

Inspiring Futures Post 21 Years Old

Policy and Practice Guidance

Personal Advisor (PA) to 25

1. Purpose:

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 amended existing guidance as to the duty afforded to young people aged 21 to 25 who are defined as Former Relevant Care Leavers. The purpose of this policy is to describe DCST Inspiring Futures Team approach to the new duty, role and function of PA support and the offer to young people.

The duty has been extended in response to the corporate parenting principles of the act, which recognises that young people may require ongoing advice and guidance to secure them in a positive transition.

This document will also outline how the service will record its activity.

2. This policy applies to:

- Young people defined as Former Relevant under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 prior to turning 21.
- This is a retrospective offer and will formalise the plans for post 21 years old. IFT Post 21 year olds were left open to IFT until guidance was devised.

3. This policy does not apply to:

- Young people defined as 'qualifying' under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

4. This policy therefore will address the following areas:

- Activity for young people who are not yet 25 but to whom are closed
- Activity for young people who are shortly due to turn 21
- Activity for young people who become eligible for a Leaving Care Service.

5. Practice guidance

Activity for young people who are not yet 25 but to whom services are closed

DCST Inspiring Futures Team will write to all young people aged 21 to 25 at least annually to explain and remind them how they can return to the service at any time during this period and seek support. We also utilise social media outlets to promote the support they can access (Appendix 2 for reminder letter).

DCST will also make sure the offer to young people over the age of 21, is captured and published in the Finance Policy. The Finance Policy is available to view on IFT Facebook page.

There are two pathways back into the service. These are drop in/duty function or full service with allocated Personal Advisor (PA).

6. Drop in/Duty function

Young people will be reminded they can drop in to catch up with the team or for advice. This can happen in a number of ways.

- The young person may merely drop in to have a chat or to catch up with the team. This can be covered by duty at Colonnades.
- A young person may also return, experiencing some distress that requires immediate attention. This would be covered on duty. If this is a time, limited crisis that can be dealt with swiftly then this can be completed via duty.
- This would be recorded on LCS as a 'Contact and Referral' and be recorded as a 'Returning Care Leaver'.
- If however it becomes clear that the issue will take a few days/interactions to address, PA will discuss with the Team Manager as to whether this requires assessment. Examples of these situations may see difficulties with appointments with benefits/housing, which could lead or have led to eviction/sanction and the young person is seeking support to challenge.
- Dependent on discussion with the Team Manager these too can be classified as duty contacts if it is anticipated there will be no further action from supporting the young person in this immediate crisis.
- If a duty worker picks up a young person and the activity is expected to run into a second or third day then it may be appropriate that the duty worker sees this through. This will be dependent on other pressures within their caseload and is subject to agreement from their Manager. If this is not possible, the duty worker will be expected to write up the case note before leaving work that day with clear actions as to what has been achieved and what actions are outstanding for the next day. This will support the duty worker carrying the work forward into the next day.
- IFT have PAs and Social Workers (SW) who complete duty. PAs/SWs will both support young people on duty. Should it however be determined that further work is required then this will be passed to the current PA on duty with the SW.
- Refer to points above. SW will not carry out ongoing tasks with young people age 21+ years.

7. Flexibility of Offer

- In all instances, the offer post 21 is flexible and can begin, end and then reopen again. Young people may, seek time-limited support and then end their involvement for a period of time. In each instance, this activity must be recorded as a 'Contact and Referral'.
- However it is important to remember that if the young person continues to revisit the service in a state of crisis over a period of weeks but on an intermittent basis it may be necessary to have discussions with the young person about the perceived chaos and worries the service has for that young person and seek permission that they consent to an assessment and more focussed support.
- This will be subject to the young person consenting to involvement.

