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Preparing for Adulthood – supporting the transition from children’s to adult’s services

Responsible officers

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1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of how Shropshire Council:
 - identifies children and young who may continue to need some social support once they reach adulthood,
 - ensures a steady transition to adult social care services, and
 - provides life skills to children and young people as they leave care.
- 1.2 The report also looks at how Shropshire Council ensures continued care for children and young people with complex needs, as they transition to adult services.
- 1.3 It also provides case studies of successfully supporting children as they begin adulthood.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the People Overview Committee:
 - Notes the work of the Preparing for Adulthood team in supporting young people
 - Make recommendations for action.

3. Risk assessment and opportunities appraisal

- 3.1 A smooth transition to adult services increases the opportunities that vulnerable children and young people have to access employment, education, housing and independent living. This in turn minimises the cost to the local authority and partners resulting from ongoing support due to unemployment, inappropriate housing, and poor mental and physical arising from this.

REPORT

4.1 **The transition from children's to adults' services**

Young people with a Special Education Need or Disability (SEND) should have equal life chances to their peers as they move into adulthood. This should include paid employment and higher education, housing options and independent living, good health, friends, relationships, community inclusion and choice and control over their lives and support.

For young people with a SEND, transitioning into adulthood is a particularly challenging time. As well as the usual challenges that come with becoming an adult, children and young people with a SEND, as well as their families, need to negotiate the transition from services available to children and young people to services available to them as adults.

Shropshire Council recognises these challenges, which is why it has a dedicated team to support children and young people with a SEND.

4.2 **Identifying children and young people with a need for support**

The local authorities has a number of legal duties to support children in a timely way as they approach adulthood, and to prepare them both for adulthood itself but also to ensure that they transition smoothly to adult social care services. These include the Children Act 1989, Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, Care Act 2014, Children and Families Act 2014 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017. Please see Appendix 1 for more information about the legal framework around transitioning from children's to adult services.

4.6 **Children and young people with a SEND**

For young people with special educational needs (SEN) who have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan under the Children and Families Act, preparation for adulthood must begin from year 9 - see Special Educational needs & Disability (SEND) Code of Practice 'Preparing for Adulthood'. The transition assessment should be undertaken as part of the annual statutory review of the EHC plan, and should inform a plan for the transition from children's to adult care and support.

4.7 Equally for those without EHC plans, early conversations with local authorities about preparation for adulthood are beneficial – when these conversations begin to take place will depend on individual circumstances.

4.8 **Preparing for Leaving Care**

There is a significant overlap between children and young people with a SEND and children looked after by Shropshire Council. Those children who require ongoing support throughout their adult lives will be supported through the Preparing for Adulthood team. Those who will not require ongoing once they become adults, will still rely to some extent on Shropshire Council as corporate parents until they reach 25.

Shropshire Council has a responsibility to prepare young people to leave care at a pace suitable to them. As a young person moves towards independence, they should expect to receive the same level of care and support as any other young person would receive from a reasonable parent.

The young person's social worker will undertake a needs assessment and pathway plan with the young person within three months of their 16th birthday or within two months of becoming looked after if this is after their 16th birthday. Each young person who qualifies for leaving care services will have a Pathway Plan. The Pathway Plan is in essence a Care Plan, detailing the services and support needed by young people aged 16 to 21 years.

Statutory guidance (Department of Health and Social Care Guidance on the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000) says:

"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(Children Leaving Care 200) 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".

The social worker will consider what advice, assistance and support is appropriate to meet the young person's needs as part of the assessment and Pathway Plan with regards to:

- Emotional and physical health
- Education, employment and training
- Accommodation

- Budgeting and bills
- Family and other relationships and the need to maintain these
- Culture and identity
- Practical skills

The care leaver will have a personal adviser as well as a social worker when they reach the age of 17. Personal advisers will remain involved with care leavers at least until the age of 21 and up to the age of 25 as set out in [Extending Personal Adviser support to all care leavers to age 25 Statutory guidance for local authorities February 2018.](#)

The personal adviser will help the care leaver to develop skills and put into place the things that will enable independent living when exiting care. The support will begin when the young person is still in care and the personal adviser provides support and advice to the young person on a range of things including:

