directed at you.

It is important that workers take into account the issues behind a young person’s behaviour and are aware of how it makes you yourself feel. It is not unprofessional to be affected by the work we do with young people or to have negative feelings as a result of difficult situations that we encounter. In the interests of good practice we need to recognise the personal impact of the work we are doing, to talk about it and to seek help and support in dealing with it, so that it does not have a negative impact on our work with young people.

Although it can be difficult when working with young people who are directing their anger or negative feelings towards you as a worker, you should try not to take it personally. Knowing the young person’s background and understanding how children respond to, for example, loss or separation will help to explain behaviours and to put them in context.

Workers may also be affected by difficult experiences that young people have had or are going through. Feelings may be brought up for you if you have been through similar experiences or you can have strong feelings of sympathy for a young person. Feelings can be difficult to handle especially if we are working in an environment where this aspect of our work has not been addressed.

Workers need to acknowledge their own feelings and respond appropriately to those expressed by young people. There is a balance to be struck between taking on board young people’s feelings without concentrating excessively on them. Neil Thompson describes what is involved in this:

“The essential task, then is to remain sensitive to people’s feelings so that we do not become callous or unfeeling, but without being so sensitive that we become disabled by the welter of emotions that we come face to face with.”

How young people we are working with express themselves can affect how we feel about them. If we treat some young people more negatively because of how they act, or more positively because we like them, we would be working in a discriminatory manner and not providing equal opportunities.

Neil Thompson suggests that the Rogerian principle of “unconditional positive regard” helps to protect against unfair treatment.

“Unconditional positive regard is used to describe an attitude of mind that ensures that we are positive towards the people we work with, regardless of our personal feelings towards them. That is, good practice is premised on doing our best for all service users, not only the ones that we like.”

The emotional side of working with young people should be acknowledged both as a validation of the young person’s experience and to allow workers to address their feelings. If you have concerns about how your feelings are impacting on your work and how your work is affecting you, you should discuss these concerns and access support using the processes, such as supervision, within your organisation.
Child development

DfES Common Core link:
Child and young person’s development

Knowledge:
Understand how babies, children and young people develop.
- Know that development includes emotional, physical, intellectual, social, moral and character growth, and know that they can all affect one another.
- Know how to interact with children to support the development of their ability to think and learn.

Know how to reflect and improve:
- Understand and behave appropriately for the baby, child or young person’s stage of development.
- Know how to motivate and encourage children and young people to achieve their full potential and how to empower and encourage parents and carers to do the same.

There are several theories about child development, some of which stress the importance of biological processes and some of which focus on social or cultural processes in development. These theories are generally considered as part of the nature versus nurture debate: which has the greater impact, biology or society? There are obviously biological processes involved in growth and development; however, these can be affected by the care and environment that a child experiences, which indicates that social factors also influence development.

Jennie Lindon in her work on child development\(^\text{15}\) concludes that:
“Children’s development is influenced by genetic inheritance including how young brains develop, but there is ample evidence from research that direct experiences work on that biological base.”

It is important to be aware of all aspects of children’s development so that provision can be made and problems addressed early. Children develop emotionally, socially, physically, intellectually and morally. Development in these areas is interlinked and should not necessarily be considered separately.

To get a rounded understanding of a young person, his/her needs should be considered holistically. A holistic approach is described by Lindon as:

“A holistic or whole child approach stresses the importance of thinking about and behaving towards children as entire individuals, that all their skills are important and support their whole development.”

In all areas of development there will be broad patterns of growth, yet how far individual children fit into these patterns, and at what ages, will depend on social and other factors such as ethnicity, culture, disability, environment and experiences.

Physical development in puberty is one of the common areas of development that is largely determined by biology but is still shaped by social factors. Lindon describes the experience of puberty, including the biological and social aspects, in her book Understanding Child Development:\(^\text{16}\)
The experience of puberty

“Human brains continue to develop; we could not learn in adulthood otherwise. The early years are very busy but there is another significant burst of brain activity in adolescence. Teenage brains are working hard to integrate the different functions and areas of the brain, especially those concerned with self-control, emotional judgement, organisation and planning. Teenagers can legitimately blame the emotional see-saw of adolescence on the frenetic activity of their brains!

Around the world young people experience puberty some time between nine and 16 years of age. The exact timing of the onset is largely a result of individual biological programming. However, puberty can be delayed by restricted diet and a great deal of physical exercise.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the average age for the onset of puberty decreased in the western world. The main reasons seem to have been a less physically active life-style for many children, combined with sufficient food for physical needs.

As you yourself will recall, puberty is more than just physical changes. It is also an emotional experience and one which brings social adjustments. The individual experience of puberty for each boy or girl is affected by social environment. Biological programming does not determine the support, or lack of it, received from family and friends, nor how your social environment helps you to feel positive, or negative, about becoming more grown up.”

Young people will have questions and worries about their bodies, sex, relationships, feelings and lots of other things during this time, and need to have someone to talk to and get advice from. It is up to the young person who he/she feels comfortable talking to and he/she may not want to talk to you, especially as he/she may find it embarrassing.

Even if this is the case, there are things that you can do to support young people through their experience of puberty. You can give young people the chance to adjust to the changes, provide opportunities to test out new skills in a safe environment and help them to feel good about their changing bodies and the experience of growing up.

If you need advice about how to help young people going through this stage, speak to your supervisor. The following websites have useful information on a range of issues relating to puberty and adolescence for young people, and have details of local services.

www.youthinformation.com

www.thesite.org.uk

www.mindbodyandsoul.gov.uk

www.lifebytes.gov.uk

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

www.brook.org.uk
Managing risk - child protection

DfES Common Core link:
Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child

Skills
Relate, recognise and take considered action:
- Understand what is meant by safeguarding and the different ways in which children and young people can be harmed (including by other children and young people and through the internet).
- Make considered judgements about how to safeguard and promote a child or young person’s welfare, where appropriate consulting with the child, young person, parent or carer to inform your thinking.

Communication, recording and reporting:
- Be able to recognise when a child or young person is in danger or at risk of harm, and take action to protect them.

Knowledge
Legal and procedural frameworks:
- Be aware of national guidance and local procedures, and your own roles and responsibilities within these for safeguarding and promoting children and young people’s welfare.

One of the main responsibilities workers have to children and young people in their care is to safeguard them and promote their welfare. Workers must ensure that children and young people are protected from harm and that they are able to fully develop (ensure their wellbeing). This is one of the guiding principles of the Children Act 1989 and must be upheld for all work with children.

There are different types of abuse (physical, emotional and sexual) that children and young people may have experienced or may be experiencing. As a worker you should make sure that you notice changes in behaviour which indicate abuse and develop an understanding of the effects of past abuse.

Child protection is a key part of the work with young people and you should receive training in this area from your service or organisation. The Change for Children programme and the Children Act 2004\(^1\), which followed from the Green Paper Every Child Matters\(^2\), have laid down requirements to improve child protection in the children’s workforce. Systems have been introduced and multi-agency work has been promoted to improve information sharing and address the delays in action that have occurred in the past where children were at risk.

Workers need to know the child protection procedures in their organisation or service and in their local areas. All areas now have Local Safeguarding Children Boards, which have replaced Area Child Protection Committees, and now have a statutory function. If you have any concerns about a young person’s safety or wellbeing you should speak to your supervisor and others involved in caring for that young person, if appropriate, and follow your local child protection procedures.

Protecting children from harm is multifaceted. We need to ensure that they are physically safe, that they are not being victimised, bullied or abused, that they are being cared for appropriately and that all their needs are being met.
Risk management
As children get older there will be other factors to consider in protecting them from harm. Young people who are over the age of consent may be in abusive relationships, use of internet chat rooms can be a potential risk and peer pressure to take part in dangerous or risky behaviours may be high. All this has to be balanced with the need to provide opportunities for young people to take risks in order for them to learn and develop new skills that they will need as adults.

There will be specific action that you will need to take in these and other situations, such as monitoring use of the internet, or finding out about the people with whom the young person is having relationships. However, there will also be general ways of working that will help to minimise the risk of young people experiencing harm.

Your relationship with the young person is crucial. If you have an open and trusting relationship with the young people with whom you work, then they will be more likely to tell you about things that are bothering them or about their lives in general. If they do not feel able to talk to you and do not talk to anyone else then they may be at risk without you being aware.

Confidentiality and disclosure
You will need to respect confidentiality but within the remit of your service or organisation’s child protection procedures. There may be circumstances where information has to be shared with other professionals. It is therefore crucial that the young person understands the boundaries within which you can maintain confidentiality.

Young people may talk to you about relationships, friendships, drugs, past experiences, sex or other issues. They will take their cues from your reaction as to whether they feel safe and whether they will be listened to. You should try not to show shock, disgust or disapproval in your response as the young person may interpret that as your feelings towards him/her rather than towards his/her actions or the experience he/she has had.

It is important that you give acknowledgement and let them know that you are taking what they are saying seriously. If they tell you about something or someone of whom you disapprove, it probably will not be effective to tell them it is wrong or that they should stop seeing the person. Providing information, talking about your concerns calmly and letting them know the possible consequences of their actions will help them to make positive, informed decisions for themselves.

There are a number of reasons why young people in care may be more at risk. These include having had past experience of abuse and developing negative patterns of behaviour. Often, having unresolved issues that they are unable to deal with, or lacking love and care in childhood, can lead to greater levels of vulnerability. In some cases, young people will need specialist help to work through these kinds of concerns.
Self-esteem
Some of these issues can be linked to a lack of self-esteem. Young people who have high self-esteem feel good about themselves. They feel valued, loved and that they are important to somebody. As a result, they will be less likely to abuse themselves or others, or to be vulnerable to abuse.

John Coleman has researched self-esteem and determines that it is a factor in the adjustment and mental health of children and young people. He points out two requirements for the development of self-esteem:

“There appear to be two key antecedents of this attribute. The first is competency or adequacy in areas of importance, while the second is approval from significant others.”¹⁹

Workers can do a lot to foster an environment that is conducive to the development of self-esteem. Positive communication, acceptance, praise, respect, unconditional positive regard and recognition of achievement will all help young people to feel good about themselves.

Mariana Csoti outlines some ways to improve self-esteem and self-respect with children who have special needs.²⁰ Some of them are more applicable to younger children and they are essentially guidelines for parents; however, many of the suggestions will be useful, or can be adapted, for professionals working with any children and young people.

“Boost your child’s self-esteem:

- Tell your child that you love her and always will, no matter what she does or doesn’t do.
- Tell your child you are proud of her … when she does her best and that’s all you want.
- Smile at her.
- Have fun together.
- Listen to what she has to say.
- Play games with her.
- Invite friends for her to socialise with.
- Give her responsibilities within her ability to make her feel useful and needed.
- Compliment her on her appearance or on something she’s done well (such as tidying her room or scoring a goal)

You can encourage your child by:

- being sympathetic when she finds something hard or is worried about something.
- reassuring her that she has coped in the past.
- praising her and applauding her when she has succeeded at something.
All these things help her to:

- increase her confidence
- have happy, outgoing relationships
- be more likely to try to achieve (and succeed) as she knows she has your support.
- be more positive about approaching things that are hard
- be less likely to give up
- cope with failure and try a second time
- approach you when she is in trouble and needs help

Increase your child’s self-respect by:

- Listening to what she has to say and responding to her comments seriously without laughing or putting her down.
- Allowing her to help and praising her for it.
- Ignoring small mistakes and smoothing over catastrophes.
- Spending time listening about her day or something she wants to tell you.
- Doing a task together and learning together. You are then treating her as an equal and she will appreciate it.
- Recognising when she has improved or moved forwards in some way, praising her for the progress she has made.
- Telling others about her achievements so she can bask in their praise too.
- Celebrating privately for achievements others may not understand (for example conquering a habit of biting nails).
- Using your child’s mistakes positively. Try to find out why the things happened and then work at ways to prevent them happening in the future. Discuss them fully and openly with your child so that you give her responsibility, and help her develop control over her own actions.”

