

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

### HAVING AND KEEPING A HOME: STEPS TO PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE – FOLLOW-UP

#### SUBMISSION FROM CARE INSPECTORATE

##### **Background**

The Care Inspectorate regulates a variety of services that provide care and support to young people leaving care or who are at risk of becoming homeless. These include housing support, support services, adult placement services, and care homes for children and young people.

As well as registering, inspecting and grading these services, we have a duty to investigate complaints and take enforcement action when there is a serious risk to health and wellbeing. This can be a condition notice, improvement notice, or emergency action, including applying immediate conditions or in the most severe cases seeking cancellation of a service.

We also have an important role to play in helping support improvement in services – giving advice, signposting good practice and highlighting services that we grade as 'excellent' during our inspections. All of our inspection reports can be found at: [http://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=7644&Itemid=489&bereNextPageId=ReportDataDetails\\_action.php&action=displayReport&repId=CS2003010921](http://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7644&Itemid=489&bereNextPageId=ReportDataDetails_action.php&action=displayReport&repId=CS2003010921).

We further carry out joint inspections of services for children and young people that take account of the full range of work within a community planning partnership (CPP) area including services provided by teachers, doctors, social workers, police officers, and the voluntary sector.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this written evidence call and would be happy to provide any further information that would help inform this important inquiry.

##### **What is your experience or involvement with youth homelessness?**

###### **Housing support services**

We are responsible for the regulation of housing support services, which include supported accommodation and emergency accommodation dedicated to young people aged 16 to 25 who are homeless, at risk of becoming homeless or are living in unsuitable accommodation. There are also a number of services that we regulate where young people under 25 years may be staying in a hostel which is registered as a housing support service, and sharing the living environment with a broad age range of adults who may have multiple and complex issues.

An example of a dedicated service for young people between the ages of 16 and 25 is Rock Trust in Edinburgh and West Lothian. This service works with homeless and socially excluded young people in this age group, providing supported accommodation in a mixture of shared and single living environments. It includes the

Mainstay project in Edinburgh, which supports young people in their own tenancies – whether council, housing association or private. At our last inspection, staff were found to be aware of the challenges facing young people with offending, drug and alcohol difficulties, mental health issues and behaviour management.

### **Adult placement services**

We also regulate adult placement services, which can include adult placement services for care leavers or vulnerable young people from the community over the age of 16 years within individual family homes.

For example, the Supported Lodgings Scheme from Fife Council provides an adult placement service to young people between the ages of 16 and 25. The service provides a "stepping stone" for young people, offering accommodation and support within a family home to help them develop the skills needed for independent living.

As well as offering support on things like cooking and budgeting, the Supported Lodgings Scheme carries out clear risk assessments concerning mental health and anger management. We found a case during inspection where discussion with a young person had enabled them to identify triggers for self-harm which in turn helped them to identify ways in which support could be accessed. A large number of young people keep in touch with carers once they move on.

### **Care homes for children and young people**

We also regulate care homes for children and young people, ensuring that these services are meeting the National Care Standards. *Standard 17: Moving on* (<http://www.nationalcarestandards.org/202.html>) sets out how children and young people who are looked after away from home can expect to be supported to move on from their residential service, including that the care home should welcome them back for visits and continue to support them after they have left.

Lothian Villa in Musselburgh is an example of a registered care home for children and young people that is providing excellent care and support to young people who have moved on. During our inspections we have found a very strong focus on the promotion of an ethos and culture of "community and being" – that the service "claimed" young people. Young people who left the service still remained a part of the broad "Lothian Villa Family", with care leavers still invited to take part in activities in the care home.

In our role as a corporate parent, we have an active role to play in ensuring all services are delivering the best possible outcomes for the young people in their care.

### **Is there more support available, for instance mediation, counselling, supported accommodation or funding?**

This can be dependent on the journey of the individual young person. Young people entitled to care and support will have more access to counselling and support, but young people who have become homeless due to family estrangement, for example, may not be able to access this support easily.

Housing support services and adult placement services play an important role in ensuring young people at risk of being homeless or have become homeless are provided with accommodation and support.

The development of supported lodgings / adult placement services for this younger group is welcomed and young people are receiving the benefit of stability in a very small, sometimes individual, care setting. However, it may also be the case that young people are in group settings such as hostels for a wide age range that are unable to provide the kind of support this particular age group needs.