8. Offering an assessment to a full service.

- Should young people require more support they can ask, or we can offer an assessment. This will be completed using the Pathway Plan.
- The PA will only complete the sections relevant to the young person's presenting need and worries. There is no requirement to complete a full Pathway Plan.
- The Pathway Plan will be shared with the Team Manager and will determine whether the young person will require a Pathway Plan to address the areas of concern.
- Should it be agreed that the young person is in need of additional, more detailed support the PA with the young person will build a Pathway Plan.
- The PA with the young person will agree what can realistically be done to support the young person.
- For young people who are in custody, a minimum 12 weekly visit will be provided., They will remain open to IFT. Personal Advisors will work with HMP professionals to ensure discharge plans are in place and Pathway Plans are being implemented.
- In the case of AWD then a multi-agency decision needs to be made as to whether IFT need to remain involved. This needs to be clearly recorded in a case note

The options are:

- Signposting to services
- Advocating to support access to services
- Offering regular visits to support the emotional wellbeing of the young person if they are experiencing a period of stress.

This plan will need to be agreed by the Team Manager

Frequency of review of the plan can be determined in this planning process but should be reviewed at a minimum of 6 months.

The level, type and purpose of contact between the PA, service and young person, can be agreed within the Pathway Plan itself.

9. Aspects to Remember

Post 21 the expectation is that the offer of support is time limited, focussed and where the goal for the PA and the young person is that the young person can be closed. It does not follow that once reopened the young person will remain open to their 25th birthday.

Post 21 there is no additional financial support or extension to entitlements other than those to young people accessing HE where their programme of study began before closure; please refer to the Financial Policy.

Part of the offer is that we will provide an adequate service in a timely manner, this means that each individual will need to agree to consent for us to contact and work with appropriate agencies.

10. Activity for young people who are shortly due to turn 21

The Inspiring Futures Team will continue to encourage young people to keep in touch with the service so they can drop in, update the team about their lives and to share good times and bad times with them even after they turn 21.

However, PAs are reminded that the plan for all young people continues to be to close young people at 21. The extension of the duty is for those young people who continue to need support and advice and who may not be ready to close. It is also dependent on young people agreeing/choosing to remain open to service.

Should the young person seek to be closed against service advice and the young person has the capacity to make their own decisions, the service is unable to keep working with the young people.

As such, PA's should still be focussed on supporting young people to achieve stability and security by the time they reach 21.

If it becomes clear that this is not achievable, the PA will have a conversation with their Manager during supervision to alert them to the likelihood that the young person will remain open to service.

The PA would then have a conversation with the young person as to what they would hope post 21.

All decisions and discussions must be clearly recorded on the file.

Should it be determined that the young person is to remain open there must be a clear rationale on the file as to why the young person has remained open and what the actions/purpose of this decision.

The last Pathway Plan prior to the young person's 21st birthday should clearly record the decision to keep the young person open, the rationale for doing so and what actions remain necessary to support the young person beyond their 21st birthday.

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12. Case recording and data collection

At a National level, DCST will only need to report on the numbers of young people accessing the service who are aged 21 to 25.

No reporting will be necessary on Pathway Plans, In Touch, Accommodation or EET activity over the age of 21.

Supervision on cases will only be recorded for those cases with an active Pathway Plan.

However, locally the service will be monitored for its activity and impact on the young people it works with. Therefore it will still be a requirement that all activity is recorded effectively 'Contact and Referral – Returning Care Leaver' and that all young people who return to service will be the subject to case supervision, Pathway Planning, case recording standards as any young person under the age of 21.

Appendix 2: Letter service sends out to remind young people of the offer

Dear

We write to you now, to remind you that Doncaster Leaving Care Service (Inspiring Futures Team) is able to offer continuing support for young people up to the age of 25.

Because of changes in Legislation and Government accepting that young people may need more help for longer they have changed the rules.

What this means is that for young people who were closed to the service but are yet to reach 25, you can still contact the service and ask for advice, guidance or more significant levels of support.

The types of support can include workers supporting you make calls, write letters to challenge decision-making. It can include workers attending appointments with you or just listening to you if you need someone to vent to.

This can also include revisiting a Pathway Plan if you require more time and support to help you.

Sadly, this support cannot include providing financial support.

If you would like more information about the offer or some advice or support please contact the service and we will do our best to help.

Alternatively, if you would prefer we stop contacting you to remind you of the offer please let us know. This would not prevent you from accessing services or support should you require them.

Yours Sincerely

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Team Manager