



The Fostering Communities Programme

Briefing paper: Pathway plans

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1. About The Fostering Network

[The Fostering Network](#) is the UK's leading fostering charity. We are the essential network for fostering, bringing together everyone who is involved in foster care. We support foster carers to help transform children's lives and we work with fostering services and the wider sector to develop and share best practice.

We work to ensure all children and young people in foster care experience stable family life and we are passionate about the difference foster care makes. We champion fostering and seek to create vital change so that foster care is the very best it can be.

2. The Fostering Communities programme

[Fostering Communities](#) is a national programme of improvement and support led by The Fostering Network in Wales and funded by the Welsh Government from 2020 to 2023. As part of our Fostering Communities programme we are producing a [series of briefing papers](#) for the fostering community in Wales which cover a range of relevant and useful topics. This one focuses on pathway plans.

3. Pathway plans

3.1 What is a pathway plan?

A pathway plan is the key plan which sets out the needs of young people who are looked after from the age of 16. It also identifies the actions to be taken and resources to be put in place to support young people as they prepare for leaving care.

The pathway plan provides young people with clarity and reassurance about their rights as care leavers, how their future needs will be met in preparing for any transitions they will make, and who will provide the support they need.

Pathway plans must be in place for all 16 and 17-year-olds who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks after they reached the age of 14.

The pathway plans replace young people's care plans referred to in Wales as 'Part 6 care and support plans', once they reach the age of 16.

However, it is important to remember that preparation for transition to adulthood should take place throughout children's lives rather than simply starting on their 16th birthday.

Welsh Government legislation and guidance

Guidance to local authorities about leaving care and pathway plans can be found in Section 5, [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014 Part 6 Code of Practice](#).

Code of Practice, Part 6 describes care and support plans which children who are looked after will have in place and then as care leavers.

3.2 What a pathway plan should include: an overview

The pathway planning process must consider where a young person is going to live and whether they should continue to be looked after. It should also outline the plans for where they are going to live as care leavers and how the young person is going to be prepared for this. It should also consider what other support they need, building on what has been in their Part 6 care and support plan.

The pathway plan must address the young person's:

- **health and development** – this will build upon the information in the young person's health plan. It should include physical, emotional and mental health.
- **education, training and employment** – a young person's personal education plan should continue while they are still in full or part-time education. Their pathway plan must have an explicit focus on career planning, taking into account their aspirations, skills and educational potential.
- **contact with the young person's parents, wider family and friends** – this includes considering how this network can encourage the young person and enable them to make a transition to independent living
- **financial capabilities and money management** – this will focus upon the young person's ability to manage their own finances and confirm the steps necessary to develop the young person's skills in money budgeting, saving and spending.

3.3 Who should be involved in pathway planning?

The voice of the young person will be at the centre of the pathway planning process.

Young people must be able to participate throughout the process and feel ownership of their plan.

Young people should have a personal adviser (referred to as a PA) to support them. Code of Practice 6 guidance states that the PA should act as a 'focal point' and that young people should know who they are and how to contact them.

The following significant adults and professionals' contributions to the pathway planning process include:

- The young person's parents or others with parental responsibility, and their wider family network.
- The young person's current foster carer and any prospective future provider of accommodation.
- A representative of the young person's education, college or training provider, and [Careers Wales](#).
- Any relevant medical professionals who are involved in their health care.
- Their independent visitor (where appointed).
- Their advocate.
- Their independent reviewing officer (IRO).
- Their personal adviser (PA).
- Representatives of the youth justice service if the young person is in contact.
- Others who could make a contribution such as special guardians or kinship carers.

3.4 Completing the pathway plan

Arrangements to complete the pathway plan will be agreed at the young person's statutory review that follows their 16th birthday.

The professional who prepares the pathway plan will usually be the young person's allocated social worker. They will complete these sections of the plan:

- The young person's strengths and needs.
- Action to be taken and/or services to be provided to meet identified needs.
- The frequency and length of the services to be provided.
- The person/agency responsible for providing/facilitating the service.
- Fixed points when progress of the plan will be monitored, reviewed and updated.

The confirmation of a 'Plan B' will be useful as a back-up if elements of the original plan are no longer possible.

The views of the young person must be recorded and incorporated into the pathway plan, using language that they understand.

A copy of the plan must be given to the young person and everyone involved should sign it.

3.5 Reviews

The pathway plan should be reviewed at least every six months. However, the young person can ask for a review meeting at any time.

