

UK Policy Meeting

17th & 18th June 2004, Glasgow

PARTICIPANTS

ENGLAND

National Leaving Care Advisory Service, Rainer

- Martin Hazlehurst, Manager
- Jane Sufian, Senior Policy Officer

Yorkshire & Humberside Leaving Care Forum

- Julie Mephram, Chair

North West After Care Forum

- Keir Parsons, Development Worker, NWACF
- John Strongman, Chair, NWACF and Manchester Leaving Care Service

NCH

- Alice Frank, Norwich Union Project Manager - Children's Services

DfES

- Mark Burrows, Professional Advisor: Looked After Children (Fri AM)

NORTHERN IRELAND

VOYPIC

- Sharon Redmond, Policy Co-ordinator

SCOTLAND

Scottish Throughcare & Aftercare Forum

- Alison Caulfield-Dow, National Co-ordinator
- Janet Sanders, Young Person's Development Worker

Barnardos Scotland

- Ian Wood, Children's Services Manager, Aberdeenshire
- Ian Dempster, Service Manager, Springboard, Highland
- Rona Gray, Service Manger, 16+ Project, Edinburgh

Fife Council

- Viv Boyle, Throughcare Team Manager (Thurs)

North Lanarkshire Council

- David Carver (Friday AM)

The big step, Glasgow

- Jacque McWilliam (Thurs)

Who Cares? Scotland

- Cal Duffy, Young Person's Worker (Thurs)
- Caroline Lindsay, Young Person's Worker (Thurs)

Scottish Executive

- Fiona McKinlay, Policy Adviser, Young People & Looked After Children (Friday AM)

WALES

Wales Leaving Care Forum & Rhonda Valley Council

- Paula Foley, Chair

Voices from Care

- Donna Conway, Advice & Development Worker (North Wales)

APOLOGIES:

Ena Fry, Scott Telfer and Kausar Karim, the Fostering Network;
Amanda Allard, NCH/Action on Aftercare Consortium;
Alison Williams, NCB; Tam Baillie, Barnardos Scotland;
Mike Stein, University of York; Shauna Wright, Renfrewshire Council;
Dave Innes, Dundee City Council; Maxine Wrigley, A National Voice

What we would like to get out of the meeting?

Sharing

- Seeing what can we learn and share?
- Pool our experience
- Interesting to see different UK perspectives
- Looking for good ideas
- Look at ways how regions could take responsibility for dissemination of info, ideas etc on common areas of interest
- See how to keep things going after this meeting and continue to share info on UK developments and work together
- Keen to hear about good policy documents, that work

Networking

- Good to have a network of contacts
- Establish contacts with other reps across UK
- Build wider networks
- Networking is important, particularly at strategic level
- Be useful to figure out ways to create and maintain a UK wide network for enquiries, dissemination of info etc.

Areas of Interest

- Consider the role of statutory and voluntary sector in pathway planning
- Looking to have the right mix of support and accommodation for young people.
- Interested in Health of Young people leaving care
- Want to look at proposed national protocol and national standards
- Sharing Examples for young people's involvement in developments
- Looking at specific needs of young unaccompanied asylum seekers
- Find out what's happening for young people in secure accommodation
- Get experiences of how young people's transitions are being supported
- See how young people are finding experience of DWP transfer
- See what works well (or not so well) with participation for young people
- Look at issues regarding rural dimension to throughcare & aftercare
- Consider issues around young people leaving care too early/too young
- Interested in better collaborative working (LA and voluntary sector)
- What works effectively in staff training and development
- Looking at employment issues for young people
- Discuss how personal adviser / pathways co-ordinators roles work in practice

Influencing Developments

- Learn from rest of UK and use it in service delivery
- Looking for examples of good practice
- Bring experiences back to our own area
- To go away with an agenda for joint activity on common areas
- National work can then influence local developments
- Absorb all info and take it back
- Look at ways to drive standards, to improve consistency and practice
- How can we monitor implementation of new arrangements, across UK