To keep young people safe from harm we need to be aware of the range of risks that can be faced and how to put safeguards in place to minimise these. This will involve consideration of physical and emotional factors as described.

There will be occasions where young people in our care are harmed or are at risk of harm and we must take the necessary action to deal with the situation. This may require the involvement of other professionals or the local authority child protection services.

In this chapter we have discussed a range of approaches to working with young people. Primarily though, it is our ability to create positive and supportive relationships with young people that will help them steer their own course through the transition to adulthood.
# Is It Difficult For You? Scenarios

How difficult would you find these situations personally and professionally? Read the scenarios below and rate them on a scale of 1 to 5 according to how difficult you would find them, 1 being not difficult at all and 5 being extremely difficult. How would you feel? Would you be concerned?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Personally</th>
<th>Professionally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A) A young person swearing during a conversation with you.</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) A 16 year old is having a sexual relationship and wants his/her partner to spend the night.</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C) A 14 year old wants to have alcoholic drinks at his/her party.</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D) A 10 year old wants to stay home alone after school but his/her parent(s) do not get home until 7 p.m.</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise 5 - Worker and young person interaction
(role play and discussion)

Context
Jez is a 15-year-old boy who came into care with his sister when he was 12. His mother was an alcoholic and suffered from chronic depression, and his father, who was a violent alcoholic, left her and the children when Jez was four years old. His mother had had a number of short-term boyfriends, one who was also violent.

Jez will be 16 years old in six months’ time. Since coming into care he has had eight placements, two in residential placements and six with foster carers. All Jez’s foster carers have found it difficult to deal with Jez’s anger, and they have been unable to stop him from staying out at night with a gang of boys who are often seen and reported for vandalism and violent behaviour in the local area. Jez has had two other social workers: Jeff and Mary.

Jez has attended three different schools since being taken into care, each time being excluded for disruptive behaviour and truanting. Since being excluded from his last school for attacking another boy, six months ago, the local authority has re-placed Jez with specialist foster parents. He has started at a new school (GCSEs are looming) and has been allocated with a new social worker, Mike - a man in his late twenties who Jez likes but is still unsure of.

Mike has been qualified as a social worker for three years and previously worked with younger children. He has just joined the Looked After Children team and has a case-load of 12. Mike has four cases that are going through placement breakdowns and is struggling with a larger case-load.

Mike has some news about what the local authority has planned for Jez once he turns 16. He has a meeting after school so goes to Jez’s school and takes him out of class to speak to him.

During the role play, think about what is happening from the perspective you have been allocated. Note the examples of poor communication.

Issues to consider:
• where and how to communicate;
• the professional’s personal attributes, attitudes, values and experiences;
• service-related barriers;
• emotional and psychological issues;
• positive approaches in working and interacting with young people;
• importance of anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practices.
Role play

Act 1. Jez and Mike are sitting in the school corridor.

MIKE (smiling): Hi Jez, how are you doing?

JEZ (silence, does not look at Mike, sprawls over a chair and says coolly): What are you doing here?

MIKE (concerned): You seem angry Jez. What’s the matter?

JEZ (silence, looks over sulkily at Mike and shrugs shoulders)

MIKE (concerned): Jez, I’m really sorry I had to come and see you during school but there was nothing I could do about it. I have something important to discuss with you and I didn’t want to talk about this over the phone. I don’t have any other time this week as I’ve got to see some of my other young people as well and have a report to write. I’ll see if I can find some time next week to go through it more with you but I just wanted you to have a chance to get your head around things before then.

JEZ (sullenly): Can’t we go somewhere else?

MIKE: Okay, let’s go to the playground

Act 2. Sitting on a bench in the playground.

MIKE: Jez, we’ve been thinking about your future and what you’re going to do after your birthday. Have you thought about it much?

JEZ: (silent, looks down, shrugs his shoulders, looking upset)

JA(Y (panicky): Oh here we go again, they’ve been talking behind my back. It’s just like I thought, they’re going to chuck me out on my birthday cos I’m too much trouble and they want to take in some other kid.

MIKE: I need to know soon what you would like to do so I can arrange things?

JEZ (sulkily): Don’t know

JA(Y (upset and agitated): Okay, so now you’re really scaring me. What are you going to force me to do? Oh, I get it, you’re going too, aren’t you? Just when I thought I could rely on you. Typical, just like the others, not that I missed them at all - waste of space! Well maybe I don’t need you either. I’ve been on my own forever, so what’s new?

MIKE (earnestly): You need to start planning what you want to do. You’ll get a personal adviser when you’re 16 to help with this as well, but I’ll still be your social worker.

JEZ (subdued and looking at the ground): If you say so

JA(Y (angrily): Why are you leaving me? I don’t want someone else. They don’t know me and won’t like me, so what’s the point. And what if they’re like that Jeff who couldn’t even understand what I was telling him. On the other hand, might be in luck - hit the jackpot with someone fit like Mary. She fancied me all right. (sadly) But then said I was too greedy, wanted too much of her and she had all these other kids - better looking than me, probably - well there’s a surprise; as if I cared. (angrily) Just what I need. Well, so what. They won’t hang around for long anyway.

MIKE (passionately): Jez, I don’t want you to be worried - you’ll get a good worker. They have lots of experience of helping young people and will understand what you’re going through.

JEZ (sarcastically): Yeah, right

JA(Y (agitated): How are they going to understand me? You don’t know everything, so how are they? Fat chance.

MIKE (seriously): Look Jez, I’ll say it straight up. I know you won’t want to hear this just as you’ve settled in again, but the council are saying they want you to move out and live on your own when you’re 16. There’s not enough money in the budget. It would be better for you to stay but there’s nothing I can do about it. (Passionately) I’ve told them they shouldn’t make you go just then, if you
don’t want to, let you have time to build up to it, especially since you’ll be taking your GCSEs - that could be a disaster. I’ll do my best to help you stay on here if you want, especially if you decide to try for college - and let me tell you there’s no better route than A levels, forget about all that vocational nonsense. Or you might be able to live in a sort of shared house with other young people from care, if you fancy that, where you’d get help to put you on track.

JEZ (cooly): Yeah, course I want to live on my own, ASAP. Be able to do what I want, when I want, with no one a nag nag nagging at me about school or nothing. Anyway, I don’t need no one - can’t wait to get out of here. Can’t you get me somewhere right now?

JAY (panicky): Dunno what I’m going to do. Talk about sudden! Well, I’ll have my mates to get me through - they won’t let me down - well, maybe; can’t kid myself. But how could you do this to me - just like Mum and Dad. I could do with a drink. Thought I could trust you to do right by me. I dunno though, maybe you can’t fight against your bosses and there’s nothing you can do. And why would you do anything anyway - don’t really care bout me, do you? Well maybe… (angrily) But who do you think you are, anyway, telling me what to do? I ain’t doing any A levels - whoever heard of that?

MIKE (smiling): But here I am trying to read your mind. I think I can guess, but I want to hear how you really feel about the future. Sorry we haven’t had a proper chance to talk about it before - you kids always need me all at once - but no rush, take your time, then I can tell them to lay off if that’s what you want. How do you feel about the exams?

JEZ (shrugs his shoulders, looking down): Gonna fail them, aren’t I? Who cares anyway?

JAY (angry): So what if you’ve got other kids to deal with? Aren’t I worth it? Would be okay if I just had a bit of help; teachers don’t make much sense, can’t ask - don’t wanna look like an idiot - people will think I’m a nerd. And too much noise around here after school; need somewhere quiet to get my head down.

MIKE (earnestly): Well, I care Jez. I know you’ve found it difficult with your school work, not surprising after all the grief you’ve been through. But I think I can get a home tutor to help you out over the next few months - help to go over it all and catch up on what you’ve missed. You could go over to their place, so no distractions. And if you want somewhere to revise, there’s always the local library around the corner. They’ve got a nice big reference bit where everyone has to be quiet. While you’re at it you might like to have a flick through the college info for some ideas - the librarian will help you.

JEZ (bored): Whatever

MIKE (upbeat): When I see you next week I’ll go through all the options with you, and once you’ve had a chance to think it over I’ll introduce you to your personal adviser and we can take things from there. First, we need to plan what help you’ll need and when, fill in some forms. Things will feel a lot less scary after that.

JEZ (suddenly agitated, pushes away the table, stands up and shouts down at Mike threateningly): You can’t force me. I’ll do what I want. I’ll run away. That’ll teach you. Or I could hurt myself and then you’d be in trouble.

JAY (pitifully, tearfully): Please don’t leave me. I don’t want to hurt you, I just don’t want you to go.

MIKE (suddenly becoming angry himself, stands up to face Jez, and raises his voice): Don’t threaten me Jez; you’re just going to have to grow up and deal with it. These things happen sometimes, that’s life. Look, Jez, just think about what you want to do and we’ll talk next week, okay? I’ve got to go now, I’ve got a meeting.
Notes, resources and references cited in this chapter

1. Further details on the Change for Children programme and the ‘Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children’s Workforce’ can be found at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk


Other useful resources

6. transitions

Children and young people experience many changes in their lives: moving from primary school to secondary school, starting work, leaving home, becoming a parent, becoming an adult. For young people in care these changes can be more difficult as they may be facing other issues as well, such as instability and lack of support. They may also experience transitions more often and may experience two or more transitions at the same time, such as leaving care and moving into independent accommodation.

In Newman and Blackburn's report on young people's transitions, they define transitions as "any episode where children are having to cope with potentially challenging episodes of change". The changes they considered were:

- moving through developmental stages
- changing schools
- entering or leaving the care system
- loss
- bereavement
- parental incapacity
- transition to adulthood

Looked after children (LAC) are likely to experience more transitions than other children in the general population due to their reasons for coming into care and their experiences in care, and will need additional support to enable them to cope with these changes.

The main transition that we will be looking at in this chapter is the transition to adulthood. Increasingly in modern society the transition into adulthood has become more difficult and delayed due to economic changes.

Mike Stein refers to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Young People in Transition research programme in his literature review on resilience, which shows that:

"...patterns of transition into adulthood have been changing fast: the major decline in the youth labour market based on manufacturing and apprenticeship training; the extension of youth training, further and higher education; and the reduction in entitlements to universal welfare benefits for young people. These changes have resulted in young people being more dependent on their families for emotional, financial and practical support, often into their early twenties ..."

This change in transition to adulthood has resulted in young people in the general population leaving home at a much later age and remaining reliant on parents even after leaving home.

The average age for leaving home is now the early to mid-20s for both males and females. In comparison with young people in the general population, care leavers (CLs) often have to 'leave home' or 'leave care' at an earlier age and have to take on the responsibilities of adulthood in a much shorter period of time. As Mike Stein remarks, many CLs have "compressed and accelerated transitions to adulthood".
Government statistics for 2002 to 2005 also state that:

“The largest category of accommodation for 19 year old former care leavers is independent living, which accounts for 42% of the cohort. The increase in the proportion of former care leavers in independent living over the last few years is largely the result of the improved in touch rate.”

Other research into transitions has identified that the transition to adulthood is becoming more difficult and that there is a longer-term reliance on family support, which poses problems for young people, such as CLs, who are estranged from families.

In their report, Transitions to Adulthood: a family matter?, Morrow and Richards comment that:

“It is important .... to identify specific groups of young people who may be disadvantaged by a lack of family assistance (for whatever reason), which may make them vulnerable at the various stages in the transition to adulthood.”

The authors define family support to include:

- earlier socialisation for adult life
- social and emotional support during transitions
- financial and other material support

For LAC and CLs, local authorities as ‘corporate parents’ should ensure that they provide this kind of family support for ‘their’ children.

One of the aims of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 was to delay the transition of LAC leaving care and to improve the support they receive during and after the transition. The age at which LAC leave care has risen slightly since the Act was introduced; however, there are still high numbers leaving care before they are 18 years old.

