

DRAFT NUMBER TWO

26/06/07

JOINT WORKING PROTOCOL

**BARNARDOS MANCHESTER LEAVING CARE
SERVICE**

AND

**EARLY YEARS SERVICES DEALING WITH YOUNG
PEOPLE WHO ARE IN, OR LEAVING, CARE IN
MANCHESTER, AND WHO ARE
PREGNANT/PARENTS**

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1. INTRODUCTION

This Protocol aims to set down in writing how Agencies working with young people aged 16 to 21 who are 'Looked After' (LAC) or 'Leaving Care', and in respect of whom Manchester is/was the Local Authority they are/were in 'care', of, will work together to achieve the best possible services and outcomes for both this group of parents and their children.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE AGENCIES

a) Barnardos Manchester Leaving Care Service (MLCS)

All young people who are legally 'looked after' on their 16th birthday by Manchester Local Authority, whether they are on Interim or full Care Orders (S31) or Accommodated (S20), and irrespective of where geographically or what 'placement type' they are living in, should all be referred on or about their 16th birthdays to MLCS.

MLCS, contracted by Manchester Local Authority's Children's Services to work in partnership with and on behalf of the said Children's Services, will then carry out in respect of all such young people the legal duties contained in the 2000 Children (Leaving Care) Act. In summary, for a minimum period of 5 years until the young person is aged 21 (and occasionally beyond this until 24 if the young person is on an agreed course of education or training) MLCS will allocate all such young people a Personal Advisor to ensure that an initial Needs Assessment, Pathway Plan and then regular 6 monthly Reviews of that Plan are all in place throughout the 5 year period in question. The Personal Advisor – part 'doer', part advocate and part co-ordinator of other services-- will further ensure each young person is supported to make as smooth transition towards independence as possible and that in so doing they each maximise their potential to the fullest possible degree.

b) MLCS LAC Nurse

A specialist LAC Nurse, employed by the PCT but seconded to MLCS and based with that Service will specialise in the health needs of care leavers in Manchester. Whilst not carrying a caseload in the same way as MLCS's Personal Advisors, that Worker will nevertheless be an additional point of reference to other agencies concerned about the health needs of care leavers, including of course pregnant and parent LAC/CL. A system will be developed within MLCS whereby MLCS's Personal Advisors will notify the LAC Nurse of any young people on

their caseloads who are pregnant, and together both workers will ensure that that young person is referred in as timely and appropriate fashion as possible to services that can support to the maximum that young woman's pregnancy.

c) Barnardos Making It Work (MIW)

MLCS has a 'sister' service called Making It Work. This Service exists to provide more intensive learning and personal development support to young people leaving care, with an emphasis on trying to get all such young people into appropriate education/training/employment options, and with a particular emphasis on trying to reach the most statistically disadvantaged groups of care leavers, such as lone parents, the black and ethnic minority communities and young people with 'health' difficulties.

d) Family Nurse Partnership (Section to be developed)

e) Leo Kelly Centre (Section to be developed)

f) Vulnerable Babies Team (Section to be developed)

g) Surestart

Sure Start Childrens Centres provide integrated multi agency services and are central to the Local Authority's efforts to develop mainstream Early Years Provision.

There are currently 24 Sure Start Childrens Centres in Manchester and the aim is to increase this to 34 by 2008.

Manchester Sure Start Childrens Centres are currently at different Stages of development in terms of delivering services. There are some (mostly in disadvantaged areas) that operated local Sure Start Programmes some time ago-in these multi agency collaborative working is already happening and Core Services are already being delivered.

It is hoped that over the next year all Childrens Centres will become fully staffed and operational, offering full equity across the City. Families and children under 5 can nevertheless access services at any Centre regardless of where they live.

Childrens Centres are the universal point of access for integrated early learning and childcare, family support, health services, support into

employment, and links to other specialist services. Sure Start Childrens Centres will improve outcomes for all children, but place a particular focus on the most disadvantaged.

All Childrens Centres have a Head of Centre who is responsible for ensuring that services for under 5s and families in their Centre's catchment area are of good quality, and working collaboratively to improve the outcomes for under 5s in line with "Every Child Matters". They are also responsible for the delivery of the core offer

Each Childrens Centre will provide **different core services-the Core Offer** either in, or through, its Centre. Some services may be delivered through satellite provision in order to ensure accessibility to all families within its locality or due to the actual size of the building.

