

# KeyNotes

FROM THE NATIONAL LEAVING CARE ADVISORY SERVICE

## The Vision's the Same

**KeyNotes is back! And so are we! We are delighted to be able to tell you that the National Leaving Care Advisory Service, formerly known as First Key, became part of RPS Rainer on the 1st August this year, following the closure of First Key in June.**

With the continued support of the DfES and the Nuffield Foundation, as well as the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum, the new service looks much like the old – and is staffed by five former employees of First Key. Martin Hazlehurst is the service manager; Jane Sufian, senior policy officer; Vicky Pearlman, policy officer; Mike Sutcliffe, projects and commissioning manager; and Amanda Gibson, administration officer. *Please note our new contact details on the back page of this issue.* We are also very pleased that A National Voice has found a new home with Prince's Trust.

Our work continues much as before. We will provide the same policy and information services, and links to Government. Our website will be available again from November, but we are available to respond to enquiries by telephone, email or post (*see back page*). Our leaving care consultancy services are expanding – as **KeyNotes** goes to press, we have just heard that we have won the contract to employ a worker to support the Yorkshire and Humberside and North East Regional Leaving Care Forums. Some of our services will be delivered by freelance

consultants, principally former First Key staff, Linda Andrew, Julie Harris and David Curtis.

The need for the service is as great now as it has ever been. There is still progress to be made in the implementation of the Children (Leaving Care) Act and the development of multi-agency responses to the needs of care leavers – particularly following on from the DH/DfES Regional Seminars that took place over the summer. The near future, with the ending of QP and the ring-fenced budget for leaving care, brings new challenges. As the focus moves to the Government's Green Paper on children at risk, the Youth Justice report, and the SEU Report, "A Better Education for Children in Care", we want to ensure that care leavers remain high on the agenda.

**KeyNotes** will be published four times a year (excuse this shortened version, but we wanted to get our news to you as soon as possible). Let us know your news, conference dates, and concerns. More information about all of the issues mentioned here can be found inside this issue.

NLCAS will be highlighting the needs of care leavers in our response to the Green Paper, *Every Child Matters*. This is an important opportunity to promote leaving care issues, so **please send us your views**.

Moving to RPS Rainer will enable us to continue to ground our work in practice and to build on the

views of workers and young people. The diverse nature of RPS Rainer's services will also enable us to set leaving care more fully within the bigger picture of social exclusion.

Finally, we would like to thank all of you whose support and best wishes have kept us going through the transition. We assure you that while the logo has changed, the vision and commitment to promoting the interests of care leavers remain the same. We look forward to continuing our relationships with you all.

**Martin Hazlehurst**  
*Service Manager, NLCAS*

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## **Green Paper: Every Child Matters**

Government plans to reform children's services have been set out in the new Green Paper, *Every Child Matters*. Some of these proposals will require legislation, and a children's bill is expected to feature in the Queen's Speech in November.

The proposals, many of which are not open for negotiation and therefore more 'white' than 'green', include:

- integrated teams of health and education professionals, social workers and Connexions advisors based in and around schools and Children's Centres;
- sweeping away barriers to information sharing to ensure effective communication between everyone with a responsibility for children;
- the appointment of a Children's Director in every local authority, responsible for bringing services together as Children's Trusts;
- a national campaign to recruit foster parents and a workforce reform package to make working with children an attractive career;
- the appointment of an independent Children's Commissioner for England to champion children's views; and
- an increased investment in CAMHS amounting to a 10% increase in capacity each year for the next 3 years, and comprehensive CAMHS in all areas by 2006.

The Government is seeking views on many of these proposals, including:

- improving support for unaccompanied asylum seekers;
- recruiting and retaining foster carers;

- removing barriers to information sharing; and
- improving the involvement of young people in local decision-making.

NLCAS will be responding in full to these proposals – **the deadline for which is 1st December 2003**.

If there are areas you would particularly like to see highlighted in our response, please contact [vicky.pearlman@rpsrainer.org.uk](mailto:vicky.pearlman@rpsrainer.org.uk)

**The Government's formal response to the report of the Laming Inquiry, and Youth Justice – the Next Steps**, from the Home Office, together with a children's version of the Green Paper have also been published. All of these can be found at: [www.dfes.gov.uk/everychildmatters](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/everychildmatters)

## **SEU Report: A Better Education for Children in Care**

The long-awaited report from the Social Exclusion Unit on the education of looked after children has been published alongside the Green Paper.

*A better education for children in care* contains key recommendations to improve the educational outcomes of looked after children, many of which have been taken up in the Green Paper.

The SEU proposals introduce:

- an individual education target for each child in care;
- improved Personal Education Plans to improve support for learning needs;
- designated teachers to encourage children and young people in care to stay on at school after the age of 16; and
- more work placements available to help children in care fulfil their potential.

The report also recommends that leaving care services should work with colleges and universities to raise awareness of the specific needs of care leavers, including through staff training.

Both the report and the accompanying Good Practice Guide can be found at: [www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk](http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk)

## **Treasury Review re Young People**

The Treasury is conducting a review of the financial support system for 16 to 19 year olds, as announced by the Chancellor in the last Budget. A report is expected in Spring 2004, before the next spending review.

## **Hillingdon Judgment**

On 29.8.03, the High Court held that four unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people, who had been provided with housing and a range of other services under sec. 17 of the Children Act 1989, were in fact 'looked after' by the local authority and were therefore entitled to services as former relevant children under the C(LC)A 2000. The court also held that the eligibility period under the C(LC)A could both begin and end after a young person's 16th birthday.

**R (on the application of Berhe and others) v Hillingdon London Borough Council**. The written judgment has been issued as **KeyNotes** goes to press, and the DfES, Home Office and ADSS are meant to be meeting to discuss the implications of the judgment.