A lack of preparation for their transition to leaving care has been identified by some LAC and CLs in research studies. A Prince’s Trust report into young people’s views on leaving care found that a third of CLs felt inadequately prepared to live independently.

The recent Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) report found that although some young people had well-planned preparation: “A common theme amongst those young people consulted was in their having remarkably short periods of notice to leave, together with their sheer lack of preparation to do so”.

Local authorities’ duties as corporate parents include ensuring that LAC have adequate preparation for leaving care and are prepared to leave care, and that they continue to provide the necessary support for CLs after leaving care. As previously mentioned, when young people in the general population leave home they typically continue to receive a range of support from their parents and families well into or throughout their adult life.

The majority of CLs will not be able to access this kind of support from family, although they may continue to get some support from ex-carers or workers. As part of preparing young people to leave care, workers should ensure that young people are provided with the required support and know how to access support in the future.
The transition from being looked after to leaving care, which often coincides with living independently, will be one of the most significant changes for LAC. It is essential that adequate planning is carried out to ensure that this transition is a slow process and that young people are provided with opportunities to develop the necessary skills well before they have to leave care.

The chapter on assessment, planning and review highlights the factors that need to be taken into account in planning appropriately for LAC and CLs. The chapter on ‘Using the ‘Get Ready for Adult Life’ Pack’ pinpoints the experiences that workers should be providing, and the skills that workers should be supporting the young person in developing, to help them successfully handle the transition from looked after child to care leaver and from child to adult.

The way that a child or young person handles any changes they go through will be dependent on the skills they have and the support available. Workers, in partnership with local authorities, are responsible for supporting the development of young people’s life skills as well as helping to support them through the transitions that they experience. The chapter on working with young people goes into more detail on how to support young people in developing personal, interpersonal and life skills.

In Mike Stein’s literature review on resilience he looks at why some young people from disadvantaged backgrounds do better than others and explores the factors that contribute to CLs’ successful transitions to adulthood in the face of the overwhelming difficulties that they experience.

By looking at what factors help some CLs to succeed, we can promote these for all LAC and CLs to try to improve their outcomes. The factors that Mike Stein identified as being crucial for LAC and CLs to overcome the difficulties of being in care and become successful adults are as follows:

1. **Stability and continuity**

   Stability has been found to be one of the most important factors in improving outcomes.

   “Stability is the foundation stone. Young people who experience stable placements providing good quality care are more likely to succeed educationally, be in work, settle in and manage their accommodation after leaving care, feel better about themselves and achieve satisfactory social integration in adulthood than young people who have experienced further movement and disruption during their time in care.”

   Some CLs experience a high number of moves whilst in care. Research has found that 30 to 40 per cent have four or more moves and 6 to 10 per cent of this group have ten or more. The Government is trying to reduce the number of placement moves that LAC experience and has introduced indicators and targets to monitor local authority performance in this area.

2. **Attachment**

   If young people develop a strong (secure) attachment to at least one carer this can compensate for previous negative family experiences. However, experiences in care, such as frequent moves, can prevent young people from developing such relationships as they often build barriers to protect themselves from hurt and loss. This can have an impact on their transition to independence as an adult as they may find it difficult to use other people’s help or to form relationships with helpful adults who could provide support.

Black and mixed race young people face additional issues as they are often isolated from the black community and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have had attachments severed when leaving their home countries and face further instability in temporary accommodation awaiting the outcome of asylum claims.
3. Identity

It is important for CLs to develop a positive sense of identity, including self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-efficacy. Identity formation is a challenge for all young people due to changes in society and CLs have other issues to contend with as well.

Identity formation for CLs is influenced by the following factors.

A) The quality of care and attachments experienced by looked after young people
B) Their knowledge and understanding of their background and personal history
C) Their experience of how other people perceive and respond to them
D) How they see themselves and the opportunities they have to influence and shape their own biography.¹¹

Particular emphasis is placed on findings that young people are often still confused about their past, especially the reasons why parents had mistreated them, and so need input, professional or otherwise, to help them make sense of their history.

Identity issues can be more profound for mixed race and black young people due to confusion about racial identity, lack of contact with family and community and the impact of racism.

4. Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is described as being able to plan, solve problems and feel competent, and helps to promote resilience. LAC and CLs should have some control over aspects of their lives and opportunities to make decisions, to problem solve and to do things for themselves.

5. Education

Education can provide opportunities for self-efficacy. Educational success, along with positive experiences of school, is linked to resilience. LAC and CLs often have missed periods of schooling through placement moves, truancy and exclusion, and can be treated negatively by peers and teachers. Their levels of educational achievement and participation are significantly lower than those of other young people. Educational support and encouragement are crucial to help LAC and CLs get the most out of educational opportunities available to them.

6. Leisure

Leisure and extracurricular activities have been found to promote resilience. Participation in school activities provides opportunities for young people to develop skills and to make new friends. The opportunity to make a difference by helping others, for example, through volunteering, was identified as being important in helping young people to cope with difficult life experiences.¹²

7. Preparation

Preparation for leaving care in itself has been identified as an opportunity for young people to develop competencies and to learn and use skills in all areas: practical, emotional and interpersonal.¹³

Some of these factors, such as number of placements, will be outside of your control, but there are many areas in which workers can have a direct influence in LAC and CLs’ lives. Developing positive relationships, promoting or supporting education and leisure, and supporting the development of all life skills, can help LAC and CLs to achieve good outcomes.
Workers providing support and/or accommodation to LAC and CLs, on behalf of, or as part of, the young person’s local authority, have an important role in ensuring that they are in an environment where they are able to develop the skills they need to increase their chances of maintaining successful adult lives. Workers should seek advice and support from their supervisor or local authority link person if they experience difficulties in any of these areas.

Transitions and leaving care

A journey to adulthood

Most young people, whether they are living with their families, in foster care or in a children’s home, experience challenges during their journey to adulthood. It is a journey from a childhood status, characterised by dependency on family, school, friends and neighbourhood, to an adult status, based in part on choices such as becoming a householder, partner, parent, student and employee (see Fig. 1).

These life course choices, from which adult rights and responsibilities flow, are mediated by the impact of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status and disability. Youth or ‘adolescence’ is a key period in this journey, a time of excitement, challenge, preparation, risk taking and change.

Leaving care

Young people leaving care face the challenge of making this transition from the role of young person in care to that of adult out of care. They share a lot with other young people during this journey. Arguments with parents or carers about school, choice of career, loud music, close friends and many other lifestyle issues are common. However, whilst this journey is difficult for most young people, young people in care may need additional support and help because of the impact of their previous life experiences. In addition, they may need help with disability or emotional problems they may have.

The research evidence suggests that it is very important for young people to have stability and continuity in their lives to give them the personal confidence and platform from which to experiment, make mistakes, take risks and rise to the challenges and responsibilities of adulthood.

Becoming independent or interdependent

It is a difficult and exciting journey at the same time. But it is not, as sometimes portrayed, a journey from dependence to independence. In a complex and diverse society such as ours, we are all dependent on others, from the most everyday, practical assistance to emotional and personal support. Reciprocity, mutuality and interdependence are far more relevant to our lives and this has implications for how we help and prepare young people on their journey to adulthood.

Figure 1: Youth Transitions Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Childhood status</th>
<th>Youth status</th>
<th>Adulthood status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>Semi-dependent</td>
<td>Interdependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>College/training</td>
<td>Labour market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child in family</td>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>Partner, parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental home</td>
<td>Parental home/student/transitional housing</td>
<td>Householder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically dependent</td>
<td>Student loan/training income</td>
<td>Salary/wage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship-dependent</td>
<td>Semi-citizenship</td>
<td>Citizen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research has shown that adolescents focus on different issues at different times and that those who make successful transitions deal with one issue at a time. Evidence shows that the three stages of transition - leaving or disengagement, transition itself and integration into a new state - are now more extended and fluid; the actual transition stage provides opportunities for young people to adjust to their new status, usually through participating in further or higher education.\(^{15}\)

LAC and CLs commonly have short, fixed transitions and are less likely to participate in education, which can be detrimental to their journey to adulthood. It is important that, as far as possible, changes are introduced one at a time, that transitions happen gradually, and that young people have the time and space to adjust to changes from being in care to leaving care.

### Additional needs in transition

Some young people have other factors to deal with as well, as they face issues associated with disability, racial identity, parenthood, being in custody, an asylum-seeking status or living outside of their responsible local authority area. Sources of information and support that workers can access to assist them in supporting these young people have been referenced and details are provided throughout this pack.

### Transition tips

- Help young people feel in control of the transition.
- Give appropriate information (forewarned is forearmed) and give element of choice.
- Allow gradual, staged transitions if possible. Limit number of changes happening at the same time.
- Allow return to a supportive environment, to regroup and face future challenges.
- Listen to the young person’s concerns and fears. Do not just dismiss them; instead, work through them, pre-empting difficulties and finding ways to avoid or negotiate past them.
Supporting young people through transitions: case studies

Case study 1
Brian is an 18-year-old white male who has moderate learning difficulties. He has been living in a residential school some distance from his home town for seven years. It is the beginning of the Easter term and the decision has been made for Brian to return to live with his family at the end of the summer term. Brian will start at the local college in September.

What issues might Brian face and how would you support him?

Case study 2
Keisha is a 16-year-old black female who is in foster care and goes to the local comprehensive school. Keisha passed her GCSEs in the summer. It is the start of the summer holidays and Keisha will be going to college to do her A levels in September. All of her friends are going to the sixth form and Keisha will not know anyone at the college.

What issues might Keisha face and how would you support her?

Case study 3
Lee is a 19-year-old white male and is living in his own flat. Lee has completed a two-year training course for which he received a training allowance and incentives from the leaving care team. Lee will be starting full-time work in one month. Lee has done a work experience placement previously and has done some casual work. This will be Lee’s first permanent job.

What issues might Lee face and how would you support him?

Case study 4
Janet is a 17-year-old white female who has lived in supported housing for the past year. Janet is pregnant and will be moving into a mother and baby unit, in the area where she grew up, when she has had the baby. Janet wanted to move to this unit as it is near her parents and she wants to have more contact with them.

What issues might Janet face and how would you support her?
Notes, resources and references cited in this chapter


7. education, training and employment support

The Social Exclusion Unit (now the Social Exclusion Taskforce) identified engagement in education as the most fundamental way in which individuals can combat disadvantage and avoid becoming socially excluded from society. Unfortunately, when we look at how well young people progress in the education system we know looked after children (LAC) and care leavers (CLs) continue to trail way behind their non-looked after peers.

The Government has launched a number of initiatives and publications to underpin its aim to improve the life chances of children in care, as follows:

- The Quality Protects' programme spent approximately £885 million between 1998 and 2003 to improve life chances and outcomes for looked after young people. Although this huge sum was spent, the Government could not reach the public service agreement (PSA) targets it had set for itself on numbers of:
  - CLs who gain five GCSE passes graded A-C;
  - LAC who sit at least one GCSE or equivalent;
  - CLs aged 19 who are in education, training and employment (ETE).
- National minimum standards for children’s homes and fostering services.
- Introduction of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.²
- Joint Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and Department of Health (DH) guidance - Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care.³
- Every Child Matters⁴ - Children Act 2004.⁵
- Show me how I matter: a guide to the education of looked after children.⁶
- Looked after children toolkit - Audit Commission.⁷
- Putting corporate parenting into practice: a toolkit - National Children’s Bureau March 2006.⁸

The Social Exclusion Unit report, A better education for children in care,⁹ examined the barriers to LAC achieving their educational potential. The report identified five key changes and actions which, if implemented, would help to improve outcomes for CLs. These were:

- greater placement stability;
- less time out of school and longer in education;
- proactive help with school work;
- more help from primary carers to support school work;
- improved health and wellbeing facilitated by all the professionals working together in the best interests of the child.

Other known factors contributing to success include:

- stable and consistent care;
- access to early reading;
- regular school attendance;
- support from well-informed foster carers;
- having a mentor;
- understanding the importance of education;
- financial support to access further and higher education.
The challenge of maintaining placement stability

Traumatised children can exhibit a wide range of challenging and anxiety-provoking behaviour. Developmental impairment can leave a legacy that, in some cases, could take a lifetime to resolve.

