

Welcome to the sixth edition of the *Keynotes* email update. It is designed to bring you news of consultation documents, conferences, publications, and other developments that we think readers need to know about halfway between the full editions of *Keynotes*, which appear every four months. This issue features an article on the Children and Young Persons Act, which is bringing in some of the changes in the Care Matters white paper.

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As part of Care leavers week NCAS and the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum launched a 'Pledge template'. The template aims to help local authorities to develop their local pledges to young people in and from care.



www.leavingcare.org/professionals/products/pledge

What did **you** do in National Care Leavers Week?

We would like to feature updates from across the country in the January issue of *Keynotes*. Get in touch! linda.briheim-crookall@raineronline.org, 020 7336 4836



News

PSA 16 Update: Join the 'socially excluded adults' Community of Practice

Find and share information about Public Service Agreement (PSA) 16 and the Cabinet Office's work around it through this online forum. PSA 16 focuses on the accommodation and education, training and employment outcomes for four vulnerable groups, one of which is care leavers.

www.communities.idea.gov.uk/welcome.do



Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) national contract for fostering

This new contract will provide local authorities with an outcomes-based framework to use when purchasing fostering placements in the private and voluntary sector.

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00316/

LILAC – Lottery Funding Awarded



A National Voice recently secured funding for its project, LILAC, Leading Improvements for Looked After Children. LILAC aims to draw upon the experience and expertise of care-experienced young people to improve the policy and practice of local authorities and other service providers on how they involve and consult children in care and care leavers. Anyone who is interested in having their service assessed should contact A National Voice on **0161 237 5577**.

www.anationalvoice.org/

Care Leavers' Association has launched a new quality mark for access to records

The CLEARmark will be awarded to local authorities and voluntary agencies who display good practice in this area.

www.careleavers.com/content.php?cat=52&pageorder=1



Changes to Housing and Council tax benefit backdating

New regulations have reduced the maximum period for which housing and council tax benefit claims may be backdated from 52 weeks to six months.

www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/user-communications/circulars/2008/A16-2008.pdf

Care to learn entitlement for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Ministers' have agreed that the residency requirement for eligibility to the *Care to Learn* scheme, which risked some UASC not being entitled to support, is suspended with immediate effect for the current (2008/09) academic year only. Learners must be made aware that residency rules for *Care to Learn* are under review and that some people may not be eligible for support from September 2009.

www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/14To19/MoneyToLearn/Caretolearn/DG_066556

'Helping young people out' – Rainer Crime Concern becomes Catch22

Catch 22 a new young people's charity was launched this month as a result of a merger between youth organisation Rainer and crime prevention charity Crime Concern. Catch22 is a national charity that works with young people who find themselves in difficult situations. Whatever the reason for their situation, Catch22 help them out.

www.catch-22.org.uk



Consultations

Consultation on Ofsted inspections

Ofsted are seeking views on proposals for assessing children's services and Ofsted's inspection of services for children in care and safeguarding as part of the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). The consultation closes on 3 December.

www.ofsted.gov.uk



Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service Consultation

This consultation seeks views on proposals for the future inspection of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS), which is a single agency that covers the 21 court areas of England. The consultation closes on 1 December.

www.ofsted.gov.uk



NCAS have responded to the DWP Welfare reform consultation 'No one written off'

The NCAS response focussed on how to create positive employment and work experience opportunities for young people leaving care, opportunities for second chance learning and reform of the 16 hour rule around housing benefit and education.

www.leavingcare.org/data/tmp/5300-10670.pdf



Featured article

The Children and Young Persons Act

The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 received royal assent on 13 November. The act follows June 2007's White Paper *Care Matters*, which set out the reforms needed to transform the life chances of children and young people in care. The purpose of the act is to strengthen the statutory framework around the care system to enable children and young people to receive high quality care and support, and drive improvements in the delivery of services focused on the needs of the child.



The act will:

- enable the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) to test out a new model of social work provision by allowing local authorities to pilot 'Social Work Practices';
- increase the focus on the transparency and quality of care planning and ensuring that the child's voice is heard when important decisions that affect their future are taken, in particular by strengthening the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO);
- improve stability for children, ensuring that children are placed in the most appropriate accommodation. Where it is consistent with the child's welfare, local authorities will give preference to placing a child with a relative. In considering placement options, the local authority, will place a child near to their home within their local authority area, with their siblings if they are also in care, and so that that their education or training is not disrupted;
- amend the inspection regime for children's homes to ensure swift and decisive action against sub-standard homes;
- require Local Authorities to take steps to secure sufficient suitable accommodation for children in care within their area;
- ensure every maintained school has a designated teacher for children in care who will lead work to help these children achieve;
- ensure children in care who enter custody are visited regularly;
- require the local authority to appoint an 'independent visitor' to befriend all children in care, if it is in their interests to do so;
- ensure young people (up to 18) are not forced to move out of their children's home or foster care placement before they are ready, by giving them a greater say over moves to independent living; and
- provide more support for care leavers by providing an entitlement to a £2,000 bursary for those who go onto higher education and by extending the entitlement to a Personal Adviser to care leavers who wish to resume an education and training pathway up until the age of 25.

To download the full act go to:

www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2008/ukpga_20080023_en_1

What next?

Guidance and regulations to accompany the act is currently being prepared and will be out for consultation next year. The finalised guidance will be published by December 2009 and the implementation of the act will happen gradually.



An update from NCAS on our policy work around the bill

As the bill has passed through parliament we have been working to influence its content. For the report stage of the bill we worked with Helen Southworth MP to table an amendment to ensure that 'relevant' children as well as 'eligible' children have an IRO at their reviews.

