

The Pathway Assessment and Plan is a statutory requirement and "Must set out the advice, assistance and support which the local authority intend to provide." (Children Act 1989). It forms an agreement between the care leaver and the Local Authority and is open to legal challenge. It is intended to be a 'live' document.

All young people in care should have a Pathway Plan started once they reach 15 years and nine months in order to start planning towards independence. It should be in place by the time they are 16 years and three months and should be reviewed six monthly with their Looked After Child (LAC) Plan by their Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) at their Looked After Child (LAC) Review until they reach the age of 18.

Once a young person becomes a Care Leaver, their Personal Advisor (PA) becomes responsible for coordinating the review of the plan.

Each young person approaching their 18th birthday must have a comprehensive Pathway Plan in place which has been signed off by a Head of Service. This Pathway Plan should then be sent to the young person's IRO for approval prior to their final LAC Review.

Once the young person turns 18 they become a Care Leaver and will transition from their Social Worker to a Personal Advisor. At this point, the Pathway Assessment and Plan becomes the only assessment and planning tool required.

Legislative changes brought about by the 2017 Children and Social Work Act extends the support offered to Care Leavers to their 25th birthday.

Why is it important?

The Pathway Assessment and Plan sets out how a care leaver will continue to be supported as an independent adult. The aim is to work with the young person to identify any support needs they have and agree how these will be supported. The plan should set out the path a young person needs to follow to reach full independence, using a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely) approach.

The aim is to build up the young person's skills, knowledge and confidence, so that they no longer need the support of the council as corporate parents, in the same way any reasonable parent would do. We must always acknowledge that circumstances may change and a young person might need to come back to our corporate family for support, advice and guidance at any time

How do we do it?

Prior to the young person turning the age of 18 the template should be updated by the Social Worker every six months and reviewed at the young person's LAC Review by their IRO. Once the young person turns 18, it is the PA's responsibility to coordinate the review with the care leaver, update the written Pathway Plan and send it for authorisation on a six-monthly cycle. The Pathway plan should be updated for significant events also. Agreement should be obtained from the young person to seek information from all parties involved and include this information as part of the assessment. Information sharing is best agreed by the written consent form, but bear in mind that a young person can revoke their consent to share at any time.

The My Pathway Assessment and Plan for Life template should be used to write up the assessment and plan. The first section of the template is an opportunity for you and the young person to reflect on the young person's life story and how this may have impacted on who they are today. The template then covers the young person's accommodation, finances, health, education, employment and training (EET), family and friends and leisure activities. Each section should include an up-to-date

assessment of the current situation, make clear what the aim of the plan is and then set out how this can be achieved.

The template includes a place for both the young person and the practitioner to scale each section. Should young people not wish to scale themselves the practitioner should still provide their view. It is important to ensure that the practitioner's assessment of the situation is recorded as well as the young person's view. Areas of disagreement, risks and contingencies all need to be evidenced clearly. Where an adult's actions may place them at risk, it is important to show that these risks have been discussed, capacity considered, and a contingency plan agreed where possible.

The Pathway Plan should be used to evidence the need for any additional finances being requested and support senior management in making their decision regarding these requests.

Section 7 provides an opportunity to think about long-term future plans - where the young person wants to be in 5 years. The practitioner can reflect with the young person on whether the current plan is working towards this or not.

The final section of the plan contains the grid. This is designed to be a standalone quick reference plan for the young person, setting out all the actions agreed through the main body of the plan. This grid should therefore mirror the overall contents of the plan. SMART targets should be set and reviewed regularly with the young person to ensure that things are on track.

If the young person does not want to complete the template with the practitioner - it is not a problem. It needs to be made clear to the young person that completion of the assessment and plan is a legal requirement and that the practitioner will take it out for them to read when completed. Any comments they then wish to add, can be recorded.

If the practitioner is working with a young person seeking asylum in the UK, it is important that the plan also considers how the different potential outcomes of their asylum claim will impact them and considers their options should each happen.

For over 18's, once the Pathway Plan has been completed it should be emailed to the practitioner's manager, the new plan and review tab should be completed on Mosaic and sent for authorisation. The practitioner's manager will quality assure the plan; inform of any changes required and once completed, authorise the plan. This authorisation needs to be within six months and it is important the review meeting is completed around the five-month point to allow time to type up the plan and complete the quality assurance process.

For more information:

The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations [Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers](#)

[Staying Put Guidance](#)

[Social Care Institute for Excellence](#)