The excerpt below from Cairns’ and Stanway’s book, Learn the Child - Helping looked after children to learn\textsuperscript{10} highlights some of the emotional issues that can impact on the education of children in care:

“When children are subjected to developmental impairment they often have difficulty with
Stress
Trust and empathy
Impulse
Rage
Shame

Living and working with traumatised children and young people is extremely challenging. The mnemonic STIRS can help remind us of the extreme difficulties these young people face. Unmet attachment need STIRS up the child. The child then STIRS up other people around them.

Traumatised children lack the capacity to regulate their own physiology. As they grow older this becomes even more burdensome. They can also perceive that this inability marks them out from their peers. They are very likely to self-medicate to try and get some relief and to establish some control over their function. Drugs, alcohol and other substances are commonly abused by young people living with stress disorders. Children can also become addicted to high stimulus activities such as computer games, dance or sexual activity. What distinguishes these activities from equivalent activities in their peers is the joyless and obsessive way in which traumatised children attempt to lose themselves through external stimuli. Some criminal behaviour is also highly stimulating and maybe attractive to hyper-aroused children.”

Children and young people who have suffered trauma at a young age struggle to understand the world around them. This lack of understanding and an inability to control their own physiological responses often results in the child feeling anxious and afraid. To their peers they can appear out of control and frightening. This in turn can lead to feelings of isolation and a huge struggle to form supportive social networks.

The role support staff and carers play in supporting young people with their education is crucial. Hyper-arousal in children and young people can be very difficult to manage, especially in a group setting. This can be especially problematic in a classroom setting where the teacher has to give the right messages to the child about his/her behaviour without perpetuating a cycle of negative responses to which the child may already have become accustomed.

Helping young people make sense of their own experience is a crucial step, as is helping them to regulate their emotions and physiology. For example, if young people can recognise for themselves when they are becoming tense or angry because of external stimuli then they can begin (with help) to use relaxation techniques to prevent a spiral out of control.

This process of change will not happen overnight. Many traumatised children will grow into young adults that still have unresolved difficulties. The key point is that change and growth is possible, even if this happens at a slow pace.
For many young people, repeated moves and placement instability may have lead to disruption of their education. These young people will need much support and encouragement if they are to feel they can achieve in the educational arena. Workers’ and carers’ encouragement is vital if young people are to succeed.

Helping young people to have aspirations and acting as a positive role model are just a couple of ways workers can have an impact on young people’s perceptions of the education system. Once young people see the potential benefits of engaging in the education system and realise that support is available to help them succeed, they can begin the process of realising their full potential.

Ensuring quiet study time is available every day can pose quite a challenge to some carers. This is especially true of residential establishments, which may well have residents that are well-motivated young people as well as those disaffected by their experiences. Meeting the needs of both groups can be extremely difficult. In residential establishments with limited space, finding a quiet place to study may prove impossible. In these circumstances alternative provision will need to be found. Using community resources such as libraries and after-school clubs can help overcome difficulties in the short term. The longer-term solution is for residential placements to have an ethos that supports the education of LAC. Practical measures written into policies and procedures should help facilitate change for the better. Links to designated teachers and clear expectations on key workers to attend parents’ evenings are two basic elements that should be in place.

Local authorities now have a duty under section 52 of the Children Act 2004 to promote the educational achievement of LAC. This also extends to those young people who are leaving care. Local authorities should ensure that each young person’s pathway plan into independence builds on his/her educational progress when he/she was looked after and includes details of how the young person will be supported to stay in further or higher education or training.

Local authority actions to support children in care with education

This and the following sections on ‘Practical ways of supporting children in education, training and employment’ and ‘What happens when?’ are adapted from the DfES resource Who does what: How social workers and carers can support the education of looked after children.11

- All young people in care should have specific access to appropriate, up-to-date books, toys and ICT equipment.
- Local authorities developing school-based therapeutic services should ensure they are accessible to children in care.
- If a child does not have a school place, the local authority should make immediate alternative arrangements to provide full-time education.
- Those who fall behind should be given additional support to catch up, which should be recorded in their personal education plan.
- All children in care should have equal access and support wherever they are placed.
- Develop a variety of employment or work experience placements for young people in care.
Practical ways of supporting children in education, training and employment:

- Make sure the child/young person gets up in time to have breakfast and go to school or college.
- Take an interest in school or college work and activities.
- Check homework diaries.
- Attend parents’ evenings and read reports.
- Keep in contact with the school or college.
- Look out for signs of the child/young person skipping school and take prompt action to get him/her back in if he/she is.
- Provide a quiet place for homework, and essential materials (e.g. pens, paper, ruler, books, calculator).
- Check homework is done.
- Encourage regular school or college attendance.
- Encourage after-school activities.
- Attend local authority events to celebrate children’s achievements.
- Celebrate and reward child/young person’s achievements.
- Support with reading.
- Help with homework.
- Ensure child/young person has access to a computer with suitable software.
- Help with revision planning, such as timetables and checking dates of exams.
- Monitor revision and stress levels: ensure child/young person has breaks, eats well, gets sleep and does leisure activities.
- Help with finding work experience or employment.
- Make sure child/young person has suitable equipment and clothing.
- Accompany child/young person to school, college, work experience, training or job on first day and until he/she is settled.
- Ensure he/she has travel fares/lunch money/packed lunch.
- Check how the child/young person is getting on in his/her education, training or employment.
- If child/young person is experiencing difficulties, support him/her and take appropriate action.

The nature of the support may vary as the young person grows older; however, certain themes remain constant over time. A significant person expressing an ongoing and active interest in the young person’s academic career is as relevant for a young person sitting exams at university as it is for a young person preparing to take his/her GCSE exams at secondary school. In both scenarios the young person may be experiencing pressure and stress. In both scenarios he/she may need help with strategies to help him/her revise or complete coursework on time.

Purchasing and using revision aids with young people can to help boost confidence prior to exam time, as can drawing up a comprehensive revision timetable and then helping the young person to stick to it, even through the times when he/she has competing activities he/she wants to pursue!
### What happens when?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What?</th>
<th>When?</th>
<th>Key activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key Stage 2 national curriculum tests, known as SATs (level 2 - level 5)</td>
<td>Age 11</td>
<td>Support child through test period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move from primary to secondary school (where appropriate)</td>
<td>Age 11</td>
<td>Support child through transition phase; check s/he is settling in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move from middle to secondary school (where appropriate)</td>
<td>Age 13</td>
<td>Support child through transition phase; check s/he is settling in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become eligible for Connexions Service</td>
<td>Age 13</td>
<td>Check whether child is working with Connexions personal adviser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Stage 3 SATs (level 3 - level 7)</td>
<td>Age 14</td>
<td>Support child through test period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose options for year 10</td>
<td>Age 14</td>
<td>Discuss options; help with selection; careers advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional review for children with statements of special educational needs (SEN)</td>
<td>Age 14</td>
<td>Attend review meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSE examinations including completion of coursework</td>
<td>Age 16</td>
<td>Check coursework completed; check revision is being done; support revision process; celebrate success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide to stay in school or go to college; take up training/modern apprenticeship or employment</td>
<td>Age 16</td>
<td>Discuss options; help with selection; careers advice; work experience; help with job hunting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose A/AS level subjects/vocational courses</td>
<td>Age 17</td>
<td>Discuss options; help with selection; careers advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take AS level examinations</td>
<td>Age 17</td>
<td>Check revision is being done; support revision process; celebrate success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose university course</td>
<td>Age 17</td>
<td>Discuss options; support with application process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take A levels</td>
<td>Age 18</td>
<td>Check revision is being done; support revision process; celebrate success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take up training or employment</td>
<td>Age 18</td>
<td>Discuss options; help with selection; careers advice; work experience; help with job hunting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Care leavers in higher education

Local authorities have specific duties placed on them by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 in relation to supporting CLs who wish to go on to study in both further education and higher education. It is worth noting that the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 states that “responsible authorities” have a duty to provide accommodation and maintenance for CLs, which ends when they reach the age of 18. However, they have duties:

- to provide general assistance (section 23C(4)(c));
- to provide assistance with the expenses associated with employment (section 23C(4)(a));
- to provide assistance with the expenses associated with education and training (section 23C(4)(b));
- to provide vacation accommodation (or the funds to secure it) to CLs in higher education or in residential further education (section 24B(5)).
Each of the duties in this group is dependent on the young person needing the assistance. It will normally be linked to the pathway plan and to the young person’s educational or welfare needs. The duty to provide vacation accommodation applies to all local authority CLs aged 16 and over, not just to former relevant children.

For CLs wanting to return to further education after the age of 18, the guidance accompanying the Act goes on to state:

“Councils have a duty to assist former relevant children with the expenses associated with education and training. Unlike the other duties, which cease when the young person reaches 21, this duty runs until the young person has completed the programme of education and training agreed with the responsible authority and set out in the Pathway Plan. Since young people who have been looked after are liable to have suffered disruption to their education, they are quite likely to be embarking on Further Education, for example, later than their peers, and this will be reflected in their Pathway Plan. Given that the Plan must be reviewed and revised at least every six months, there is scope to take account of a former relevant child’s educational achievement should this qualify them, say, to undertake a degree course and then postgraduate work. The responsible authority would not be expected to provide accommodation and maintenance for those in Higher Education: under such circumstances, the prime funding must come from whatever mainstream sources would be available to support anyone else. However should the young person’s welfare or educational or training needs require it the responsible authority would be under a duty to provide assistance such as travel or equipment costs as well as contributing to the expenses incurred by the young person in living near the place where he or she is, or will be, receiving education or training.”

Leaving care services need to work with local further and higher education institutions, the local leaving care service and Connexions partnerships to raise awareness of the specific needs of CLs. One way this work is being developed nationally is through the Aimhigher programme.

**Aimhigher**

“Aimhigher” is a national programme run by the Higher Education Funding Council for England with support from the Department of Innovation, Universities & Skills (formerly the Department for Education and Skills). It aims to widen participation in higher education by raising the awareness, aspirations and attainment of young people from under-represented groups. The programme particularly focuses on young people from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds, some minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities.

The role of Aimhigher is to:

- Raise aspirations and motivation to enter Higher Education among young people from under-represented groups, in line with the Government’s target that by the year 2010, 50% of those aged between 18 and 30 should have the opportunity to benefit from Higher Education
- Raise attainment of potential students from under-represented groups so that they gain the academic or vocational qualifications that will enable them to enter Higher Education
- Raise awareness and understanding of the different progression routes into Higher Education via vocational courses, so that prospective students understand that A-levels are not the only option
- Offer information, advice and guidance to potential students and their teachers and families

**Aimhigher activities:**

Aimhigher encompasses a wide range of activities to engage and motivate students who have the potential to enter higher education but are under-achieving, undecided or lacking in confidence. Most Aimhigher activities take place at a local level, which allows them to be tailored to the needs of specific communities and individuals - some examples are included below:
Activities at a regional and area level are supported by national Aimhigher activity, including a road show for schools and college and the Aimhigher student portal website."

Extract above taken from Aimhigher website.

The Aimhigher programme has a lot to offer both LAC and CLs. Carers and workers should also be familiar with the range of advice, information and support that the programme can offer to this group of young people.

**The Frank Buttle Trust By Degrees study**

This five-year research study by the Frank Buttle Trust followed three cohorts of young people, all with a local authority care background, as they prepared for and entered the higher education system. The final report, Going to University from Care, gives a valuable insight into the support needs of CLs and how local authorities can help meet these as young people prepare for and embark on a course of higher education.

