

1 Who is a Looked after Child (LAC)?

- ❖ A LAC is a child or young person (under the age of 18) who is placed in accommodation away from an adult with parental responsibility (under Section 20). That adult can retract this agreement at any time.
- ❖ A Care Order is when a child is given accommodation away from their family (under Section 31); this places the child in the care of the Local Authority (LA) with parental responsibility being shared between the LA and the parents.
- ❖ Other reasons a child or young person becomes LAC:
 - Police custody or on remand (under Section 21).
 - Emergency protection order/police protection (under Section 44 & 46).
 - Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).
- ❖ Children are no longer LAC when a special guardianship or adoption order are granted.

Children's Act
1989

2 Entering Care & Consent

Upon entering care, it is a **statutory** duty that all LAC are seen by a registered medical practitioner for an Initial Health Assessment (IHA). Prior to this, it is the responsibility of the LA to obtain consent from the birth parent or guardian. The child/young person can consent to the IHA and medical treatment if they are deemed to have capacity under Fraser Competence (1985).

7 Moving Forward

Understanding the needs of the Rotherham population of looked after children and care leavers is pivotal. Scoping the health needs helps us to provide the best services for our young people. Locally and nationally the picture is very similar, LAC children may have difficulties with drugs and alcohol, emotional health, special educational needs and disabilities, poor dental and optical health. Joined up working with key service providers and our young people to ensure the best holistic outcomes are achieved in a "would this be good enough for my child?" approach.

6 Voice of the Child

"Nothing about me, without me"

UN Convention on the rights of the child (1989) states: - every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them and have their views considered and taken seriously.

Rotherham LA will:

- Offer support through our Right to Rights Service to help you with anything that is important to you and provide you with information, advice and assistance to help put things right and help you to understand what's happening and why.
- Listen to you and help with any concerns you have about the service you have received either now or in the past from the Council.
- Promise that our independent advocacy workers will make sure that your voice is heard and acted upon and make sure that you know what is happening and why. We will also make sure that the people responsible for your care know how you feel about things.



3 Health Assessments (HA)

The IHA must be completed within 20 working days of the child coming in to care. Ideally the IHA should be carried out by a paediatrician or a registered medical practitioner.

The IHA health plan is then shared with the LA, Independent Reviewing Officer IRO, GP and carer.

Following this, a Review Health Assessment (RHA) is carried out every 6 months until the child turns 5, then annually if they are over 5. The previous health plan is reviewed to ensure all unmet health needs are addressed.

4 National Profile

Nationally, the number of LAC has increased steadily over the past 10 years; there were 75,420 LAC as of 31st March 2018 which was up by 4% from 2017 and up by 2% between 2016 and 2017.

Most children become LAC as a result of abuse or neglect, many have the same issues as their peers, however, the extent of these are often greater due to their past experiences.

5 Services

- ❖ LAC have been identified as some of the most vulnerable children and young people in our society.
- ❖ Almost half of children in care have a diagnosable mental health condition and almost two thirds have special educational needs (NICE 2010).

The NHS and CCG meets the needs of the LAC population through:

- Commissioning effective services (universal and bespoke packages of care).
- Commission equitable service for children who live "out of area".
- Profile the health needs of the population.
- Work with partner agencies to provide effective care.
- Monitor timeframes to ensure statutory requirements are fulfilled.

Author: Newcastle Gateshead
Clinical Commissioning Group, and
localised for Rotherham by NHS
Rotherham CCG Safeguarding Team

NHS
Rotherham
Clinical Commissioning Group

1 What Is a Care Leaver?

A care leaver is an adult who has spent time in care as a child, such as foster care, living with family or in a residential care setting (a children's home, for example). A child's care journey can be lifelong or for short periods of time. In England and Wales young people can choose to remain in care until 25. If chosen to do so, their care order ends and the Local Authority is no longer their corporate parent. Should they require any additional support or advice, they can access services as many times as they want up until their 25th birthday. There is a national focus to extend all health and care leaving services up to the age of 25.

7 Moving Forward

Care leaving services across the country are varied in what they provide. Health and social care professionals should ensure to take full advantage of existing services available, to support care leavers. Excellent communication between professionals and care leavers is paramount to ensure their engagement and that their voice is heard.

A face to face meeting with care leavers is a good way of engaging them with your service. Understanding them and what their needs are is also important; relevant information about their health and wellbeing can be found within their health assessments.

Further information on care leavers can be found:-

<http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/leavingcare/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-leaver-strategy>

<https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-young-people/leaving-care>

6 Everybody's responsibility

Health issues identified during a young person's time in care do not stop when they turn 18. At this stage in their lives, they may require more support as they transition into adulthood. Working closely with Local Authority and health colleagues is key to ensuring the young person receives support and understands how to access local services. Becoming a young adult can involve many opportunities and challenges, a strong support network can make all the difference to these young people who are often isolated from friends and family. Social interactions play an important role in health, studies have found a lack of social connections can increase the risk of death by at least 50% (Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review).

2 Preparation for leaving Care

From the age of 14, young people who are looked after should begin preparations for independence. Around the age of 16, all young people should be allocated a Personal Advisor (PA) from the Local Authority; this is to prepare them for leaving care and for the next steps, for example housing and education.

3 The last RHA and Leaving Care

All young people in Newcastle and Gateshead are offered a Review Health Assessment before their 18th birthday; from this assessment the nurse will devise a health plan for any outstanding health needs they may have. A copy of this plan will be sent to the young person's social worker, PA, Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and GP. They are also offered a Leaving Care Summary which highlights the most important health information to date from their history; this should include relevant health information from birth to 18 if available. This can be declined by the young person, but they can ask for this in retrospect after leaving care.

4 The Pathway Plan

The Pathway plan should set out the individual package of care that the Local Authority will provide support to the care leaver in achieving their goals. It may cover education, training, employment, ambitions, where they want to live and what financial help they require. PA's can help support care leavers to access health services, housing and work closely with them. The plan should be updated every six months and should reflect the care leaver's wishes.

5 Ongoing Health Needs

Care leavers are some of the most vulnerable young people in society. There is widespread agreement in the literature and research that care leavers are often behind their peers educationally and have the highest mental and emotional health needs. The majority of young people entering into care have experienced neglect, abuse and trauma in the family setting. When a young person turns 18 they are likely to have ongoing health needs that may require support and guidance to fulfil their potential, remain well and achieve their goals in life.

Care leavers are:

- ❖ 7x more likely to die before the age of 25 than the general population (DfE2017).
- ❖ 25x more likely to be homeless (National Audit Office 2015).
- ❖ 27x more likely to be in the criminal justice system (HMIP 2011).
- ❖ 33x more likely to be involved with sex work (Home Office, Paying the Price: A Coordinated Prostitution Strategy).