In response to the growing number of support services for young adults, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act and policy developments such as 'Staying Put', our specialist Children and Criminal Justice Service teams are now responsible for inspecting services for young people in the 16–25 age range.

This will allow us to focus on issues that specifically impact on this age group such as transitions, mental and physical health and wellbeing, and exploitation. This also gives us the potential to explore further the high self harm and suicide rate among this group of vulnerable young people. We will use this information to help us identify future areas to focus on in inspection.

As part of the review of the National Care Standards, consideration will need to be given to how these standards best cover young people aged 16 to 25 that use housing support services and adult placement services, as the current standards do not adequately reflect the increased use by this younger age group.

### **How have things changed for young people experiencing homelessness since 2012?**

We have found that there has been the continued development of adult placement services (also known as supported lodging schemes or shared lives) for care leavers and dedicated housing support for young people. However, provision of these services is not consistent across local authority areas.

As the regulator, we have an important role to play in encouraging the services we regulate to develop new imaginative ways of delivering care, while at the same time ensuring that the young people using them remain safe and receive good quality of care.

We have produced additional guidance (see annexe) for providers of care services for looked after and accommodated children, setting out examples of innovation we have identified in the services we regulate.

### **Are there additional issues for young people who are leaving care?**

There are sometimes issues facing young people during the transition period from leaving a residential unit, especially if the placement was outwith their own area. Issues can include continued access to health and support services, having to leave work or college, and having to leave their support network of friends and return to a community that may have grown up without them.

There is also an issue around safeguarding that needs to be further explored. It is important to balance the rights of this age group to be seen and treated as adults with the need to consider and intervene, especially for young people aged under 16 years, where protection is a major issue. This group is “caught” between child and adult protection practices and interpretation by agencies.

### **What new approaches have been introduced, and how effective have they been?**

As part of our regulatory activities, we come across a number of different approaches being taken to support young people leaving care, or who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Some of these are outlined below:

- The Rock Share project matches young people with potential flatmates and they are supported to find suitable two-bedroom accommodation. The flatmate offers live-in support to the young person, helping them adapt to living independently.
- Foyers offer accommodation for young people aged 16-25 affected by homelessness. They combine learning and accommodation, providing safe and secure housing, support and training for young people. Young people make a ‘deal’ to make a commitment to their own development and contribute to their local communities. There are currently two of these types of services in Scotland – Aberdeen and the Western Isles.
- Based on a partnership between Shelter Scotland and Relationships Scotland, the Safe and Sound Project is aimed at young people aged 14-24, who have run away from home or are at risk of doing so in the Tayside area. Its main focus is providing family mediation to help resolve family disputes and establish communication between young people and their parents. It also helps young people moving on to new accommodation by providing practical support.
- The Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution (SCCR) has also recently been established by the Edinburgh's Cyrenians charity and is funded by the Scottish Government. It will provide families with support and advice on how to solve any conflicts, and reduce the chances of young people becoming homeless.

### **How well is the Housing Options approach working towards reducing instances of youth homelessness?**

n/a

### **Has the number of young people presenting as homeless changed?**

We do not collect this data. However, we do collect data from our annual returns on the number of housing support and adult placement services provided to young people aged 18 to 24. This can be requested by contacting [parliament@careinspectorate.com](mailto:parliament@careinspectorate.com).

## **Has there been any changes to funding for voluntary organisations?**

We have found that a number of registered services aimed at preventing young people from becoming homeless have had to cancel their registration over the past year. This has included Action for Children's PATH and Aberlour's The Young Runaways Service – Scotland's only refuge for young runaways.

## **How might the implementation of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill help to tackle youth homelessness?**

We welcome that the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act will enshrine in law raising the age care leavers can request support ('aftercare') from local authorities from 21 to 26, and that looked after young people will be able to stay in their placement beyond the age of 16 – applying to aged 25 from 2015.

This will have a positive impact on helping to prevent youth homelessness among care leavers, although it will not address the wider group of young people who face homelessness who have not been in the care system.

We will have a role to play in inspecting how services are supporting young people to remain or return to care once the Act comes into force. We will as always support services that may develop new innovative models of care that emerge from these legislative changes.