The main recommendations from this report are as follows:

1. Local authorities should plan and budget to support increasing numbers of CLs going to university.
2. Financial support for CLs at university should be tailored to their needs and not provided only at a minimum level.
3. Children in care should be enrolled in schools where a high proportion of pupils go on to university.
4. There should be a full discussion of post-16 plans before GCSE, including the option of continuing to higher education.
5. Foster carers should be trained and funded to provide accommodation and support for young people during their exam years and throughout their higher education courses.
6. Prospective students should be given a written contract specifying the financial and other support to be provided based on discussion of their individual needs and circumstances.
7. Students should be advised and supported to live in university accommodation during their first year.
8. Every student should have a named personal adviser for the duration of his/her course.
9. All higher education institutions should have a comprehensive policy for the recruitment, retention and support of students from a care background.
10. Admissions tutors and widening participation officers should be better informed about the care system.
11. The Government should fund local authorities to support the education of unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors. Local authorities should provide skilled support and advice on status problems and ensure high-quality legal representation in case of need.
Higher education institutions’ ‘quality mark’ initiative

This is a new initiative allowing higher education institutions to apply and qualify for a quality mark if they meet certain criteria relating to encouraging/supporting CLs to apply and study at the institution.

The Frank Buttle Trust has created a ‘Quality Mark’ that recognises institutions which “go that extra mile” to provide support to students who have been in care. The problems faced by young people who have been in care can seriously hamper their ability to acquire educational qualifications or employment skills. The Trust worked in partnership with Universities UK, the Standing Conference of Principal, the Association of Colleges and the Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education to develop a ‘Commitment to Care Leavers in Higher Education’.

This commitment provides a charter through which higher education providers can demonstrate their commitment to supporting CLs. It is envisaged that higher education providers will link this commitment to other schemes and activities such as AimHigher in England. Southampton, Kingston, Bradford, Leeds, Sheffield Hallam and Edge Hill Universities have already been awarded the ‘Quality Mark’ at its launch in June 2006.

Grant opportunities for care leavers

The Frank Buttle Trust provides grants and support to enable young people to undertake courses at universities and other higher education institutions. Information can be obtained from the website (see below in Notes and Resources section).

The Bryn Melyn Group Foundation Trust Fund also makes grant payments to CLs seeking to engage in education. Grant applications are welcomed from all CLs up to the age of 26 to help with personal development needs, crisis payments, education, training or employment needs. Applications connected with training and enterprise are welcome from CLs up to the age of 29. See the website for further information.

Education provision and options: what workers need to know

There are a whole range of choices for education and training, along with numerous providers. It is difficult for workers to know all the options for helping young people make the most suitable choices.

WMTD has developed a set of charts, described below, that will enable workers to provide or access the information necessary to assist young people with their decisions about education.
The Education Skills Support Charts, found in the Appendix section, are for use by young people, their carers and leaving care staff. The idea is not in any way to replace the valuable role played by specialist ETE staff and/or Connexions workers. Rather, the charts will enable and enhance the day-to-day support of young people as they manoeuvre their way through the increasingly complex world of education and educational opportunities. The charts are an accessible and visual guide to the key information that young people, their carers and their leaving care staff will need to help them make informed decisions about their education options. The five charts include the following information:

CHART ONE - COMMON EDUCATIONAL JOURNEYS 16+

The basis of the opening chart is an image showing the main education/training routes (e.g. school, college, apprenticeships, university, etc.) leading to the main education/training outcomes (e.g. GCSE, A levels, vocational qualifications, degree, etc.). Young people (aged 16+) will be able to look at the chart and, at a glance, see potential routes for themselves in terms of the education and/or training ‘journey’ they wish to pursue.

CHART TWO - SETTING THE CONTEXT FOR STAFF/CARERS

- The legal framework: powers and duties of local authorities, especially under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Pathway plans
- Personal education plans (PEPs) and PEP extensions
- LAC reviews and planning meetings
- The ages and stages in education: key stages, national curriculum tests, known as SATs (standard assessment tasks), what happens when, etc.
- Absence: what happens when a pupil is not in school?
- Disabled young people: processes and provision
- Educational provision for young people in custody
- NEET (not in education, employment or training) issues and provision: engagement plans

CHART THREE - ROLES OF KEY PEOPLE

- Social workers
- Personal advisers
- Carers
- Connexions workers
- ETE workers in leaving care teams
- Designated teachers
- Pastoral support officers
- College staff
- Others

CHART FOUR - QUALIFICATIONS AND COURSES

- Access courses
- Short courses
- Pre-ETE courses, The Prince’s Trust, Fairbridge, etc.
• Chart of The National Qualifications Framework (NQF levels 1-8, including National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)) and how the different qualifications relate to each other
• Chart of The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ levels)
• Details of the courses/qualifications that are likely to be sought by care leavers
• Further education courses
• Work-based training

CHART FIVE - SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
• Checklist on supporting young people in ETE
• Financial support
• Homework and study support
• Revision and exams
• Parents’ evenings
• Special educational needs (SEN): how to support pupils with SEN
• Subject choices
• Moving to a new school/college
• Higher education: Aimhigher, visits to universities and choosing the right course, help with applications/Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)
• Options for young parents: funding, childcare, etc.
• Individual tuition
• Engaging NEET young people
• Support for disabled young people
• Other sources of advice: learndirect, Connexions Direct, etc.
• Jargon buster
• Key contacts

Employment
Being able to find and maintain work is very important for all young people but especially those leaving care as they will be more likely to succeed in adult life and not face the social problems that are all too common for CLs. Local authorities and individual workers have a role in helping young people with employment. The WOW CD-Rom, described below, provides information on this. WMTD partnered with The Who Cares? Trust to produce an interactive CD-Rom for care experienced young people entitled: WOW! (World of Work). The CD builds on the success of The Who Cares Trust? Employability and Employability Plus pack that it produced in 2002.

The WOW! CD-Rom is predominantly for young people and aims to help them obtain and sustain employment. It is very interactive, including games and filmed case studies of young people and employers giving their advice and top tips on gaining and sustaining employment. Young people were central to the design, content, production and promotion of the CD-Rom, which included having a film crew consisting entirely of CLs.

There is also a workers section, which consists of a guide on how to set up work experience placements, examples of innovative, employment-related initiatives going on in local authorities now, suggested activities to work through with young people on the CD-Rom, useful website links, etc.
WOW activities for young people - a guide

Introduction

This guide explains the various activities in the young person’s section of the WOW CD-Rom. Click on the WOW activities button for an explanation of each activity with some discussion points for you to help the young people gain as much as they can from this CD-Rom.

About Me!

This section gives young people a chance to focus on themselves: what they like, do not like, their interests, their skills and qualities and what experiences they have had. This is to help them think about possible career choices as well as building up a CV glossary as they go.

The ‘I like’, ‘I don’t like’ and ‘skills and qualities’ activities all work in a similar way, whereby young people choose words and phrases to add to the ‘I like’, ‘I don’t like’ and ‘skills and qualities’ mind maps and have the option to add them to their CV glossary if they want to. Instructions for how to do these activities are included for young people.

Discussion points

- Encourage them to think about positive things they have learned from their experiences. Help them to see that even experiences they feel are negative, such as moving around a lot, changing schools, etc. can give them valuable transferable skills such as flexibility, resilience and the ability to cope with new challenges - all good qualities for the world of work.

- Stress that nobody is good at everything and it is good to have some areas to work on.

- People rarely have all the skills/qualities needed for a job when they start - they learn on the job.

- Learning new things keeps life interesting. Help them to focus on what they want to develop and to have short-term goals to work towards, so that they can reach their potential.

Looking for a job

This section has three sections to guide young people through the process. The job advert activity, CV activity and the interview game can all help young people to look for and apply for a job.

Remind them that they have been building up some words and phrases in their CV glossary that might be useful when they write their CV and a covering letter or fill in an application form.

Job advert activity

This activity features three different job adverts: one from the internet, one from a newspaper and one from a job centre. The information is taken from real adverts, but they themselves are not real job adverts. Addresses and names are made up. Each advert has some key phrases or words highlighted that are seen in many adverts. Young people can click on them to see an explanation.

Discussion points

- Encourage young people to look out for these key phrases in job adverts and to refer to them in their application forms and covering letters. They need to show a potential employer that they have the key things the advert says the employer is looking for.

- Encourage them to be open to different options, and not to be put off if they do not have everything the advert is looking for.

- Make sure you give them any useful contacts/websites/tips you may have for finding vacancies.

- Local authorities are a huge employer; keep your eyes open for opportunities for young people.
CV activity

This section explains job descriptions and person specifications, and applications in writing, either in the form of a completed application or a CV with a covering letter.

The CV activity is a voice-activated guide through the different sections of a CV and explains what is required in each section. Young people can also look at the sample CV before they click on the ‘my CV’ tab to fill in the template and make up their own CV.

Discussion points

- Help them to write a concise and eye-catching personal statement.
- Help them to edit their CV if it is longer than two pages.
- Encourage them to look at websites that feature other sample CVs (see website list on CD-Rom).
- Point out that it is a good idea to ‘tweak’ your CV to suit particular jobs.
- Make sure they mention all voluntary work, work experiences and other relevant experiences.
- Encourage them to keep updating their CV and to keep copies electronically or to print them off.

Writing a covering letter

The covering letter activity is a sample covering letter with seven sections – each with two alternative paragraphs, a) or b). Young people are asked to click on the paragraphs they would choose if they were writing this covering letter. It is a letter the person from the sample CV (Munjit Tailor) is writing for the Assistant Graphic Designer job (sample job advert number 1). When they have completed the activity, the feedback will show which were the correct paragraphs to choose and explain why.

Discussion points

- Help them to write concisely and not to waffle.
- Help them to concentrate on the important points and to write no more than one side of A4.
- Help them to say something interesting and positive that will make them stand out from the rest of the applicants. It is their chance to show off!
- Make sure their letter is neat and tidy, on good-quality paper and that it is typed unless they have been asked to write it by hand.
- Make sure they check it and ask someone else to check it for spelling and grammar.
- Make sure they apply before the deadline.

Interview game

This game is a multiple-choice exercise where young people choose answers to five questions about preparing for an interview and five sample interview questions they may be asked at any job interview. They will be given feedback depending on whether they answered mostly a’s, mostly b’s or mostly c’s. They then click on the interview top tips to get more information on how to do better at an interview.

Discussion points

- Help young people to understand how important it is to prepare for an interview.
- How they present themselves is as important as what they say.
- Make sure they are aware that it is good to ask questions.
Give them some practice: pretend to be the interviewer a few times, so when they do it for real, it is not their first time.

Discuss the top tips with them and how they can improve on their technique.

**What career**

Some people have always known that they want to be a journalist, or a teacher, or to work with animals. Most people, however, need a little help to think about what career path they might follow.

This section has three parts:

1. Film clips of young people and employers talking about their experiences and giving useful tips.
2. Some career ideas that link in to the ‘I like’ ‘I don’t like’ and ‘skills and qualities’ activities in the ‘About Me!’ section, together with a couple of useful website links.
3. Downloadable information sheets for young people undertaking work experience or job placements. These include: a health and safety information sheet, an evaluation form, a personal information form, a work experience diary template and a checklist, including getting a National Insurance number, etc.

**Discussion points**

- Help them to see that if other young people have succeeded in the world of work, so can they.
- Point out that employers are not people of whom to be frightened; they just want people to show them how good they are. They will encourage young people in interviews.
- Arrange for them to meet some young people in person to ask them questions about how they succeeded in the world of work.
- Make sure young people have the downloadable information about work experience if they are undertaking any placements.

**Finally**

In order to fully equip young people for the world of work, it is necessary for you to discuss with them, or help them to find out, the following practical information. The list of websites on the CD-Rom will help, too.