Whenever the plan is reviewed and updated, everyone involved should sign it.

4. The content of the pathway plan: in detail

4.1 Health and wellbeing

The pathway plan should detail any help the young person will receive regarding their health needs. It should also take into account the young person's physical and mental wellbeing and what, if any, general or specialist health services need to be included.

The pathway plan is also about supporting the young person with developing a healthy lifestyle. It could include, for example, commitment to support them with local interest groups, sports activities or volunteering, or peer group activities.

As part of the pathway planning process, the young person will be encouraged to share with their social worker and/or PA their thoughts and feelings, how they get on with other people and if there are any things that could help them with that.

4.2 Education, training and employment

The pathway plan should ensure that the young person has everything they need to succeed in their career, and that they are on track to achieve their career goals. It will confirm how the local authority will support them financially, including obtaining materials and IT equipment. The plan will confirm access to all opportunities for employment, education and training.

4.3 Family and social networks

This element aims to identify the young person's support systems and, through subsequent planning, assist the young person in maintaining and developing these and other community ties.

4.4 Money

It is very important that the young person has confirmation of the financial support they will get from the local authority. This will include a statement of all their entitlements, any help they may need to budget, savings they may have, or benefits they are entitled to.

Young people might need financial support for a range of activities, including, for example, driving lessons.

Independent benefits advice and information are available from the weblinks below.
Turn2us
Entitledto
Money Helper
Shelter Cymru
Citizens Advice

4.5 Accommodation

Options for accommodation after a young person moves on to independence need to be explored. The local authority should assess the accommodation needs of the young person. This includes checking the accessibility of the location (eg linking with housing to ensure accommodation meets all the needs of the individual to enable them to feel safe, secure, and part of the community), safety, bills and rent of any proposed new home.

The pathway planning process can consider the [When I am Ready](#) scheme. This gives young people the right to stay with their foster families beyond the age of 18 if both parties agree to this. The foster carers convert to When I am Ready carers, and a 'living together' agreement is drawn up between the young person and the family.

If a young person is not happy where they are living, this needs to be discussed urgently with their PA and at the pathway plan review.

4.6 Identity

Identity is all about who the young person is. The social worker and PA will advise and support the young person of sources of information about their history and how to obtain copies. There may also be a life story book completed.

4.7 General

The plan should also look at how prepared the young person is for the challenges as an adult. Are there things they need to learn to be ready to live independently and how will the local authority support them to do that?

They should also ensure that the young person has the right ID documents, national insurance number, driving licence and passport and are informed of their rights under data protection to access documents.

This section aims to ensure that during the pathway planning process the young person acquires a range of skills (practical and interpersonal) which prepares them for independent living.

5. Young people in custody

If a young person enters secure accommodation or custody, their pathway planning must continue. It is good practice for the social workers first visit to take place within ten working days of the young person entering custody. There should also be a review of the pathway plan at least a month before they depart.

6. Pathway plans for a young person up to the age of 25

Over-18s who are eligible for leaving care services, or who are resuming programmes of education or training after the age of 21, are entitled to continuing support from a PA.

The pathway planning process continues up to age 25. As they gain maturity and experience, young people can be encouraged to take increasing responsibility for their pathway plan reviews, even chairing the meetings if they wish.

The duties of the local authority continue for as long as the young person continues in their agreed programme of education or training. The local authority's duties will be confirmed in a revised and updated pathway plan.

If a care leaver aged 18 or over is not continuing in education or training, then the pathway planning process should be brought to a conclusion in an agreed way around the time that the young person reaches 21, and they should be advised of contact details if they have needs for services in the future.

6.1 Keeping in touch

The young person's PA should explain how they will keep in touch, for example, through text, telephone calls or email. The young person should also be notified on any personnel changes.

If contact with a young person is lost, the PA must take reasonable steps to get back in touch with them. However, the young person's wishes should be respected at all times and they have a right to decline support.

7. Top tips

7.1 Questions young people can ask

- When should I have started my pathway planning?
- Am I being listened to? Have I had lots of opportunity to tell my PA or social worker about my plans for the future and what help I think I might need to make those plans come true?
- Do I know where I can go to get support if I think I'm not being listened to?
- Have I got all the information I need to feel informed and make decisions about my future?
- Have I got my foster carers involved in my plan so they can speak up for me?
- Have all the right people been asked about what support I will need as I move to independence?
- Does my plan cover health, education, training, skills, employment, money, identity, relationships and accommodation?
- Is my plan saying what I actually want it to say? If not, do I know what to do? (You should only sign your plan when you are happy with what it says.)
- Do I have a copy of my plan? (You should have – and don't forget to ask for a printed copy if you'd like one.)
- Do I know when the plan will be reviewed? (It should happen at least every six months.)