UPDATES ON UK DEVELOPMENTS

Scotland

- Had involvement in Scottish Executive's Throughcare & Aftercare Working Group
- New Regulations & Guidance and Pathways materials – launched 1st April 2004
- New Policy & Practice website to be launched very soon – promote discussion and link regional and focus groups: www.scottishthroughcare.org.uk
- Got Scottish protocol endorsed by CoSLA and ADSW (inspired by North West protocol from England)
- Looking to establish a network of young people's local groups
- Young people's web pages are being developed.
- Young people led the Debate Project – had an event in Feb 04, and future event in 2005
- Had work around consulting with young people with disabilities
- Scottish initiatives – Laidlaw youth project (mentoring funding) and Columba 1400 Leadership Academies for young people leaving care. (non-directive coaching) www.columba1400.com
- Forum published a standards document in 2000: 'Key to Success'. Need to reconsider national standards
- Have focus from Scottish Executive on collecting more statistical info on outcomes for throughcare & aftercare. Still need to monitor impact of new arrangements.
- Interested to know how right to appeal/complaints is working in practice

Northern Ireland

- VOYPIC are involved in children's services planning groups: 1) children in care and 2) those in receipt of aftercare
- Consultation with young people in relation to new legislation developments
- Draft Regulations and Guidance presently out for consultation (deadline 20th Aug 04)
- VOYPIC provide Befriending and Youth Participation Services
- VOYPIC Chair the Leaving and After Care Practitioner Group – looking at implementation of new legislation – on 1st April 2005 Children (Leaving Care) N. I. Act
- Lobbying around funding for services and implementation of new legislation
- 3rd & 4th November 04 – hosting a Leaving and Aftercare conference in Northern Ireland.

www.voypic.org

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk (Dept. Health, Social Services and Public Safety)

Wales

- Have Children First Programme in Wales, for implementation of C(LC)Act 2000 (not Quality Protects)
- 22 LA's in Wales. Have variation in level/extent of services
- Wales Leaving Care Forum has been operational since 1999, and had high profile
- Looking to improve/increase profile
- Had inspection report on services, published in Feb 04. Looking to follow-up on recommendations, and improving systems for monitoring/measuring outcomes
- Haven't got a Development Worker for Welsh Forum. All voluntary, on top of own jobs. Looking to take this forward.
- Involvement of Voices from Care
- Funky Dragon – looks at young people's participation and rights
- Want to have more involvement with ADSS, for issues that come up from Practitioners in the Forum
- Looking at how to influence children's services agenda, and improve gaps between children's and adult services, (for 18+)
- Looking at getting the Forum's cross boundary protocol approved by ADSS (has been difficult)
- Want more consultation work with young people (looking at possible conference later in year)
- Affected by rural issues in Wales too.
- Voices from Care consult with young people on issues and take them back to the right people.

www.childrenfirst.wales.gov.uk

England

- Since implementation of Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 – financial support, especially for 16 & 17 year olds has worked well generally – there have been a few issues (mainly individual support level), pathway planning has gone generally ok.
- Still some areas need attention – e.g. education
- Concern that Leaving Care is not highest on the agenda (or ‘fashionable’) anymore (we’ve had our time) – may become a struggle again to keep it high on agenda
- Future agenda, must be more around Corporate Parenting
- Children’s Trusts will be introduced – how will care leavers fit into this? (need to be vigilant on this for other developments too)
- Draft national protocol drafted by DfES. Need to consider implications with existing North West protocol and others e.g. in Scotland.
- Still issues around consistency and quality across Local Authorities
- Support for Asylum seekers is a major issue in several areas (numbers are increasing) – policy and expectations are not clear, especially regarding the law and support
- Mental Health and Healthy Lifestyles – how is looked after system addressing these needs?
- Suitability of Accommodation – quality & quantity
- National Standards for leaving care – still to be taken forward, got a recent draft version.
- People didn’t truly take on resource implications of having a Personal Advisor until age 21. (Now have case loads of 40+)
- Need to look at how to develop inspection criteria for monitoring standards of service provision.
- Quality of assessments and pathway planning varies greatly.
- Children’s Bill – will be issues around private fostering and numbers of young people coming through for services.
- Adoption Act and post-adoption support – will this fall to leaving care services = resourcing issues.
- Can get 2-tier structure for level of support for young people – more problematic young people are not getting full service
- Issues for young people in Young Offenders Institutions, and level of support they get from Youth Offending teams.
- Research into resilience and young people leaving care, and their care experiences is important (e.g. Mike Stein’s work). Need more research.
- Support for Young people with disabilities is an area of concern – difficult getting LA’s to identify these young people as care leavers (see NCB’s work)