- How to obtain a National Insurance number
- What a P45 is
- Having a birth certificate and passport for proof of identity
- The impact of paid employment on benefits
- Opening a bank account
- Income tax
- How they are going to travel to work and what it will cost
- Helping them to ensure they have adequate and secure accommodation
- Making sure they are registered with a GP in order to get doctor’s certificates for periods of sick leave at work

To find out how to get a copy of the WOW! CD-Rom go to:

www.leavingcare.org/professionals/products
Notes, resources and references cited in this chapter

1  For information about the Quality Protects programme, see the website at http://www.dfes.gov.uk/qualityprotects/


3  Department for Education and Skills & Department of Health (2000) Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care
Available at http://www.dfes.gov.uk/educationprotects//upload/ACF3725.pdf


Available at http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/seo/publications1037.html?did=32


Available at http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/05/86/00/04058600.pdf

13 See the Aimhigher website for information about higher education for young people and their carers at http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/home/index.cfm


15 Information about Frank Buttle Trust grants is available at http://www.buttletrust.org/

16 Information about The Bryn Melyn Group Foundation Trust Fund can be obtained from the website at http://www.brynmelyngroup.com/foundation/grants.php

Other useful resources

The Who Cares Trust have published a document ‘Education Matters - for everyone working with children in public care’ which can be ordered at http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk/publications.htm
8. using the get ready for adult life pack

Preparing for adult life

For most young people, preparation for adult life is a gradual process beginning in childhood and progressing with increasing age and personal development. It is also a supported process, usually taking place in the context of the family, and it is a participatory process involving discussion (or arguments!), negotiation, risk taking, making mistakes and trying again. Finally, it is holistic in approach, attaching equal importance to practical, emotional and interpersonal skills.

Preparation and leaving care

Preparation for leaving care should be part of an ongoing process and not a time-limited exercise. Children and young people should start learning life skills from as early as possible according to their age and abilities. Some young people will have disabilities that will require them to continue receiving care and support when they have left care; however, they still need to be prepared for adulthood and must be given the opportunity to develop the skills of which they are capable.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 guidance states the underlying principles in preparation for leaving care and the three aspects of preparation.

Some of the principles underlying preparation for leaving care are as follows:

- Preparation for leaving care should help develop young people’s capacity to build satisfactory relationships, develop their self-esteem and enable them to acquire the necessary practical skills for independent living.
- In helping young people to develop socially and culturally, carers must be prepared to take some risks and to take responsibility for doing so, to let young people take some risks, for example, in attempting relationships that ultimately do not work, and to take responsibility for supporting young people through breakdown in relationships.
- All preparation for leaving care and provision of after-care must take account of the religious persuasion, racial origin, cultural and linguistic background and other needs of the young person.

The three broad aspects to preparation for leaving care are:

1. enabling young people to build and maintain relationships, including sexual relationships;
2. enabling young people to develop their self-esteem;
3. teaching practical and financial skills and knowledge.

As a worker you need to ensure that young people are supported to develop a range of skills across all the areas outlined. This will include:

- self-care skills: personal hygiene, diet and health, including sexual health;
- practical skills: budgeting, shopping, cooking and cleaning;
- interpersonal skills: managing a range of formal and informal relationships, including sexual relationships;
- education: planning and supporting positive progress;
- identity: developing a positive self-image, knowledge of and links with family and community, sexuality and cultural knowledge and skills for young people from minority ethnic communities.
Further information on workers’ roles in developing young people’s skills and preparing young people for leaving care can be found in the Children (Leaving Care) Act guidance.

Particular attention may be necessary to meet the preparation needs of young people with learning or physical disabilities, as their preparation opportunities may be overly restrictive.

Preparation will involve giving children opportunities to see tasks being carried out, showing them how to do tasks and then ensuring that they get the chance to learn and practise skills, with the eventual aim of them being able to do as much for themselves as they can.

Preparation for the emotional aspect of living independently and becoming an adult is as important. Children should be supported to develop self-esteem and confidence, they should learn how to deal with problems, how to resolve conflicts and how to cope with their feelings, and they need to develop an understanding of the issues and realities of adult life. The importance of helping looked after children (LAC) to tap into resources in the community and to develop support networks outside of the care system is stressed in the guidance.

“...the process of preparation should ensure that when young people do leave care, they have a supportive network of friends, many of who will be from outside the care system, and that they are well-equipped to enter into relationships with others. This will require workers to support the young person to “network” into community resources, just as their non-looked after peers are supported by family and friends.”

Making sure that young people are ready to leave care means ensuring that they know how to access support in the community and have links with people other than workers or carers, so that when they are no longer entitled to services from the local authority, they will still be able to get help and advice.

**What should workers do?**

As a worker you are acting as a corporate parent on behalf of the local authority and you play an essential role in helping children in your care to develop the range of life skills that they need for adulthood. Local authorities must act as a good parent. In the area of preparation this means that they should ensure that their children have the necessary skills for when they leave care and reach adulthood. A useful way to approach this is to think about how you would prepare your own child for when they leave home.

A common experience for many LAC and care leavers (CLs) is the lack of opportunities many have to develop household or budgeting skills. When they are discharged from care (at age 16 in some cases), to live on their own and are expected to cope with living independently, it should be no surprise that some CLs have problems in maintaining their tenancies or experience other problems.

The age that LAC and CLs leave home, and their opportunities to learn skills, differs from children who are not looked after. The average age for children in the general population to leave home is now their mid-20s, whilst LAC leave care between the ages of 16 and 18, generally to live in their own independent accommodation. If we also consider the availability of continuing parental support to most young people in the general population when they leave home, it is in stark comparison to the experience of their LAC peers, who not only have to cope with independence earlier but often without recourse to the support other young people can rely on.
The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 was introduced to improve preparation and support for LAC and CLs. Care planning and pathway planning is central to this process and must detail what work is going to be carried out with the young person to develop practical and other skills. As workers who work directly with young people in accommodation settings, it is your responsibility to ensure that young people are able to learn and practise independent living skills.

### Teaching practical life skills

LAC and CLs in all settings must be given opportunities to learn life skills. All workers have a responsibility to make sure this happens. One aspect of the role of foster carer and residential worker is the provision of direct primary care, so as a worker you may consider it is part of your job to look after the young person and wash, cook, clean, iron, etc. for them whilst they are in your care.

However, as emphasised previously, the amount and type of care to be provided will vary and reduce over time and must be balanced by the requirement to prepare the young person for adulthood. It may be the case that it is easier, saves time or fits in with the routine of the home for workers to carry out all the household tasks, but this approach will seriously limit the opportunity for young people to learn necessary skills.

Housing support workers and personal advisers may provide opportunities for learning skills through providing courses and cooking sessions within their services. Social workers and personal advisers with responsibility for statutory planning must ensure that care and pathway plans contain provisions for young people to learn life skills.

Most of these skills will be taught in the young person’s accommodation by foster carers, residential social workers and housing support workers. Personal advisers and social workers should liaise and communicate regularly with these workers to ensure that the plans are being followed. Those with responsibility for reviewing the plans must also ensure that tasks identified in the plan are being carried out and take the necessary remedial action where the plan is not being followed through.

### Other life skills

Some life skills are easier to learn, especially the practical skills, so it can be clearer who will be responsible for this and they are more likely to be detailed in care and pathway plans. Other skills are more difficult to learn because they cannot be directly taught. They are skills that children develop over time as a result of the care they receive, the relationships they are part of and the experiences they have.

All workers therefore have a responsibility to learn how to build relationships with young people and how to facilitate the development of communication skills, problem solving abilities, self-esteem, self-confidence and other important skills and attributes.

Children often learn by example so workers should be aware of how they demonstrate these skills and ensure that young people can see them using these skills. Opportunities should be provided in placements and within services for young people to make decisions, take appropriate risks, to communicate in different ways, to resolve issues and practise and develop the full range of life skills.
Supporting skills development

Supporting the development of some life skills and personal/social skills was identified in the training pilot as an area of difficulty, especially when there is limited time to prepare young people.

The development of certain life and social skills can be problematic, especially in time-limited situations. Conflict resolution, problem solving, anger management, communication, decision making and assertiveness are not things you can learn in a short space of time. Emotional development, which provides the basis for the acquisition of life and social skills such as these, needs to be addressed on an ongoing basis, starting in childhood and continuing throughout the young person’s life, to enable them to learn these skills. Despite these issues there are still ways in which workers can help older children and young people with their emotional and social skills development.

There are resources listed at the end of the chapter that have information on approaches and exercises that you can use when working with young people on social and emotional skills development. A limited number of exercises have been developed for the pack from suggested activities in these resources. For more extensive and in-depth information to support your work in this area, refer to the resources identified.

Descriptions and further information about the exercises developed for the pack will be given in the Health chapter overview (handling feelings, anger management and self-esteem) and in the Life Skills chapter overview (conflict resolution, assertiveness, communication, problem solving and decision making).

Points to consider

- Importance of range of life skills for adulthood: interpersonal, emotional, practical and social.
- Emphasis should not just be on practical skills.
- Difficulties with supporting development of non-practical skills (long-term nature of this work).
- Importance of self-esteem, confidence, positive identity, etc.
- Teaching life skills should be gradual: through care approach, start from when young people come into care (appropriate to age and ability).
- Need to provide everyday opportunities for young people to learn and to practise skills.
- Disabled young people may not be going on to live independently, but they need to do things for themselves and take on responsibilities of adulthood, making decisions, forming relationships, etc.
- Workers need to allow young people to take risks and make mistakes - part of the learning and development process.
- Workers need to be understanding of mistakes made and support young people through these.
- Emphasis on particular skills may be based on your own values.
How to use the pack

The Get Ready for Adult Life pack contains information relating to the Every Child Matters outcomes and includes all areas that need to be covered in pathway plans, as required by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 legislation and guidance. A wide range of subjects are covered and there are signposts to other sources for further information. A checklist at the start identifies where there are gaps in skills and knowledge. Quizzes, activity sheets and interactive activities throughout the pack can be used by young people to work on the required skill and build up their knowledge.

Get Ready for Adult Life pack contents list:
- Checklist
- Money
- Health
- Education, training and employment
- Family and social relationships
- Accommodation
- Looking after yourself
- Having your say
- Legal rights
- Being in care
- Life skills

Relevant requirements to achieve the Every Child Matters outcomes have been set out by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in the Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework, as follows:

Be Healthy
- Healthy lifestyles are promoted for children and young people
- Action is taken to promote children and young people’s physical health
- Action is taken to promote children and young people’s mental health
- LAC’s health needs are addressed
- The health needs of children & young people with learning difficulties or disabilities are addressed

Stay safe
- Children and young people are informed about key risks to their safety and how to deal with them
- Children and young people are provided with a safe environment
- LAC live in safe environments and are protected from abuse and exploitation
- Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities live in safe environments and are protected from abuse and exploitation
Enjoy and Achieve

- Children and young people are enabled and encouraged to attend and enjoy school and to achieve highly
- All children and young people can access a range of recreational activities, including play and voluntary learning provision
- Children and young people who are looked after are helped to enjoy and achieve
- Children and young people with learning difficulties or disabilities are helped to enjoy and achieve

Achieve Economic Well Being

- Young people 11-19 are helped to prepare for working life
- Children and young people who are looked after are helped to achieve economic well-being
- Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to achieve economic wellbeing

Make a Positive Contribution

- Children and young people are supported in developing socially and emotionally
- Children and young people, particularly those from vulnerable groups, are supported in managing changes and responding to challenges in their lives
- Children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision making and support the community
- Children and young people who are looked after are helped to make a positive contribution
- Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to make a positive contribution

Children and young people must be provided for in all the areas set out and must be given information and support to promote their all round development. The Get Ready For Adult Life pack is a source of relevant information and provides a framework for young people to work on key areas of development with carers/workers as they approach adulthood. An overview of each chapter will now be given.

Checklist

The pack has an assessment tool in the form of a checklist for young people to identify skills and knowledge that they have and those they have not yet developed. There are questions under each chapter heading for young people to answer. Young people will be able to complete individual sections or the whole assessment. The checklist will be available on the leavingcare.org website and young people can complete the assessment by themselves.

Ideally, the checklist should be completed with a worker but if the young person does it by himself/herself a worker should go through it with the young person afterwards. The worker should discuss the outcome with the young person. Where he/she disagrees with the young person’s assessment, the worker should give reasons for this and then ask the young person for evidence, or agree that the young person will demonstrate his/her skills and then negotiate changes to the assessment.

