

**Appendix 2****Guidance Note: Pathways and Continuing Care assessments**

1. For all young people teenage years are full of changes and intense and often polarised feelings. There is a natural inclination to extend outside of the family home, often with peers, and often, to push the boundaries put in place by parental figures. They have a lot to deal with and more so if care experienced.
2. When there is an expectation that a child or young person will be accommodated following their 16th birthday, the Lead professional and care givers need to be mindful of the necessary processes in relation to the implications of the young person's age. It is considered not helpful to introduce a Pathway assessment only through the context of age which may give the message of an expectation of moving on, when actually the young person's best interests are much more likely to be served by supporting them within the family and relationships where they are.
3. For Throughcare workers being introduced into a family or other care placement when a young person reaches the age of 15, there is an inherent challenge in achieving the balance of the right message. The goal should be that of incrementally gaining independence skills while remaining in their placement.
4. The expectation of care continuing up until 21 requires attitudinal change which although underway is not yet fully embedded, for either carers or young people themselves, so again, the professional role is that of conveying this message and information from an early stage.
5. For these reasons a two-stage Pathway assessment process is recommended, with the initial assessment starting between the young person's 14th and 15th birthdays. Initially, this should be a fairly basic exploration about the wishes and expectations of young person and carers, and an opportunity to offer relevant information and guidance about the future with this being clearly recorded. If the discussions are reflecting that at this stage in care there is a sense that the young person believes that they may wish to remain in placement until they reach their 21st birthday, then the full Pathways/ Continuing Care assessment can be deferred until their 17th birthday: there are risks with that which need to be explored. The risks being that the young person has a change of plan in which case assessments would need to be accelerated to try to catch up to ensure fresh, effective and responsive planning. Conversely, if the young person has complex needs then an extended transition period may be useful in terms of early identification and exploration of what the young person may need from Adult services following their 18th birthday so that they experience as seamless a transition as possible.
6. Alternatively, if the young person is keen to move on at 16, or this may happen because the young person is fluid in their thinking, then the full assessment can proceed following the initial assessment.
7. The achievement of better understanding regarding status and financial support for carers as well as young people means that all concerned will know what they can expect and plan with greater confidence. Increasingly kinship and foster carers hear about Continuing Care from recruitment and assessment onwards, so they are well placed to engage in these discussions. There may need to be greater emphasis on sharing this knowledge and understanding with birth relatives too.

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