We will also continue to support CPPs to deliver their corporate parent responsibilities to care leavers, highlighting areas of good practice and development. This will further support the recommendation made by the Equal Opportunities Committee, as part of its original inquiry into youth homelessness, to establish which local authorities are not operating effective care leaver protocols (recommendation 47).

## **Is the Getting it Right for Every Child helping schools and local authorities to tackle youth homelessness?**

GIRFEC and the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators set out a clear commitment to ensuring that all children and young people in Scotland are safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. There is also a strong emphasis on early intervention.

However, a number of the services that prevent young people being homeless often come under adult protection, or fall between the gaps of child and adult protection. Schedule 12 of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2011, for example, defines 'adult placement service' as "a service which consists of, or includes, arranging for the provision of accommodation for an adult (that is to say for a person who has attained the age of sixteen years)..."

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20 May 2014

## **Guidance for providers: looked after and accommodated children who need ongoing support as young adults**

**Publication code: REG-1013-046**

<b>Publication date</b>	22 October 2013
<b>Version number</b>	1
<b>Author's initials</b>	LD
<b>Job title</b>	Head of Inspection (Criminal Justice and Young People's Services)
<b>Responsibility for this document</b>	Depute Director (Children's Services and Criminal Justice)
<b>Review date</b>	21 October 2016

This is the first version of this document.

## **Guidance for providers of registered care services for looked after and accommodated children who need ongoing support as young adults**

At the Care Inspectorate, we are committed to working with providers of care services to get the best possible outcomes for all children. We know that looked after and accommodated children are particularly vulnerable as they move from care into early adulthood. We are keen to be as flexible as possible with innovative care services that support the transition out of care.

### **Background**

The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 sets out the different categories of services that must be registered with the Care Inspectorate. These include services for children and young people who are looked after and accommodated in the following service types.

- Care homes
- School care accommodation
- Secure accommodation
- Fostering
- Adoption

There are other service types that may also support young people over the age of 16 years, each of which must be registered.

- Housing support
- Support service
- Adult placement
- Offender accommodation

There are certain types of care service that cannot by law continue to care for young people when the young person reaches a specific age, or if the young person no longer meets the criteria for being accommodated in that service type. These include:

- secure accommodation, where no one can be accommodated on reaching their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday or if they no longer meet the criteria for secure care
- school care accommodation, where no one can be accommodated if they are no longer attending school
- foster care, where the young person ceases to be a “looked after child”.
- care homes, which may have a restriction placed on the age range of children and young people that can be looked after. Providers can apply for a variation to any conditions about age range.

### **Options to consider**

We strongly suggest that providers ask us for advice at an early stage of developing their service. We are committed to supporting diversity and the development of

services that will provide good outcomes for children and young people. We must, however, do this within the parameters of relevant legislation.

There are examples of very good innovative and diverse service provision that have developed over many years to support young people in transition. These include:

- providers of school care accommodation also registering to provide other service types, such as care home and housing support services to provide transitional and through-care services
- care homes developing their service and separately registering an outreach service as housing support and/or a support service, depending on needs of young people
- care homes including in their registration a satellite flat to support young people in transition from the care home, or who need crisis support, to come back for a short time
- providers of secure accommodation developing care home and/or school care accommodation for young people who no longer need secure care but who do need ongoing, stable, support relationships and care planning
- Foster carers also registering as adult placement carers to support young people who are no longer looked after and accommodated (some of these may be under 18 years old).

### **Important points to consider**

It is a legal requirement to register a service with the Care Inspectorate and this should be considered when trialling any new venture. It can take up to six months to register a new service, so contacting us early is crucial.

There is a registration fee and an annual fee to pay for each registration of a different service type, details of which are published online at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com) Services provided together, for example housing support and support services, can be assessed for a combined service discount.

Each registered care service will be inspected by us.

Young people over the age of 16 living in a foster placement will be subject to enhanced disclosure checks, as will any other adult living in the family home and birth children 16 years of age.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill proposes changes for 16-24 year olds. Providers should be cognisant of the Bill and we will update this guidance as necessary in light of new legislation.

For more information, please contact Lawrie Davidson, Head of Inspection (Criminal Justice and Young People's Services) on 0131 6534100 or at [lawrie.davidson@careinspectorate.com](mailto:lawrie.davidson@careinspectorate.com)