- Developing independence skills
- Accessing training, education and employment opportunities
- Accessing and managing suitable accommodation at a time that's right for the young person.
- Managing money so that young person has enough to pay bills and to live on including making sure that young person knows what money they are entitled to such as benefits and bursaries and any entitlements (such as leaving care grant) from Shropshire Council
- Keeping in contact with family and friends
- Help to find specialist support when needed, including counselling and advice on issues such as drugs and alcohol and sexual health

4.9 **Preparing for adulthood team**

Preparing for Adulthood team work closely with colleagues in children's social care, health, SEND, education providers and employment support amongst others to ensure a joined-up approach to support planning for young people who need extra support to prepare them for adulthood. The team focusses on long-term goal setting to support young people and their families to plan for their future in a way that focuses on strengths in each situation. By working with partners in services for children, it can understand the needs of children and young people as they approach their adulthood in order to be commissioning services for young adults that effectively met their needs.

Adult social care preparing for adulthood (PFA) team begin working with young people from age 16. The PFA team will gather information to establish if a young person is likely to be eligible for adult social care support under the Care Act. For those who are likely to have eligible needs, the PFA team will them work alongside

the young person, their family, education and any other support to build a thorough understanding of their goals and aspirations for the future, their strengths, their current situation and what support they may require as they transition into adulthood. For those referred who do not have eligible needs, signposting to other appropriate services and community resources is provided.

At age 18, adult social care become the statutory provider of support for young adult with care and support needs. The team focusses on on person centred planning, putting the young person at the centre of any support they may require. The team also supports young people to build independent living skills, contributes to Education, Health and Care plans, and supports young people to move on to a range of independent and supported living settings and provide carer support.

4.10 Supporting children through the occupational therapy service

In 2020, Shropshire Council's occupational therapy service began to develop a specific pathway for children accessing the Preparing for Adulthood service, to provide greater support for young people aged 16-25 moving into supported living or remaining in the family home. Before this time, support work was carried out on an ad-hoc basis.

This emerging role is carried out one day a week by a Shropshire Council occupational therapist. Their primary role is to assess the needs of individuals planning to move to supported living and to assess the needs and provide interventions to those remaining in family home. So far this year the service has received 25 referrals from the Preparing for Adulthood team, for which it has completed 15 assessments. Occupational Therapy also provides information and advice to social workers and other professionals, and has been involved in work to complete the Green Acres redevelopment.

Due to the limited capacity available, the service is largely reactive to referrals from Preparing for Adulthood for imminent rehousing. However, with greater capacity it could be involved in assessments and referrals at a far earlier stage.

4.11 Supporting young people to secure accommodation

Shropshire Council Housing Services currently employs a Children and Young Person Coordinator within housing on a full-time basis.

This officer works with all individuals who come through the service who are aged 16 to 25 years of age. Many of the young people are also supported by Shropshire Council's Leaving Care Team. Work with this cohort begins at age 17.5 when they are getting ready for independence. The young person will have been flagged by their social worker and / or their personal assistant. Many of them are ready to live independently but need guidance as to how to access the housing market.

A small number of young people are not ready to move into independent living so need to find semi supported / supported living. This can be due to a number of reasons and can include (but not exhaustive of) mental health issues, exploitation/vulnerabilities, ex-offenders or just need a place so where they can improve their independence skills knowing there are staff on site to support them.

4.12 **Preparing for adulthood pilot projects**

The preparing for adulthood team (PFA) and children's social care are currently carrying out two pilot projects to improve young people's transitions:

Disabled Children's Team (DCT)

This pilot aims to gather evidence that will allow children's and adults social care to work more effectively together to support young people with disabilities to effectively prepare for their adulthood, to foster positive relationships between young people, their families and services and to be aspirational for their future. 2 social workers from DCT will work alongside PFA lead and be working with a range of young people and families to explore:

- Models of working across children's and adults that best meet the needs of young people
- How children's and adult teams can work more effectively together to develop support plans that prepare young people for their adulthood
- How to improve joint working with partner agencies including health services
- To define roles and responsibilities within DCT and PFA teams
- To improve practice in relation to the Mental Capacity Act, supported decision making best interest decisions
- Increasing DCT and PFA workers confidence in being creative in service provision
- Identifying gaps in service provision and exploring ways of meeting these needs