The checklist information should not be used as a stand-alone assessment but as part of an assessment of a young person’s life skills. The checklist information can identify what work is needed to prepare the young person for adult life.
Preparation for adulthood should begin as early as possible. If the checklist is completed at a young age, sections can be revisited, or the checklist can be completed again at a later age, to evidence and monitor progress made.

The purpose of the assessment is to identify gaps in the young person’s skills so that a plan can be put in place to address the areas where more work is needed. This should be carried out as part of the care or pathway planning process. The pathway plan should already have details of the work to be done with the young person to prepare them for leaving care. If a separate plan or action plan is drawn up following the assessment in the Get Ready For Adult Life pack, which includes more detail on the work that is to be undertaken, then this will need to be referenced and incorporated within the care or pathway plan to ensure the work is monitored and reviewed.

It is not necessary to work through all of the pack or to go through it in order. Following the checklist exercise, the number of areas identified for work will vary, depending on the age and ability of the young person, or it may be that only one or two sections of the checklist have been completed. In all cases, workers should agree with the young person what areas of the pack will be worked on, ensuring that areas where there are gaps are covered.

**Money**

LAC and CLs often have low incomes and can take up finance options that are expensive in the long term to help supplement their incomes. This section gives information on different types of income and on financial products. Budgeting, credit, contracts and bills are some of the other areas covered.

Workers can use this section to work on budgeting with a young person, to help them learn about the cost of living and to support them in developing financial awareness.

**Health**

The ‘Health’ chapter gives information on a range of health-related topics and covers mental and sexual health, as well as physical health.

Many young people will know that eating well and exercising are necessary for good health but they may not be aware that feeling good about yourself and having people to support you are also important for health - mental health.

A healthy diet, exercise, cooking, medical checks, medical history, self-esteem, personal support and sexually transmitted diseases are amongst the topics covered. Workers can use this chapter to promote positive health choices and to help young people to consider and learn about all aspects of their health.

Supporting information for handling feelings, anger management and self-esteem is given below.

**Handling feelings**

Young people need to know how to recognise and manage feelings. They need to be aware that how they act is separate from the feelings they have and that they have control over how they express their feelings.
There are resources available, listed at the end of the chapter, with exercises that you can use to explore issues around feelings with young people. Some exercises are provided in the pack, which may be used as a starting point. There is an exercise to name as many feelings as possible. Workers can help young people to come up with the less obvious ones. Another exercise looks at what effects different feelings have on our bodies. It is important to help young people to understand and recognise the physiological changes that can happen to their bodies so they know when they are starting to experience a feeling and can put strategies in place to deal with it, if, for instance, they have difficulty expressing and dealing with rage or anger.

Discussing situations with young people that they have witnessed or seen in films or television programmes can be useful to gauge young people’s understanding of feelings, and can be a starting point for discussing feelings, without the focus being on the young person. You could ask the young person to say what they think the character or other person was going through, what they were thinking or feeling and to comment on how they acted.

**Anger management**

With anger management the key will be to help young people to learn how to express their feelings positively. There is an exercise for young people to look at their anger in a lot of detail. You can support the young person by giving him/her observations and suggesting alternative strategies for expressing anger.

In the Trust for the Study of Adolescence’s (TSA’s) Working with young people resource pack, there is a detailed section on techniques for managing anger (reproduced below), which gives suggestions about how to support young people in managing their anger.

**“TECHNIQUES FOR MANAGING ANGER”**

Most anger management strategies with young people break the process down into similar stages. These can be summarised as:

- Helping the young person understand how a number of long standing or ongoing factors and short term triggers can come together to spark a response
- Helping them identify what these factors and triggers are at a personal level
- Encouraging the young person to take control of their responses to these factors and triggers, rather than being controlled by them
- Helping the young person to create specific personalised techniques for dealing with these factors and triggers
- Ensuring there is somewhere to express anger appropriately and safely

If the worker’s approach is one of interest and joint exploration, rather than judgement, young people can be encouraged to investigate different factors that come together when they lose control. Some of these factors may relate to long-term conditions, past trauma, oppression and long term resentment, and some may be ‘triggers’ that are easily identifiable (for example ‘When...happens, I feel like...’ or ‘When someone calls me....I....’). Young people can be encouraged to ‘be their own scientist’ and keep a log of what happens just before events that result in them ‘losing it’. This includes noting the thoughts and feelings that build up inside them as well as recognising what happens outside.

Through these discussions, young people may begin to see themselves as separate from the angry feelings and triggers. They can be encouraged to think about ‘putting a little bit of time between their thoughts or feelings and their action’. They can also be encouraged to ‘take the power back’.
This involves taking control over how they respond, rather than being controlled by events and feelings. This is often extremely difficult for young people and all signs of effort should be acknowledged. It is important for the worker to demonstrate their belief that the young person is capable of change.

Young people can be encouraged to develop their own ideas for recognising the build up of tension and avoiding triggers or responding to them differently.

Techniques involving scaling can be useful in this kind of work. This means identifying where something is on a scale of 1-10. Angry feelings can be viewed this way, with a warning bell at, say number six, reminding the young person to put a prepared technique into play. Discussion can include talking about what turns ‘the heat’ up or down. Imagined measuring devices can be made into visual props such as drawings of thermometers, or volcanoes for the young person to carry around.

Other ways of using metaphors, are drawing and other art work. The metaphor should come from the young person (‘Do you have any picture in your head for what your anger is like?)). Creating the image can itself be a helpful way of dealing with feelings, and it can create a useful ‘prop’ for further exploration (‘So how do you know the kettle is about to boil over?’ or Can you think of another image that would help to damp down the flames?).

Relaxation and visualisation techniques can be extremely helpful to some young people. Relaxation techniques alone are useful for building body awareness of tension and how to deal with it. (For example by focusing on breathing out, unclenching fists, jaw and shoulders[.]) Using visualisation as well can give the young person ‘cool’ images that they may be able to bring to mind when things become too ‘hot’. Again, the images should come from the young person themselves rather than being imposed by the worker or taken from a book. (‘If you were to imagine the most relaxing situation for you, so you felt as though you hadn’t a care in the world, what would it be?’ ‘Can you tell me more about your lake/tropical island/whatever?’).

Young people can also be encouraged to create a list of reasons why it would not be a good idea to ‘lose it’. This can be frivolous as well as serious, so there is an element of fun and humour. Again the principle is that if the young person has concretely engaged with these ideas during a calm period, it may become possible to bring them to mind when things heat up. Similarly, the positive benefits of staying in control can be listed, exaggerated, made into fun positive images or easy to remember phrases.

Other techniques may include looking at how to avoid or get away from the circumstances in which anger is likely to boil over, and rehearsing different responses to common triggers.

Although young people may be helped by realising they can gain control over their anger, it is important to let them know that the feeling itself is not wrong, and that expressing these feelings in a safer way can help them to feel better. The underlying benefit of using person-centred anger management techniques such as those described above, is that the young person feels listened to, believed in and taken seriously.

Remember that young people have the right to choose whether or not they want to engage with techniques for managing their anger, or any other feeling. If they do not think they have a problem that needs to be addressed, or they are not ready to address it, these techniques alone will not work.”
Self-esteem

Young people may find the self-esteem exercise difficult, especially if they have low self-esteem or feel embarrassed. You can help the young person think of positive things about himself/herself. Anything can be put down but you should try to make sure there are examples of positive personal qualities and not just of outward appearances, such as looking smart. This exercise can help you assess the young person’s self-esteem by seeing how the young person reacts to it and how difficult he/she finds it to do.

Building up self-esteem is obviously a lengthy and ongoing process. How young people are treated and what type of environment they are in is of crucial importance. Further information on how to build self-esteem can be found in the ‘Needs of looked after children’ and ‘Working with young people’ chapters.

Education, training and employment

This chapter gives information on the education, training and employment opportunities that are open to young people. Other areas covered include volunteering, driving, employment rights and job hunting.

Education and leisure need to be actively promoted for LAC and CLs, particularly in view of the difficulties they can face in accessing and maintaining their education, training and employment.

Education and leisure can help young people to develop interpersonal skills, learn new skills, make friends and, above all, have fun! Workers can use this chapter to help young people explore their education and training options, for information on work-related issues and to help young people think about the range of ways they can gain skills for work.

Family and social relationships

LAC and CLs will often have experienced problematic relationships with their families and other people in their lives, resulting in difficulties with developing positive relationships. It is important that LAC and CLs learn about their families and their life stories as it is a key part of their identities. Awareness of what makes a good or bad relationship is also essential so young people can recognise potentially abusive and damaging relationships and the emotional harm that arises from these.

This chapter looks at family and identity, friendships, sex, maintaining positive relationships, having strong support networks and parenting. Workers can use this chapter to help young people explore family and relationship issues and to encourage young people to develop healthy, supportive relationships.

Accommodation

Information on different types of housing and how to access housing is given in this chapter. LAC and CLs are often keen to obtain their own accommodation but can lack awareness of the responsibilities and issues that go with this, including being part of a neighbourhood or community. This chapter also covers tenancies, safety in the home, emergencies, energy saving and being a good neighbour.

Workers can use this pack to help young people learn about the realities of maintaining a home and how to stay safe in their homes.
Looking after yourself

This chapter looks at personal presentation, caring for clothes, internet safety and personal safety. Workers can use this chapter to bring up issues around self-care and to help raise young people’s awareness of how to stay safe when using the internet and when travelling.

Having your say

It is important that LAC and CLs feel that they are part of the community and that they can make a contribution. This can help them to develop personal skills and support networks. Knowing what to do if something goes wrong, and feeling confident enough to take action, will help them to resolve issues when they no longer have the support of workers in the care system. Service user involvement, complaints and voting are some of the subjects covered. Workers can use this section to help young people explore the ways in which they can get involved in their communities and to consider the benefits of participation.

Legal rights

Most of the information on legal rights is contained in a booklet included in the pack, Young Citizen’s Passport, published by the Citizens Foundation. This booklet gives lots of information about the legal rights of, and responsibilities for, young people in general.

Another booklet, Sorted and Supported, by Voice, is also included in the pack, which gives specific information about CLs’ rights and entitlements under the C(LC)A. In addition, homelessness and housing law in relation to CLs is covered.

Workers will be able to use these booklets to help young people with legal questions and to find out about organizations that can provide further information and help. Areas covered include education, work and training, life (covering topics such as health, sex and drugs), family, house and home, leisure, travel and transport, and the police and courts.

Being in care

Children and young people in and leaving care are the responsibility of the local authority and, as such, their local authority has to meet many statutory requirements and follow a number of procedures, which young people may find hard to understand. During this time LAC and CLs will have different workers with responsibilities for particular aspects of their care. This chapter gives a basic explanation of the assessment, planning and reviewing process that young people will experience and gives descriptions of the roles of the main workers that they will encounter. Workers can use this chapter to help answer questions young people may have about the care process and what different workers do.

Life skills

LAC and CLs need to learn the skills that will enable them to lead successful adult lives. Life and social skills are essential skills for adulthood. LAC and CLs need to be able to get on with other people - where they live, at school/work, with friends, families and loved ones. They also need the skills to be able to cope with things that happen to them and to get what they want out of life. For this they need a range of life skills, including key social skills.

This chapter looks at conflict resolution, assertiveness, communication, problem solving and decision making. Workers can use this chapter to help young people to work on and develop these skills.
Young people need to know about communication, how they express themselves, how to be assertive and how to resolve conflicts, solve problems and make decisions. There are exercises in the pack to use with young people to start to explore and practise these skills. Workers can support young people by helping them to identify where they are lacking in skills, in a positive way, and giving them the opportunity to learn and practise the skills identified.

People learn new skills in a variety of ways. Canter and Wilkinson in the Social Skills Training Manual describe one method used in social skills training programmes to learn skills.