Useful Publications:

1. After the Act, Bob Broad, de Montfort University
2. Setting the Agenda – What’s Left to Do, Action on After Care Consortium
See Mike Stein’s ‘Diamond’ of young people’s resilience
3. Into the Mainstream, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

www.nwacf.com

www.dmu.ac.uk

www.anationalvoice.org.uk

Issues to take forward

- Cross border protocols, the monitoring of how they are implemented/used in practice, getting them endorsed nationally / at senior level (inc. Charging policies)

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Participants split into 3 groups, with each group looking at one of the following areas of interest:

1. Corporate Parenting
2. Young People's Participation
3. Protocols and Standards

Common Themes:

Each group would also consider the following, in relation to the group's area of interest (as above):

- A> Monitoring/Measuring
- B> Particular Groups of Young People:
 - a. In secure care
 - b. With Disabilities (transition)
 - c. Asylum Seekers

Key Questions:

Each group was asked to consider the following questions:

- What are the issues?
- What do we need to do about it?
- How can we make it happen?
(action points)

FEEDBACK FROM GROUPS

GROUP 1: Corporate Parenting

- Young people with Disabilities and Transitions – where are effective protocols in place?
Need to disseminating information.
- Need Corporate groups within LA's – having power to make things happen
- Having in-roads to senior managers / decision makers in LA's. You need authority to make things happen
- Relations with Housing/Homelessness and Social Services – (mis)interpretations of leaving care legislation = delays/lack of services
- Need for joint training = better understanding
- Celebrating successes – how are good outcomes measured? And improved?
- Sharing examples of good practice (e.g. housing officer based in leaving care team) = there are ways of providing services
- Getting it right: at the most senior corporate level, practice level and for young person
- Good collaborative work, negotiating, be consistent
- Importance to help young people to recognise their own successes – to believe in themselves.
Good parenting = giving young people positive recognition
- How should corporate parents communicate – email, texting?? What about talking?!
- Success of having Education managers in leaving care services
- Importance of cultivating relations with politicians – 'champions' with responsibility
- Reorganisation – don't just change things if something doesn't work.
- Teams don't just work because they are multi-disciplinary or qualified staff. It requires good team work.

GROUP 2: Young People's Participation

- People have different understanding of what participation means, and what it takes/involves
- Break the mould – think 'out of the box' = new ideas
- How do young people have their say in their pathway plans?
- How they can influence policy/decision makers?