Case Management Team

This pilot is similar to above in that it focuses on improving transitions, but with young people whose need arise from their mental health and/or trauma. One senior social worker from adult mental health social work will work alongside PFA lead to liaise with and support social workers from children's case management team to explore:

- The range of needs of this group of young people and how these can be met effectively as they prepare for their adulthood
- How children's and adult teams can work more effectively together to develop support plans that prepare young people for their adulthood
- How to improve joint working with partner agencies including health services

- What should children's and adults social care look like for this group structurally and in practice and to define roles and responsibilities within children's social care and PFA teams
- To understand demand for this type of service provision
- Identifying gaps in service provision and exploring ways of meeting these needs

Both pilots will be running until March 2021 when outcomes and finding will be evaluated and shared.

4.14 **Case Study**

James started a Supported Internship with Shrewsbury College in September 2017. Enable, Shropshire Council worked in partnership with the college to find a suitable work placement and provide in-work support. James originally wanted a placement at the hospital as this was his dream career. Unfortunately, it wasn't possible to secure a hospital placement and discussed other options with James. As he was a very caring person, a Care Home was suggested, with a view to him progressing to working in the hospital once he got enough experience. James agreed with this and did an excellent job at the Care Home, quickly building up a rapport with the residents and working really hard. He worked Xmas Day, New Years Day and was always willing and eager to help. After his internship he was offered a paid role.

The SEN Team also involved James in a focus group of young people working with Shropshire Council to ensure the voice of the young person was heard and that the young people we support were involved in decisions involving their PFA journey. James was a key member of the group who gave a presentation to Senior Managers at Shropshire Council and was involved in developing the SEND PFA provision, helping to write transition guides and input into the Local Offer. James also presented at a NDTI conference. James has been inspirational telling his story to other young people with SEND, explaining what he has done and how he has overcome hurdles to be successful.

James has now achieved his dream career aim in securing a role at the hospital. He has emailed me to say he will write some guidance for other young people with SEND who may want to work at the NHS. James completed his application himself and is now looking at buying a motorbike to help him get to work more easily. James now has the skills to continue to progress in his employment journey. He achieved these skills through a combination of work-based learning through the Supported Internship alongside support from mentors and his involvement with the SEND Focus Group. He continues to keep in touch and is keen to speak to other young people to inspire them to follow their dreams and aspirations.



4.14 **Case study – complex needs**

Allison and Drake

Allison and Drake are two unrelated young people that transitioned from children services to adult services in a joined up and well planned way. Both Allison and Drake were open to the Disabled Children Team and the Leaving Care Team until they transitioned to adult services (Leaving Care Team remain involved).

Both Allison and Drake had a long history in the care of the local authority both starting from young ages. Drake came into the care of the Local Authority when he was 7 following the local authority applying for and gaining a care order. Drake has been living at a specialist (Autism) residential placement since 2014. This has been his longest standing placement. Prior to this, Drake had five different foster placements which unfortunately broke down for various reasons, including carers not being able to meet his complex needs and behaviours within the home environment.

Allison came into care by virtue of a care order at the age of 2 due to abuse and neglect. Allison was in the same long term foster placement until the age of 15 at which point she moved to the specialist provision as Drake. This was due to her complex needs and the retirement of her foster carers.

Whilst their care pathways were different both young people have significant needs due their disabilities including diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Condition and learning disability. Allison and Drake both required support from health services, children social care, and SEN services. Both were living in a specialist residential provision

for young people with autism and attending Severndale Academy for their education.

The children social workers for the for the young people had engaged with the preparing for adulthood team and had worked together with each young person fully involved to plan for the smooth transition between the age of 17 to 18 to adult services including moving to more independent living arrangements. Whilst Allison and Drake are not related, they came to know each other in the specialist residential provision and became friends. Discussions and planning took place between the professionals and with Allison and Drake about the options post 18. The PFA team worked with Allison and Drake, alongside the disabled children's team, to understand specific wishes and needs about their future. As a result, a property has been identified and secured for Allison and Drake and they have been matched with two other young people whom they have met and wish to live with. The young people have been supported to meet each other, communicate their feelings about potential peers and build relationships with each other. Necessary adaptations have been made to the property and the young people have been able to choose the colours of thier bedrooms and furniture for their homes. If it had not been for the pandemic the move would have already taken place. The move from the residential home for Allison and Drake to a supported house in the local community is planned for the spring 2021.