The Core Offer

Integrated Early Learning and Childcare

Examples-nursery provision for working parents, play group, stay and play, parent/toddler groups, drop in activities

Family Support and Parental Outreach

Examples-early intervention, intensive support, parental outreach, parental involvement/engagement, home visiting, group work, parenting courses, events, involvement of parents in "advisory groups" or recruitment and training. Targeted work with groups and individuals aimed at the most disadvantaged.

Child and Family Health Services

Examples-antenatal and post natal support, antenatal appointments, healthy eating sessions, parenting courses, safety courses, breastfeeding support, smoking cessation, speech and language therapy, pre school psychology services and access to other specialist support.

Links with Job Centre Plus

Examples-information points, easy access to job centre plus staff, information on employment, training and volunteer opportunities, links with employment training agencies.

Links with School and Children's Information Service

Examples-some Childrens Centres are attached to schools and work very closely eg good transition plans from Centre to School, joint events, links with Childrens Information Services, lone parents events, access to work events

Quick and Easy access to other Services

How SureStart Childrens Centres link to parents who are, or have been, “looked after” and who are new parents

Sure Start Childrens Centres are universal to all families of children Under 5-however there is a particular focus on the most disadvantaged.

All young people accessing MLCS have been “looked after” which means That the majority of them have been separated from all or some of their family during childhood. There is also a strong possibility that they have suffered a trauma through death of a parent/carer or neglect or abuse from a parent/carer.

This does not mean that all parents who were “looked after” are unable to parent without support, but that they may need more encouragement and support to access even universal services. They are also less likely to have positive family around them to support them with their own children.This can lead to further isolation and disadvantage

If they have had a trauma I childhood and a negative experience of care and services, they are also more likely to need support to break down the barriers and feel confident to aces services for their children without fear and prejudice.

This protocol therefore aims to provide a clear agreement between services to ensure easy access into Sure Start Childrens Centres for all parents known to MLCS

h) Connexions Teenage Pregnancy Service

Connexions offers advice and support to young people. In Manchester Connexions offers a specialist service for young people aged 16-19 who are pregnant or who have children. A Specialist Personal Adviser can provide advice and support around such as: options around a pregnancy; education, training and employment; benefits; housing; childcare and

more... With permission from the young person they can also make referrals for benefits advice, counselling and health services.

3. STATEMENT OF JOINT OBJECTIVES AND COMMON OUTCOMES

Having children at a young age (16 → 21) can be a mixed blessing, though the assumption that is sometimes made that being a LAC/care leaver per se automatically means your child is more vulnerable or is more likely to come into care itself should be treated with some caution from the outset. Of course 'child protection' concerns to the unborn baby, or born child, will supersede all other consideration where evidence of such concerns exist, and referrals in such circumstances will always be made in an urgent and timely fashion to Manchester Children's Services via the City's Safeguarding Procedures. However in all other instances the primary objective will be to provide to the 'pregnant or parent' young person the maximum amount of support available in as generic, non stigmatising and enabling fashion as possible, with the main objective in mind being the health and well being of both parent and child, and with a view to them both growing together and achieving the five Outcomes described by Every Child Matters. All parties will thus understand and 'sign up' to the critical importance of how supportive services are first offered, as a generalisation that is true about so many LAC/Care Leaving parents is that they can easily be suspicious of such services and not use them when they could or should because they perceive the purpose of such services is to judge or 'oversee' their parenting, and perhaps to 'take their children off them'.

The joint outcomes all Agencies will work towards as part of this Protocol will be.

- LAC/Care Leavers will be well informed about choices to become, or not become, a parent.
- LAC/Care Leavers who become parents will be offered consistent, flexible, non stigmatising support from pregnancy onwards.
- LAC/Care Leavers who become parents will enjoy having a child(ren).
- LAC/Care Leavers will be confident as parents.

- LAC/Care Leavers will demonstrate good understanding about child development
- The child(ren) of LAC/Care Leavers will be safe and healthy in their formative years.
- LAC/Care Leavers who become parents will continue to achieve their employment/training/educational potential.
- Appropriate use will be made of Manchester Safeguarding Procedures where there are 'child protection' concerns about a LAC/Care Leavers unborn or born child.