Barriers and difficulties that can be faced:

- Control – participation being used as reward/privilege
- Young people never get feedback – and impact of this = disenchantment
- Not all young people like groups

What works:

- Young people on board of directors, involved in recruitment & selection of staff and training
- Video Diaries can work well
- Importance of positive relations with staff to facilitate participation
- A project seen as being involved in participation (participation is not something separate)
- Including young people with disabilities and communicating – finding right people to work with them.
- Levels of influence – can identify certain policy makers, but what about others (e.g. in health, disability)
- Funding for participation is a big issue. Hard to get resources.
- Need to look to government responsibility to fund initiatives
- Can be hard to reach out to marginal groups (esp. with govt. initiatives)
- Mainstreaming of participation can be more difficult. Can depend on importance that is placed on it. Shouldn't just be an 'add on' – should be a core activity
- Need to get principles of participation embedded in policy - it becomes a recognised process.
- How to get info and opportunities to young people who may be hard to approach

GROUP 3. Protocols and Standards

- Disputes over charging can hold up protocols – big concern
- Protocol standards can get watered down by disagreements
- Should have aspirational statements not just minimums
- Need to review how protocols work in practice
- Several examples: Scotland/Wales/North West/Eastern – what about a National UK one!
- Top down protocol or bottom up – latter is better = developed at practice level with support from most senior levels.
- Logos lend authority to protocol documents

- Look at UK wide protocol?
- Review current, bring them together and review
- Flow charts are good (See Scottish version)
- Call it a 'Protocol' not 'Guidelines' as this lends more authority

- Need to link together different regional forums
- Share policy, practice, protocols, website info etc
- Share practice/info through using CD Rom, current networks, using Keynotes, etc.
- UK Network should meet periodically. Also use existing events/conferences around the country
- Need core network of core representatives – using existing forums

- How can policy makers support such developments?
- National Standards and key Performance Indicators are linked
- There are a variety of standards already out there – need pooling together and looking at – and linking to other standards in existence or in development (ie Foster Care, Residential care)
Also NCH developing Standards for internal Leaving Care service delivery
- Can there be a common set of UK standards?
- How are protocols disseminated to those LA's that have signed up, i.e. practitioners etc
- Monitoring provision needs to be built in, to inform reviewing of impact of protocols/standards etc – a practical format is needed

Key Points for Friday's meeting

- Need to keep leaving care on the national agenda
- Need for Consistency Across UK, when young people move areas – various protocols, need for UK wide approach
- Service Standards, Monitoring and Inspection Criteria, Targets – are closely linked. Should be aspirational standards
- Young People's Participation – taking issues to a more strategic level and various channels/ departments
- Communication and Networking between Policy Makers and Forum's Across UK – how can it be built on and supported, and make good use of existing networks?
- Good Collaborative working – policy makers, local authorities, voluntary sector and for front line workers. Be clear what good collaborative practice should entail. Also for key groups of young people, e.g. with disabilities, asylum seekers, in secure care
- Need for establishing / maintaining key Government-supported working groups across UK
- On-going support for UK wide network, inc. links with UK policy makers
- Should consider research outcomes, and disseminate research across UK
- Need to consider role of Children's Commissioners

Friday 18th June

Input from Policy Makers

Mark Burrows, Professional Adviser, DfES gave a presentation on developments and outcomes in England.

Some Key Points:

- 25% of young people are placed out of authority and tend to do less well than other young people
- 20% of all care leavers are most vulnerable (see diamond of resilience)
- There are still issues with education for 16-19 years. There have been some improvements at GCSE level, but there are still only 1% of care leavers in higher education at up to 23 years old.
- See the Treasury website for the review of financial support for young people
- There's often a lack of understanding by Local Authorities on the current employment market and the skills required in the current labour market
- Need an imaginative approach to employment (often just short term work is available to young people)
- There are concerns around meeting the needs of most vulnerable groups, especially around on-going support for most vulnerable over 21 year olds.
- The Green Paper 'Every Child Matters' has a wider context to: improve fostering, improve placement stability 'choice protects', encourage local placements, recognise the changing market in residential child care (the number of new children's homes is increasing)
- See the NCSC website: 'How are We Doing' report.
- There are 35 pilot Children's Trusts in England, which bring together Health, Education and Social Services – should result in more access to services
- Need to develop a common assessment framework
- Hope to launch national protocol for England very soon
- Performance tables for English local authorities have recently been published.