List of background papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

HM Government *Care Act 2014*

Department for Health and Social Care *Care and support statutory guidance*

Special Educational needs & Disability (SEND) Code of Practice *Preparing for Adulthood*

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Dean Carroll (Adults, Social Services and Climate Change)

Edward Potter (Children's Services)

Local Member

All Members

Appendices

Legal framework – transition from children's to adult services

Appendix 1 Legal framework – transition from children's to adult services

Care Act 2014

Sections 58-66 of the Care Act 2014 state that a child, young carer or an adult caring for a child is likely to have needs when they, or the child they care for, turns 18, the local authority must assess them if it considers there is 'significant benefit' to the individual in doing so. This is regardless of whether the child or individual currently receives any services.

The Department for Health and Social Care's Care and support statutory guidance states that:

"Transition assessments should take place at the right time for the young person or carer and at a point when the local authority can be reasonably confident about what the young person's or carer's needs for care or support will look like after the young person in question turns 18. There is no set age when young people reach this point; every young person and their family are different, and as such, transition assessments should take place when it is most appropriate for them."

The guidance further states:

"Local authorities must carry out a transition assessment of anyone in the 3 groups when there is significant benefit to the young person or carer in doing so, and if they are likely to have needs for care or support after turning 18. The provisions in the Care Act relating to transition to adult care and support are not only for those who are already receiving children's services, but for anyone who is likely to have needs for adult care and support after turning 18."

Children and Families Act 2014

Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 sets out a range of duties towards young people preparing for adulthood. These include the provision of information, advice and support, working together to achieve outcomes and strategic joint commissioning through the Local Offer as set out in Chapter 8 of the SEND Code of Practice 2015. At the annual review of the EHC plan in Year 9, and at each subsequent review, local authorities must include a focus on preparing for adulthood and transition planning must be incorporated in the EHC plan and set out clear outcomes to prepare young people for adulthood. Planning should include:

- Support to prepare for higher education and/or employment;
- Support to prepare for independent living – this should include ascertaining where the child or young person would like to live (it may be that they do not wish to move into independent living) and local housing options should be explained;
- Support in maintaining good health – including effective planning for transition of health services;
- Support in participating in society – including mobility and transport and developing and maintaining relationships and friendships.

Reviews should identify what support the child or young person requires to achieve the outcomes and aspirations specified in their EHC plan and to prepare them for adult life.

Care leavers

Care leavers have a range of support available to them as set out in legislation such as Children Act 1989 and its associated statutory guidance such as *Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations, Volume 3: planning transition to adulthood for care leavers statutory guidance*, Children Leaving Care Act 2000, Children Social Work Act 2017

Depending on the circumstances and the time young people spent in care, the law describes four different groups of care leaver:

- Eligible child
- Relevant child
- Former relevant care leaver
- Qualifying care leaver

The young person is an eligible child if:

- they are aged 16 or 17, and
- they are currently in care, and
- they have been in care for a period of 13 weeks (or episodes which add up to 13 weeks) since their 14th birthday and at least one day whilst they were 16 or 17 years old.

They are a relevant child if:

- They are no longer in care, but they have been eligible, and
- They are 16 or 17 years old

They are a former relevant child if:

- They are aged 18 or above, and
- Immediately before they reached 18 they were an eligible or relevant care leaver, or

- At age 21, or before age 25, they either continue to be on an agreed course of education and/or training or wish to receive support to start a new course.

At age 21, or before age 25 they can also ask for advice and guidance from the Leaving Care Team, even if it is not connected with a course of education or training. They may be going through a difficult time in their personal life or want some practical support with something

They are a qualifying care leaver if:

- They are aged at least 16 but under 21, and
- They were looked after by the council prior to the making of a special guardianship order, or
- If at any time after they reached the age of 16, they were looked after for a period of less than 13 weeks and have not returned home.
- At age 16 or 17 they were an eligible child but were living with a parent for more than six months before you reached age 18 (unless they were there under a care order).