4. PROCESS OF WORKING TOGETHER

a) Data Exchange/Information Sharing

At the outset of its dealings with all young people referred to its service, MLCS invites young people to understand, and 'sign up' to, the basis on which MLCS will or will not share information about that young person with other Agencies. Essentially this process differentiates between 'basic information' like name, date of birth, address etc – which we say we will routinely share if we feel such a service can then benefit that young person,- and 'personal information', which we undertake not to share without the express involvement and consent of the young person. Exceptions to this are obviously around child protection and serious harm to self or others. Young people sign a consent form to say they understand and consent to this process, and such a record is also held on computer.

Give this situation MLCS will share on a quarterly basis with a "named person" within Agencies signed up to this Protocol details of who it knows to be care leavers (thus revealing this basic information), which in the first instance could then be used in the following 3 circumstances

- for that Agency itself to know who it is working with who are Manchester Care Leavers, and for that Agency to be able to use that information anonymously for statistical purposes

- for that Agency itself to then send direct to the young person details of its own service that the young person may or may not choose to use
- for a named person in that Agency to make contact with the MLCS Worker involved with that young person to begin to explore whether, and how, a more 'personal' service to that young person might be offered. It could be that as a result of this initial conversation no 'follow up action' whatsoever will be taken.
- on the other hand, arrangements may be made for the MLCS Worker to discuss with the young person the benefits of involvement with that Agency and/or a joint approach may be made to the young person etc etc. In this way sensitivity towards the young person as a care leaver and their right to preserve certain personal information about themselves and their situation will be retained, but the benefits of agencies working together and sharing information will also be explored

Obviously in reverse an Agency coming across a Manchester Care Leaver, with whatever referral process is operated by that Agency, can approach one of MLCS's Team Managers to ascertain who that young person's worker is, and make a referral via this route if (as is hopefully unlikely) that young person has never been known to MLCS and should have been, or ask MLCS's duty service to assist a 'known' young person (if their worker is unavailable) between the hours of 9.30 → 4.00, Monday to Friday.

b) Joint working with Individual Young People

Once MLCS and one or more other Agencies become involved with the young person, and information issues have been clarified, it is expected all parties will work together in the interests of the young person, involving that young person wherever possible in planning a service delivery decision about their and their child's life. Good practice would dictate periodic face to face meeting between workers as well as telephone contact and subject to the young person's agreement (see above) MLCS

will share with the Keyworker from that Agency a copy of that young person's Pathway Plan and/or Pathway Review.

Where "problems" or specific issues are identified the CAF assessment process will be used, leading to multi agency planning meetings to jointly identify help to be given and who is going to do this.

5. JOINT TRAINING/BRIEFING

All parties acknowledge the benefits of understanding both one another's roles and responsibilities, as well as more general issues such as 'care' and young people's experiences of 'care', and child development and parenting. All parties will therefore commit to at minimum being available on an annual basis to brief each others staff groups as to roles and responsibilities or to attend each others team meetings to do the same; to send each other relevant and updated information; and to help each other, wherever possible, where 'training' or 'briefing' of a more specialised nature relating to each Agencies expertise is required.

6. STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

MLCS's Manager will attend the City Wide Achieving Economic Well Being Sub Group, and the multi agency group of the same title within the 'LAC' umbrella of Children's Services. Issues to do with LAC/Care Leavers as parents will routinely be considered at these meetings. MLCS will also be represented at any City Wide Teenage Pregnancy Forums/Meetings within the City (as used to happen).

As regards the operation of this Protocol and strategic overview of issues to do with LAC/Care Leavers Parents, MLCS's Children's Services Manager will be the first port of call for all such enquiries/issues. MLCS's Manager, quarterly and annually, will feed information into the groups described in paragraph one of this section, and in turn will bring issues from such meetings back to MLCS for further discussion.

Finally the appropriate Managers of all Services party to this Protocol will meet together on a six monthly basis, partly to review and if need be update the

workings of this agreement but also to jointly share outcomes with this client group and discuss how these can be improved.