

Starting Point

Supported Placements



Overview

Starting Point is a new project offering supported placements to care leavers within North Tyneside. The projects have been developed through Placement Services with the support of Leaving Care & New Beginnings Young Parents Scheme. We have listened to care leavers and professionals who have highlighted support as key to success. Providing in-house supported accommodation ensures care leavers have access to a range of services and support, focusing on engaging in education, employment and training, health needs, and developing the necessary skills to live independently.

Focus

The primary aims of the service are to:

- Support young people to develop aspirations for a successful future
- Provide supportive accommodation through which young people can develop the necessary domestic skills to live independently
- Provide support to engage and sustain young people in training and/or employment
- Support young people in developing social skills through which to manage the transition to independence
- Develop the skills young people need to take responsibility for their actions and future, including a focus on managing health needs.
- Work with young people to arrange appropriate move on plans and offer ongoing outreach, either through associated trainer flats or other accommodation.

Organisation

There are two Starting Point units: Edmund House in Backworth & Purley Close in Howden.

Edmund House

Edmund House provides accommodation for up to 5 males and females over school leaving age. Each young person has a bedroom with their own key and shares communal living areas, kitchen/dining area and bathroom.

Purley Close

Purley Close provides supported accommodation for up to 5 females over school leaving age in self contained flats. Each young person has their own flat key and there is also a communal area where young people can spend time with staff and other residents.

Placements are offered to school leavers up to the age of 21 years.

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Starting Point also offers outreach support to young people who would benefit from dedicated staff encouraging their engagement in training or employment. Priority is given to young people who are NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) however referrals for other young people can be accepted.

The Manager, Tracey Hopps, oversees both Edmund House and Purley Close as well as the provision of outreach and meets regularly with the Corporate Parenting Manager, Paula Clough, and Leaving Care Manager, Anne Harrison, as well as providing updates to associated departments and committees.

Each accommodation has two House Leaders and a team of Support Workers. House Leaders work closely with the Leaving Care team and have case responsibility for in-house placements as well as outreach support. House Leaders allocate and direct the involvement of Support Workers who undertake targeted work to achieve the aims outlined above. Work is consistent with the aims and Pathway Plan for the young person.

Both accommodations are staffed overnight and staff are trained in all mandatory aspects of the role, including lone working for the dual roles of in-house and outreach support. In all instances the emphasis is on direct, persistent support to encourage young people to engage and maintain that engagement.

Referrals

Referrals are received by the Manager for placements for school leavers. For all referrals the appropriate referral document and risk assessment must be completed for review prior to placement (see Appendix 1). Same day referrals can be accepted however documents and risk assessment should still be completed. Both accommodation settings can offer placements to asylum seeking or homeless young people who become looked after by the Leaving Care team.

Referrals for outreach are received by the Manager and House Leaders in each accommodation (see Appendix 2); staff are allocated to undertake work following the referral document and risk assessment being received, and discussion with social worker.

General

Each young person has a named House Leader to offer support in accessing services and making decisions regarding their future. Each young person has individual needs and staff work with the allocated social worker to ensure relevant aspects of the Pathway Plan (training, health and exit plan) are a major focus. Each team comprises male and female staff members and staff may work across both units.

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Residents are expected to engage in education, training or employment, or to actively seek provision. Staff also support residents to develop social, domestic and self care skills to develop confidence and experience essential for moving successfully into the community, by offering specific sessions relating to identified topics as outlined below, or accessing professionals who can provide this focus.

One major focus is around budgeting and healthy diet. Young people are allocated £20 each week to contribute to buying food stuffs with staff, as well as developing basic cooking skills. Young people are offered the chance to undertake the Amber Project (currently under review) which focuses on skills highlighting living independently. At Purley Close young people also have the opportunity to access events and training being undertaken in the training suite at the adjoining Young Parent's Scheme.

Focus of support

Transition to adulthood can be difficult for young people who do not have the support of family members, in particular for care leavers, and many factors can impact on their achieving work readiness and successful independence. Social isolation and lack of skill in domestic, social and self management tasks can result in an inability to progress, and dependency on services. Starting Point aims to offer support during that transition and to equip young people with the skills and confidence to succeed independently.

As well as focusing on training and employment, each young person has an individualised package of support agreed with them and social worker which may include some or all of the following:

- Self-care and living skills
- Managing money
- Recognizing own needs and accessing universal services
- Wellbeing – physical, emotional, sexual and mental health
- Social skills and relationships
- Problem solving
- Managing tenancy and accommodation
- Barriers to attainment: substance use, offending
- Developing interests and pastimes
- Motivation and taking responsibility

Any additional focus is agreed with social worker to meet the needs of the young person in accordance with their wishes, and/or the Pathway Plan

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Involvement

Residents are encouraged to take an active role in their home, helping to maintain a clean and positive living environment and making suggestions for how the unit runs.

Young people are invited to spend time with staff, for example having movie nights or curry nights. Young people are asked to make suggestions for events within the unit and there will be activities organised at times, in particular encouraging young people to access local facilities using their Ease Cards.

Young people are encouraged to make decisions regarding their own care and welfare. This increases over time according to each individual's needs and abilities, with young people gradually taking responsibility for themselves. As with all parenting roles, support is maintained in the long term as young people develop and move into adulthood.