Fiona McKinlay, Policy Adviser at Scottish Executive gave feedback on Scottish policy developments.

Some key points:

- Regulations and Guidance were published in April 2004. Lead Implementation Officers for throughcare & aftercare in Scotland have been meeting every 3 months during run up to implementation. They will meet again in October.
- Scottish Executive have supported the development of the new Policy & Practice website at: www.scottishthroughcare.org.uk. Hope that this becomes a one-stop point of information and discussion, sharing views.
- Educational attainment for young people who have been in care is a key area of focus. There are differences across Local Authorities, with different issues in different areas.

- Mentoring is another key area of focus. Columba 1400 has funding for leadership academies for up to 600 young people who have been in care. The target for this work is that 60% of the young people who have been through the Columba 1400 programme should then go on to achieve education, training and/or employment opportunities.
- Minister also has significant interest in fostering, especially regarding remuneration, recruitment and retaining carers. An audit of fostering services should be complete by March 2005.
- There is a division within the Scottish Executive that focuses on secure care.

Key Questions and Discussion

Young People's Participation -

How much account is given to young people's involvement?

England –

- Issue can be about looking at wider Government participation strategy, not just one department doing this.
- Some Local Authorities are further ahead than others in involving young people and having young people's participation strategies

Scotland –

- will be speaking with young people in foster care as part of review
- Don't just want to get their views, need to look at taking views, acting on them, feeding back and illustrating where their views have actually been taken on board.
- Interested in considering what are the best ways of doing this.

Employability projects–

- Funding - There are 'Safeguarding Children' Grants and regenerating communities funding (OPDM) – got to be of national relevance and imaginative.
- Issue – how to engage the big employers, in valuing putting something back into community by employing more young people
- Its an under-thought about area – can be because of lack of understanding of current employment market – inc. employers demands, expectations
- Difficulty is that such employability projects can be expensive, with a lot of effort needed for a relatively small number of young people (i.e. most vulnerable 20% of young people)
- Need to also look at educational aspirations for looked after children, impact of placement instability, and the cultural changes that are needed when in care.

Education Maintenance Allowances

- They are not means tested, and care status should not be taken into account. Young people leaving care should not be disadvantaged, and should receive EMA that they are entitled to.
- Is issue about variations across L.A.'s. Need to share how it's working in practice. Need to establish acceptable benchmarks.

Supporting People

- Concerns that many supported accommodation providers for young people leaving care may end up in vulnerable position, following review of supporting people.
- Issues around different local interpretations of Supporting People schemes.

ISSUES RAISED FROM KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

A. Protocols – cross border issues

- Each part of UK works to different protocols
- Young people do move across UK
- Need links between protocols
- Welsh and Scottish Protocol have roots with North West protocol
- Want aspirational protocol with highest possible standards, not just minimums level of practice
- Concerns around charging policies emerging – don't generally want to go down this route
- Need more evidence of numbers of young people actually moving in and out of LA's, and where from/to.

- Can we gain a common understanding on the process that should apply across UK, to work to a common basis?
- Issue is managing work where charging is required because there is no capacity to carry out the support
- Need on-going discussion on what is 'reasonable' costs to providing support
- Still need to make young people aware of reality of moving areas

Question - How are concerns raised if LA's do not work to agreed protocols?

England –

- Will be reviewed in 1 year
- Regional Dev. Workers will bring issues that come up to DfES
- Need to ensure Regional Forums can monitor issues

Scotland –

- Lead Officers should monitor and feedback on issues.
- Scottish Exec would expect ADSW to monitor
- There also complaints systems.
- If issues are raised, are they solution focussed?

- By Summer 2005 will have a better idea how protocols are working in practice
- Stakeholders will be ADSS and ADSW, regarding the resourcing of arrangements.
- Provision of services needs to tie into assessment process.
- Can still work to higher level of standards across regions.
- In Northern Ireland – protocols have not been on the agenda yet
- Wales – there's a protocol that is currently ready to present to ADSS for endorsement. It's useful to show examples of other protocols.