## National Leaving Care Advisory Service

### National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum

National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum exists to provide member authorities with an opportunity to 'benchmark' their performance against agreed service standards in leaving care and to learn from good practice amongst member authorities. NLCAS supports the Forum, which is alive and well despite the inevitable interruption caused by the closure of First Key.

The Forum's workplan includes a rolling programme of benchmarking against sets of service standards covering the main areas of provision involved in supporting care leavers. The standards will be updated in the light of previous benchmarking exercises. The Forum's membership includes a wide spread of geographical locations and different types of local authorities, so that members can nearly always find 'similar' authorities for comparison. The Forum is also

represented on the working group of the DfES QP Leaving Care Project Team that is updating First Key's National Standards on Leaving Care (see below).

There are currently 28 local authorities who are 'core' (full) members of the Forum and a number of other authorities who are 'network' members, i.e., they take part in all the activities of the Forum except for the quarterly meetings. Enquiries about membership of the Forum should be addressed to:

[martin.hazlehurst@rpsrainer.org.uk](mailto:martin.hazlehurst@rpsrainer.org.uk)  
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or tel. 07793 365161.

### Project Work

As NLCAS, we will continue to offer local authorities and other providers of services to care leavers a full range of training, consultancy, audit and other project work. Much of this work will be carried out by experienced freelance consultants commissioned by us – initially these will all be former members of staff from First Key, including Linda

Andrew (formerly service manager) and Julie Harris (formerly projects manager for the Midlands).

Enquiries about project work should be addressed to Mike Sutcliffe (projects and commissioning manager) – contact details as above.

## DfES Leaving Care Project Team

**The July 2003 meeting of the Project Team discussed the draft National Protocol on the movement of care leavers between local authorities; leaving care services for asylum seekers; the Buttle Trust/Thomas Coram study of care leavers at University; and care leaver statistics.**

The agenda is being compiled for the 5th November meeting. If there are matters you would like discussed at these quarterly meetings, please contact [jane.sufian@rpsrainer.org.uk](mailto:jane.sufian@rpsrainer.org.uk)

A working group of the Project Team is updating the First Key National Standards on Leaving Care. The group plans to present a draft to the Project Team in the new year.

## leaving care diary

### DH/DfES Regional Leaving Care Seminars: "Putting Young People at the Centre"

The last of these eight seminars, which focussed on multi-agency working to improve outcomes for care leavers, took place on **25th September 2003**. NLCAS is currently working with DfES to produce a post-seminar report containing the "Next Steps" identified by each seminar.

### National Care Leavers' Week

The 2nd National Care Leavers' Week takes place **19th–25th October 2003**. To find out more about the varied and creative programme, whose theme this year is "Barriers to Work", go to [www.brynmelyngroupfoundation.org](http://www.brynmelyngroupfoundation.org) or tel. 01678 540 598.

### National Leaving Care Conference: "Two Years On: Improving the Life Chances of Young People Leaving

### Care after the C(LC)A 2000"

On **12th November 2003** Margaret Hodge, Minister for Children, will be the keynote speaker at this De Montfort University event. Among other speakers, Professor Bob Broad will present the key findings from his research study, "Implementing the C(LC)A 2000", conducted in partnership with Action on Aftercare Consortium. For details: Lucy Norman/Margaret Barton, tel: 0116 257 7377; email: [dmccc@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:dmccc@dmu.ac.uk)

### Research Findings/What Next? NCB/AOAC Conference

Watch this space for future details of a conference **early in 2004** bringing together the findings of a number of research studies into the implementation of the C(LC)A 2000. The conference will propose a way forward to promote the interests of care leavers in the post-QP ring-fencing era.

### NLCAS Conference: "Debating the Act 2"

The second "Debating the Act" conference will take place in early **March 2004**. Participants at the first conference, held by First Key in 2002, were so enthusiastic that NLCAS have decided to do it again. Like "Debating...1", "Debating the Act 2" will look at progress and problems since the C(LC)A 2000 came into being, but will focus on education, training and employment. Expect provocative speakers and skits in the morning, and fired-up young people debating in the afternoon. Fight "conference fatigue" by joining these young people as they test their wits and wit against each other. Details and booking form, early December 2003, from Amanda Gibson, tel: 020 8808 6127; email: [amanda.gibson@rpsrainer.org.uk](mailto:amanda.gibson@rpsrainer.org.uk)

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"Preparation for Adult Living" resource pack now available from Ena.

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**News:** FK (NI) is closing 10.2003, and donating its assets to Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC). VOYPIC will then facilitate the Aftercare Practitioners' Forum (contact details in next issue of *KeyNotes*).

## ● National Forum

The Action on Aftercare Consortium is now serving as the National Forum for the Regional Aftercare Forums.  
Chair of AOAC: Amanda Allard, NCH,  
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# National Leaving Care Advisory Service

## CONTACTS

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*RPS Rainer is a national young people's charity, which provides care, support and new opportunities to the most vulnerable 10-25 year olds.*

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## KEEP IN TOUCH!

*Do you have to beg, borrow or steal your copy of KeyNotes?*

*To put your name on the mailing list, phone Amanda Gibson on 020 8808 6127.*

*We welcome contributions to KeyNotes in such forms as articles, letters, and diary events.*

*Please contact Vicky Pearlman on 020 8808 6127 if you wish to discuss possible contributions.*

## Contributors

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Mike Sutcliffe  
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## First Key and NLCAS Websites

Apologies to all of you who tried unsuccessfully to use the enquiry email facility on the First Key website following the closure of First Key in June. After repeated requests, the website provider finally closed the site in mid-September.

We expect the new NLCAS web pages, including an email facility, to be available at the RPS Rainer website in November.