Monitoring progress

Staff monitor each young person's progress in maintaining education, training and employment and offer regular support to overcome any hurdles encountered. Progress in other identified areas may also be monitored and in all cases shared with the young person to encourage ongoing success. Any concerns over engagement are discussed with the young person from a solution-focused perspective, and managed through a joint approach with social worker.

Practicalities

Young people are encouraged to visit the unit before admission. In both units young people are provided with a welcome pack to meet basic needs (towels, bedding, basic toiletries), after which time they are responsible for their own possessions and finances. Leaving Care allowance is paid directly by the social worker into the young person's bank. The units do not offer any additional allowance (other than support with food shopping) or advances of allowance. Young people will liaise with their social workers to discuss accessing setting up costs if they wish to purchase items such as a TV.

Each young person is provided a key to their bedroom on admission. If this is lost they will be charged £5 for a replacement.

Guests are welcome to visit the unit but overnight stays are not permitted. Guests are expected to behave within the boundaries of the unit and not to cause any disruption to staff or residents.

Young people are entitled to arrange overnight stays. Young people under the age of 18 years are required to arrange overnight stays outside of the unit with staff so that contact can be maintained and staff are assured that they are safe. If

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staff have any significant concerns regarding the welfare of a young person, they may be reported as missing to police following the NTSCB (North Tyneside Safeguarding Board) Joint Protocol with Northumbria Police.

Staff generally only access young people's bedrooms/flat to make health & safety checks or undertake work with the young person with that young person's agreement. However, where staff have concerns over the welfare of the young person or the impact of visitors, they may enter without permission.

Boundaries

Young people are responsible for their own behaviour and any guests to their home. Young people are encouraged to respect each other and staff to maintain a positive living environment. Any young person who causes distress or harm to another may face police involvement and may lose their placement if this can not be resolved. Bullying is not acceptable.

Guests are welcome, however could be asked to leave and refused admittance if they cause any distress or harm to others.

Young people will be charged for any damages and this may be removed from their Leaving Care allowance (these are standardised charges for items agreed with the Leaving Care Manager).

The units remain council property and therefore smoking and substances are not allowed. Residents are asked to smoke in the designated area if they wish to do so. Any substances found within the unit will be confiscated and may be reported to the police.

Young people are responsible for their own family contact and involvement but can be supported by staff as appropriate; family are welcome to visit the unit and staff provide information and updates on agreed terms respecting the young person's confidentiality.

Over 18 years

All young people are making a transition to adulthood and gradually become more independent. Over the age of 18 years it is acceptable that young people become more independent and plans are agreed with social worker regarding overnight stays and general welfare.

Young people under the age of 18 who are looked after by North Tyneside, have their rent and amenities provided, and furthermore are supported with a Leaving Care weekly allowance. On reaching 18 years of age Starting Point will work with the young person and their social worker to access Housing Benefit or pay rental

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contributions and a contribution for amenities. This helps the young person to gradually take control over their own living arrangements.

Placement Reviews

Where any placement appears not to be working in the interests of the young person or others, a meeting will be held with the young person and their social worker to review placement and consider ways to improve engagement or look at other options.

Any plan to move a young person to a new accommodation is preferably undertaken in a planned way. If there is a need to move a young person without usual planning, the care team will coordinate a suitable response.

Moving Forward

All placements support young people to move on to independence, to successfully manage in the community and in their chosen careers. Plans and timescales vary according to each young person's needs however the transition is supported by the staff team in accordance with the Pathway Plan and considers the best move on option for the young person, to either trainer flats, council tenancies or private rental accommodation. Starting Point ensures young people are supported throughout this transition offering ongoing outreach from known staff at a level that suits the young person's needs.

Social isolation appears to be a key factor in satisfaction for care leavers who move to independence. Starting Point considers the knowledge of the Leaving Care team, Care 2 Work group and RHELAC team who have collected the views of care leavers and particularly those who are NEET. The project will continue to develop trainer flats for care leavers and pilot the use of shared housing for young people to move on to live together where they think this would be beneficial.

It is expected that regular, planned outreach and support reduces over time, but there is no age or time restriction relating to contact and support from Starting Point.

Welfare and Safety

All residents have access to universal services available within North Tyneside and to specific services for the client group. Starting Point operates within North Tyneside's safeguarding policy and staff are trained in safeguarding, including CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation). Any safeguarding concerns are referred to the social worker and/or Front Door as appropriate and concerns regarding members of the Children's workforce are directed to the LADO, Angela Glenn.

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Staff are trained in the Northumbria Police joint protocol for Missing from Placement and engage with police to carry out dynamic risk assessment regarding the welfare of any young person in their care. Young people who are absent but not missing will be monitored by staff.

Complaints

Young people have the right to make complaints which will be dealt with by the manager as appropriate. Young people also have access to the formal Complaints process within the council and are introduced to the Advocacy service which they can access as needed.

Further Development

Starting Point offers a multi-agency, multi-service perspective to the progress of our looked after young people. This is a long term commitment, initially prioritising accommodation and targeted support, with consideration to develop:

- A raft of in-house accommodation for young people including trainer flats, shared tenancies, and support in council or private arrangements
- An in-house training provision that provides modular based learning and work experience through council channels to prepare for work readiness.

The project will be reviewed at regular intervals to consider impact as well as adjustments to better meet the needs of service users and achieve council objectives.

For further information contact:

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