“The procedures used in teaching social skill resembles those used in the teaching of any other skill. The overall task is broken down into smaller stages or component parts and these are taught systematically, step by step, starting with the simple and working toward the more complex. For each ‘step’ explanations and instructions are given (sometimes referred to as coaching) and this is usually followed by a demonstration (modelling). The trainee then practises the skill himself (behavioural rehearsal or role-play). Feedback and encouragement (which can act as reinforcement) are given, and if necessary, corrections are made. Finally, the newly acquired skill is practised in the home environment (homework assignments or practice).”

Although you will not be developing a programme for social skills training, these methods can be used in an informal way of working with young people. By showing the young person a set of skills, giving them the opportunity to practise through taking part in role-play and working through situations they find difficult, all the while providing feedback, encouraging them and supporting them to use the skills in their lives, this will help them to develop a sense of self-efficacy and belief that they can deal with difficult situations.

Another way to learn social skills is through games or exercises, as they enable young people to practise skills in a relaxed environment without the stress of worrying about the consequences, whilst they are having fun. Daniel and Wassell list the following resources that have social skills activities, in Assessing and Promoting Resilience in Vulnerable Children.

- Stop Think Do (Peterson and Gannoni 1992). Activities using traffic light symbols to help young people to think out options before acting.
- Creative Conflict Resolution (Kreidler 1984). 200 activities to teach children how to deal with problems in social interaction. Activities can be adapted to use in group settings outside of school or for individual work.

The following two games are listed in the resources section of the TSA resource pack.

- The social skills game (1996) Yvonne Searle and Isabelle Streng, Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- The Relationship Game (1998) Working with Men

When working with the young person on the problem solving and decision making exercises, you can use the sheets below taken from the TSA training pack to help the young person look at all the factors and all the options he/she has. They provide questions to ask and details of what to consider.
Questions to ask to help young people with problem solving
(Solution-focused questions)

How does this problem affect your life?
What would your life be like if this did not happen?
What would you prefer to happen?
What would you have to do make this happen?
What would you be willing to do?
How is that different from what you are doing?
Tell me about times when this does not happen.
How might you prevent yourself from getting what you want?
What feels scary/risky/unpleasant about changing?
Is there some way someone could help you?
What has been tried before?
What expectations do you have of others?
What is the best that could happen?
What would be satisfactory for you?
What is your biggest fear?
What is your biggest hope?
What might others say?
How might other people react?
Is there any particular person affecting this decision?
How would you know if you had resolved this problem?
What would your life be like if this happened?

Things to consider when helping young people making decisions

Help young people:

- **Gather information - get the whole picture**
  Enable access to all available resources.
  Check whether the young person needs assistance in accessing resources.

- **Assess motivation**
  Is this a decision he/she is really interested in?
  Does it fit with his/her values and way of seeing the world?
  Is there a point? Is there a payoff?

- **Consider who else is involved**
  Does anyone else need to be part of this decision?
  Is there someone whose input would be useful?
  How can you help the young person to involve them?

- **Consider any time pressures**
  Does this decision have to be made here? Is there a better place?

- **Explore the options**
  What is the range of possible decisions that could be taken?
  Use different strategies to explore these options and their implications.

- **Assess resources to help implement the decision**
  Has the young person got everything and everyone he/she needs to help him/her to reach this decision?
  Have you helped him/her to recognise his/her own internal resources?

- **Foresee obstacles**
  What might happen to get in the way of making a good decision or getting a successful outcome?

- **Consider who else is affected**
  How will other people react when this decision is made?
  Can other people be included at an earlier stage and encouraged to help rather than hinder a successful outcome?

- **Rehearse ways of dealing with implications**
  Encourage the young person to try out exactly what he/she will say or do when obstacles or difficulties occur. Give constructive feedback.
  Anticipate the possibility of failure. Think about what to do if something does not work.

- **Plan the next step(s)**
  What precisely is the young person going to do next?
  Does the young person have everything needed to help him/her to do it?
  Decide how, and with whom, progress will be monitored and reviewed.
  Set dates for monitoring progress.
  Recognise the possibility that it will not all be smooth sailing.

- **Acknowledge the young person’s decision-making skills**
  Every experience the young person has as a decision maker is confirmation that he/she has decision-making skills.
  Help the young person to gain confidence in these skills by acknowledging what he/she has done, including surviving failure.

The life and social skills discussed cannot be developed by just doing exercises. The aim of these exercises is to provide a focus to start to think about and work on these skills. Children and young people should grow up in an environment that provides the best possible chances for them to develop these skills on an ongoing basis. How adults interact with young people has a major impact on whether these skills are developed. As a worker, acting in the role of corporate parent, it is essential that you provide young people with what they need to develop all aspects of themselves.

Daniel and Wassell in their book, Assessing and Promoting Resilience in Vulnerable Children 3,10 use the term “social competence” to describe the skills and abilities that young people need to function successfully on a social basis as adults in society. They list the key messages that children should get in their living environment which are conducive to young people developing social competence. They have listed them in relation to residential homes but most of them can be applied to any setting.

### Giving messages to young people in residential care settings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Messages</th>
<th>How they are sent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We accept that you will make mistakes.</td>
<td>Verbal reassurance, opportunity to learn from mistakes, no automatic discharge, modelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are not your behaviour.</td>
<td>Language used in reprimands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We value you.</td>
<td>Showing encouragement, interest in them, listening, N Nice physical environment, investment in space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should have expectations and hopes.</td>
<td>Using care plan, attainable, realistic goals, valuing agreement, resourcing talents and interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have a voice which will be listened to.</td>
<td>Listening, children’s meetings, confidentiality, involving in care plan, complaints and child friendly meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You must have respect for and keep safe other young people and staff.</td>
<td>Challenging unacceptable behaviour, caring culture, modelling realistic consequences, re-educating in how to express in others ways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You will always be warm, fed and kept healthy during your stay.</td>
<td>Providing physical environment, choice, personalised spaces, routine, access to preventative health care, information on keeping safe and healthy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should not be physically/socially/emotionally abused.</td>
<td>Open culture, trained/experienced staff, enough staff, voice in admissions/discharge, good supervision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We like you.</td>
<td>Giving verbal and physical affection, choosing to spend time with them, praise, fun, surviving difficult times together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We want you to understand what is happening.</td>
<td>Keyworker, information packs/tapes, involvement in meetings/reports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We want you to feel safe.</td>
<td>Own room and keys, health and safety, open culture, proactive questions “do you feel safe?” call cards when from outside.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Young people may not be interested in preparation for leaving care and it may be difficult to work on these areas with them. However, it is your job as workers to make sure that the young people in your care are prepared for adult life - emotionally and practically - in order to minimise the risk of them failing when they leave care.

The more knowledge young people have about life, and the more confidence they have in themselves and their abilities, the easier it will be for them to live successfully as adults, doing things for themselves, or being able to access help when they need it.
Imagine you are an 18-year-old care leaver living in a bedsit on benefits. You have £45.50 (2006 level for an 18 year old) a week to cover all expenditure except rent. Using the following chart, draw up a plan of how this money could be allocated. Could you manage? How?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outgoings</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Yearly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel to work/training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel for leisure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clothes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone calls</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TV licence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Water charges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General household goods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toiletries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meals out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Magazines/books</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure/entertainment (e.g. DVDs, cinema, gym, theatre)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loans/HP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical costs (if not on benefits)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL**
Handout

Home Alone Exercise

Imagine you are a 17-year-old care leaver living in a flat on your own. You moved in three months ago. At first you enjoyed your freedom and there were lots of people coming to see you. Now you are finding it hard doing everything for yourself and do not have many visitors. You often feel lonely. What do you do?
Further reading and other useful resources

Below is a list and description of resources that have further information on approaches and exercises that you can use when working with young people on social and emotional skills development. Some of these are aimed at younger children, or for use in groups, but can be adapted for use as a starting point for individual work with older children.


The Trust for the Study of Adolescence aims to increase levels of knowledge about adolescence. One of its main areas of work is emotional wellbeing. It has an online catalogue with materials at [www.tsa.uk.com](http://www.tsa.uk.com).

The trainers’ guide and resource pack is a valuable resource, providing training to help workers develop skills to work effectively with young people. It contains information and exercises to help workers reflect on and develop their own skills, as well as outlining strategies/methods to support skills development in young people.


This is one of a set of resources on resilience containing practical exercises and information on how to promote resilience and encourage young people to develop personal and social skills.


This manual provides information on how to assess social skills problems and how to design and run programmes for service users from different settings on an individual or group basis. No prior knowledge of the field is needed; the manual can be used by professionals from a variety of backgrounds.


This book contains activity sheets with exercises to help children develop their self-esteem using their imagination and creativity as an aid. The materials are suitable for use with children who have special needs and can be used on an individual or group basis.
Notes, resources and references cited in this chapter


Glossary

ADSS - Association of Directors of Social Services formerly had responsibility for adult and children's services within top tier local authorities. They recently split into two new departments - one for adults and the other for children. The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) which represents all the directors of adult social services in England and the Association of Directors of Children's services, ADCS which represents all the directors of children's services.

Audit Commission - Regulates the proper control of public finances by local authorities and the National Health Service in England and Wales.

Care Leaver or CL - A young person who was formerly looked after by a local authority. Different care leavers may have different legal statuses depending on; the amount of time they spent in the care of the local authority the age they left care and their current age.

Commission for Social Care Inspectorate - The Commission registers, inspects and reports on adult social care services in England. Their job is to improve social care and stamp out bad practice.

DoH - Department of Health - the government department responsible for public health issues.

DfES - Department for Education and Skills - UK government department with responsibility for children's services, families, schools, 14-19 education, and the Respect Taskforce.

On June 28th 2007 the DfES was split into two separate departments. The DCSF and the DIUS. See below for their responsibilities.

DCSF - The Department for Children, Schools and Families, which is responsible for improving the focus on all aspects of policy affecting children and young people, as part of the Government's aim to deliver educational excellence.

DIUS - The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills brings together functions from the former Department of Trade and Industry, including responsibilities for science and innovation, with further and higher education and skills, previously part of the Department for Education and Skills.

DWP - Department for Work and Pensions - The DWP is responsible for the government's welfare reform agenda; delivering support and advice to people of working age, employers, disabled people, pensioners, families and children.

Looked After Child or LAC - A child or young person who is cared for by a local authority either through a voluntary agreement or via a court order. The most common order is the Care Order, made under section 31 of the Children Act 1989.

National Minimum Standards - The national minimum standards set a minimum level of service for each element of providing a care service. They are not enforceable by law but are important guidelines to help providers, inspectors and people who use services to judge the standard of service. They are designed to make sure everyone understands what’s expected and so services can be measured against the same standards.
**Ofsted** - Inspect and regulate to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages

**Public Service Agreement** - Public Service Agreements (PSA’s) set out the key improvements that the public can expect from Government expenditure. They are three year agreements, negotiated between each of the main Departments and HM Treasury during the Spending Review process. Each PSA sets out a Department’s high-level aim, priority objectives and key outcome-based performance targets.

**Quality Protects** - Quality Protects programme was launched by the Department of Health in September 1998 to support local authorities in transforming the management and delivery of children’s social services. It finished in 2003.

**Social Exclusion** - The process by which disadvantaged people are marginalised from the activities and benefits of mainstream society

**Social Exclusion Task Force** - has replaced the Social Exclusion Unit. The role of the Task Force is to coordinate the Government’s drive against social exclusion, ensuring that the cross-departmental approach delivers for those most in need.

**Teenage Pregnancy Unit** - Is a cross-Government unit located within the Department of Health. Two of it’s main aims are; reducing the rate of teenage conceptions, with the specific aim of halving the rate of conceptions among under 18s by 2010 and secondly, getting more teenage parents into education, training or employment, to reduce the risk of long term social exclusion

**Treasury** - Government department with responsibility for overseeing Government expenditure.
With Rainer as Lead Partner

What Makes The Difference? (WMTD) is part funded by the European Social Fund under the Equal Community Initiative Programme