ACTION POINTS:

1. On-going monitoring, via regions/forums, linking with ADSS/ADSW and DfES/Scottish Executive
2. Keep up to date on developments in Wales and Northern Ireland
3. In 1 years time, give feedback on emerging issues
4. Disseminate examples of existing/draft protocols from different areas

B. Standards

- Have been discussions across UK around the need for leaving care standards
- Can the various parts of UK just learn from each other, or is there scope for UK standards?
- Principles of good practice should be very similar across UK
- How should standards be pitched? Inspection/performance measures or good practice guidelines?
- Need links with inspection to call them standards
- Can have standards supported by bodies like SSI, from which inspection indicators are then developed/adapted
- On-going work on draft English Standards
- Key to standards is ownership, to make them worthwhile and used in practice
- Already have key performance measures in Scotland, (included in statistical returns) and may not want to go down further inspection route
- Can we learn from other developments regarding standards, that can inform best practice

ACTION POINTS

1. Share examples/drafts of current work that's underway across UK
2. Need to gain overview in 1 or 2 years time on how implementation of standards has been
3. Review what working tools actually help to support and improve practice

C Young People's Participation

- Its been valued to come together
- It's a very big agenda, which can depend on resources and funding to support it
- Look to various models and have national sharing.
- How can we share examples of good practice, models, etc?
- Need to ensure participation can also extend to other young people, e.g. with disabilities, from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- There's great value in young people talking to young people from other areas, to share experiences. It can influence practice/support.
- Need to keep focus on what young people themselves tell us.

ACTION POINTS

1. Continue to support and maintain links between organisations working with young people – nationally and locally
2. Carry on sharing information, ideas etc.
3. More contact between organisations
4. Promote use of email, websites to keep in touch

OTHER KEY ACTION POINTS

1. Working Collaboratively Across UK – areas for joint working:

- Links with Web based info
- Monitor protocols in practice
- Look at examples of standards

2. Sharing and Learning Across UK – to influence policy and inform practice:

- Share outcomes from research
- Be aware of where common areas are (or maybe not)
- How to support links between existing and new websites – do not want duplication. NLCAS to look at providing web based info, i.e. from regions, keynotes, etc. Scottish Policy & Practice web pages
- Make people more aware of where info on leaving care developments can be found
- Keep asylum seeking young people and young people with disabilities high on agenda – make sure links are made to share info/developments/practice

NEXT STEPS

The Network:

Learning, sharing, networking has been valuable to take back (now and previously)

- Who – needs to be or should be involved and how?
Give more thought to this. Ensure representativeness – include ADSS/ADSW others.
- Frequency? – e.g. meet every 2 years. (June 2006?! Where?)
Have discussions later in 2005.
- Keep in touch via email and websites.
- Share info, documents, developments

- Link future meetings with key events – and use these opportunities to continue discussions/provide updates
- Feedback info/discussions to other Forums (e.g. AOAC)

3rd & 4th November – Leaving Care Conference in Belfast – watch this space: can offer to share experiences, what messages to put across fro a UK perspective.
Sharon at VOYPIC to confirm plans.

Alison (Scotland), Paula (Wales), Jane (England) and Sharon (N.I) be key links for network for at present. They should keep in regular contact with each other on developments.

National Care Leavers Week – 24th – 30th October (theme is accommodation)
Can use opportunities to promote developments. People across UK looking to be involved.

Useful Websites:

www.scottishthroughcare.org.uk
www.raineronline.org/nlcas
www.nwacf.com
www.childrenfirst.wales.gov.uk
www.vfcc.org.uk
www.anationalvoice.org
www.sonet.ac.uk
www.dfes.gov.uk/qualityprotects
www.stirling.ac.uk (for research)
www.columba1400.com
www.nch.org.uk