Our amendment said: "a local authority must offer the services of an independent reviewing officer to any relevant child for whom it is the responsible local authority".

Whilst the amendment was not accepted the new Minister, Sarah McCarthy-Fry MP, did respond to concerns raised and assured MPs that in the new Guidance there would be a presumption of young people being looked after up to 18 – rarely would there be good reason to cease to be looked after at age 16–17. Therefore, she said, relevant children will be come a 'residual category' as the vast majority of young people would remain in care until their 18th birthday.

The Minister said that "a local authority cannot move a looked-after child to independent living arrangements without first conducting a statutory review of the care plan and that, where such a move takes place, it does not automatically result in the child leaving care. That is an entirely separate decision that must also be reviewed".

A full briefing on the act and its implications for care leavers will be published shortly on our website, www.leavingcare.org.

Upcoming events

3rd National youth homelessness conference

8 December 2008, Croydon

This conference focuses on prevention and if early intervention, when young people are aged 13–17, can prevent a young person needing to leave home.

www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/nyhsconference.pdf



Supporting Teenage Parents Conference

8 December 2008, London

Half day briefing on Improving The Health And Wellbeing Of Teenage Parents

9 December 2008, London

Both events organised by Capita, provide a forum to share good practice and identify achievable improvements to services for teenage parents and their children.

www.capitaconferences.co.uk/NR/ronlyres/BE6E7029-2A73-4408-9C99-8DB2384856FC/0/SupportingTeenageParentsMKAE.pdf

Recent publications

Briefing on the legislative and policy framework around accommodation and care leavers

This new NCAS briefing focuses on the legislative and policy framework around accommodation for care leavers and has been developed as part of our Accommodation project. If you want to find out more about this project contact sue.baxter@raineronline.org.

www.leavingcare.org/data/tmp/5303-10678.pdf

CLG guide on supported lodgings as a housing option

The aim of this guide is to inform and support local authorities' planning and commissioning of supported lodgings within the context of strategies to tackle youth homelessness. It is based on a review of supported lodgings services in 17 local authority areas in England, and of data collected through the Supporting People programme.

www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/makingadifference.pdf

Your rights to be heard

These free introductory guides from Participation Works aim to educate young people in England on their rights in particular situations, e.g. "Your rights when in touch with Children services"



www.participationworks.org.uk/ResourcesHub/Yourrightstobeheard/tabid/410/Default.aspx



Future Care – Children’s Advice on Future Care Standards

The *Future Care* report by the Children’s rights director identifies what young people think the future standards for care should be.

www.rights4me.org/content/beheardreports/295/REPORT_Future_Care.pdf

Children’s care monitor 2008

This report highlights six things that children and young people living away from home or getting help from children’s social care services say are important to their lives: keeping safe; bullying; having a say in what happens to them; making complaints and suggestions; education and care planning.

www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Children-s-care-monitor-2008

NYA Young researcher toolkit

This toolkit is intended as a guide for young researchers and those who work with them. It looks at each stage of the research process, from finding and defining a research interest to sharing your findings and making change happen.

www.nya.org.uk/information/118654/yrnonlineresearchtoolkit/



Are We There Yet? Improving Governance and Resource Management in Children's Trusts

This Audit Commission report on Children's Trusts found considerable local uncertainty about what the trusts are required to do by law and little evidence of better outcomes for children and young people resulting from the requirement to coordinate children's services.

www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/NATIONAL-REPORT.asp?CategoryID=&ProdID=17AEBDA5-657E-4ef7-80BB-92214D4C04FF

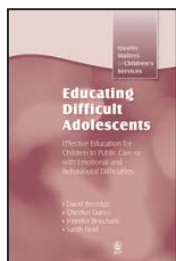
SCIE report on working with challenging and disruptive situations in residential child care

This knowledge review examines and shares effective practice around how to keep children safe and promote their well-being through managing challenging and disruptive situations.

www.scie.org.uk/publications/knowledgereviews/kr22.pdf

For other resources around residential child care from SCIE go to:

www.scie.org.uk/publications/elearning/rcc/



Educating difficult adolescents

This book explores why educational achievements for children in care are significantly poorer than their peers and how to enable children in care to succeed in the classroom.

www.jkp.com/new/9781843106814

Local Area Agreements (LAAs) – search by performance indicator

This resource from IDeA allows you to search for examples of work by performance indicator. There are currently 5 examples of work around NI 148 – care leavers not in education training and employment.

www.idea.gov.uk/idk/laa/laa-indicator-browse.do

Introduction to leaving care briefing

This NCAS briefing gives an overview of leaving care services and the issues faced by care leavers and may be especially useful to professionals in related sectors wanting to find out more about leaving care.

www.leavingcare.org/data/tmp/5306-10682.pdf

'As long as it takes: a new politics for children'

NCH has changed its name to Action for Children and launched a series of reports on the strengths and weaknesses of policy developments in relation to children, young people and families. One of these, *Children in care: 21 years of policy*, focuses on policy developments for looked after children.

www.actionforchildren.org.uk/content.aspx?CategoryID=372



Boosting the self-esteem of children in care

The Who Cares? Trust has published a new book which aims to tackle the low self-esteem frequently experienced by young people in care.

www.leavingcare.org/news/104/

Contact us

All past issues of *Keynotes* are available on our website. For further news, information and resources go to our website or get in touch.

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NCAS is supported by Catch22, Registered charity number 1124127.

Catch22, the charity that helps young people out.
Before we were Catch22 we were Rainer and Crime Concern,
two national charities which merged in 2008.