7.2 What practitioners and foster carers should know

- The young person should have a clear understanding of the pathway planning process.
- A timetable for the completion of the pathway plan should be agreed at the child's next statutory review following their 16th birthday.
- There should be pathway planning sessions with significant adults and other professionals involved with the young person.
- The social worker will have responsibility for ensuring the pathway plan is completed, however, they can ask other significant people to complete relevant sections. When other agencies are part of the process of preparing a young person's pathway plan, it is good practice to ensure they have a copy of the relevant part.
- Additional information should be taken from the young person's care files.
- The completed assessment should be shared with the young person, highlighting the identified needs, strengths and skills to be included in the pathway plan.

- The services and/or resources to be provided and timescales for action to be undertaken that will be included in the plan should be discussed with the young person.
- Once the pathway plan draft has been completed, the young person will decide who is to be sent a copy to comment on the draft.
- The young person will confirm their satisfaction with the final draft and the signatures of all relevant parties obtained.
- The young person will decide who should be given a copy of the completed pathway plan including their reviewing officer and others identified in the plan. A copy will be placed on the young person's file.

8. Resources from The Fostering Network

Factsheets

The Fostering Network has also produced a number of [factsheets](#) on a variety of topics:

[Care leavers – accommodation and support](#)

[Fostering unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people](#)

[St David's Day Fund](#)

[The Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#)

[When I am ready](#)

Thrive

The Fostering Network in Wales publish *Thrive*, a young person's magazine for those aged 12-16 years. They have produced a special edition focussing on [pathway plans](#) and a full list of past thrive editions can be found [here](#).

When I am Ready

[When I am Ready](#) will give all young people living with foster families in Wales, the right to stay with their foster carers once they reach 18 years of age. The change in law came about following a campaign by The Fostering Network in Wales.

The Fostering Network in Wales has also produced a When I am Ready [film](#), on behalf of the Welsh Government, which focuses on young people and looking at both carers' and young people's concerns.

There is also a FAQs guide to When I am Ready, which can be found [here](#).

9. Organisations offering further help and support

Fosterline Wales

[Fosterline Wales](#) provides a free help and advice line, providing information about all aspects of foster care, including tax and national insurance, benefits, allowances and

insurance. It also offers confidential support, including to those who face an allegation, or who may be concerned about a care plan, or who are unclear about the legislation and guidance related to foster care in Wales.

Call us on 0800 316 7664 from 9.30am - 12.30pm Monday to Friday.
If you call outside this time, please leave a message and someone will call you back as soon as possible.

You can email us at Fosterlinewales@fostering.net

Voices from Care Cymru

Voices from Care Cymru is a national, independent, Welsh organisation dedicated to upholding the rights and welfare of care experienced children and young people. More information and help can be found on their [website](#).

Tros Gynnal

Tros Gynnal (TGP Cymru) is the leading Wales based children's rights charity, which supports and represents vulnerable children and young people. More news and information can be obtained from their [website](#).

NYAS Cymru

[NYAS Cymru](#) stand up for children's and young people's rights, making sure their voices are heard and that they can get the help and support they need.

Welsh Government

Social Service and Wellbeing Act 2014 and Code of Practice 6 - see Chapter 5: Leaving Care, can be accessed [here](#).

Children in Wales. There are a number of informative resources available on this [website](#).

Children's Legal Centre, Wales. This [website](#) contains a number of resources.

Shelter Cymru

There is some helpful advice on this [website](#) for care leavers moving on to their own home.

Roots Foundation

[The Roots Foundation](#) is a volunteer led charity supporting young people in care, care leavers, children in need and adults who have left care.

Rees Foundation

The aim of the [Rees Foundation](#) is to help care experienced people to thrive and they run a number of projects for care experienced people.

10. How The Fostering Network can help

The Fostering Network offers advice, information and support. Our expertise and knowledge are always up-to-date and available through our vital member helplines, publications, training and consultancy.

Training and consultancy

Wherever you are in your fostering career, as a foster carer, social worker or manager, The Fostering Network has a range of [training](#) designed to meet your development needs. For more information, please email wales@fostering.net for more information.

Contact details

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