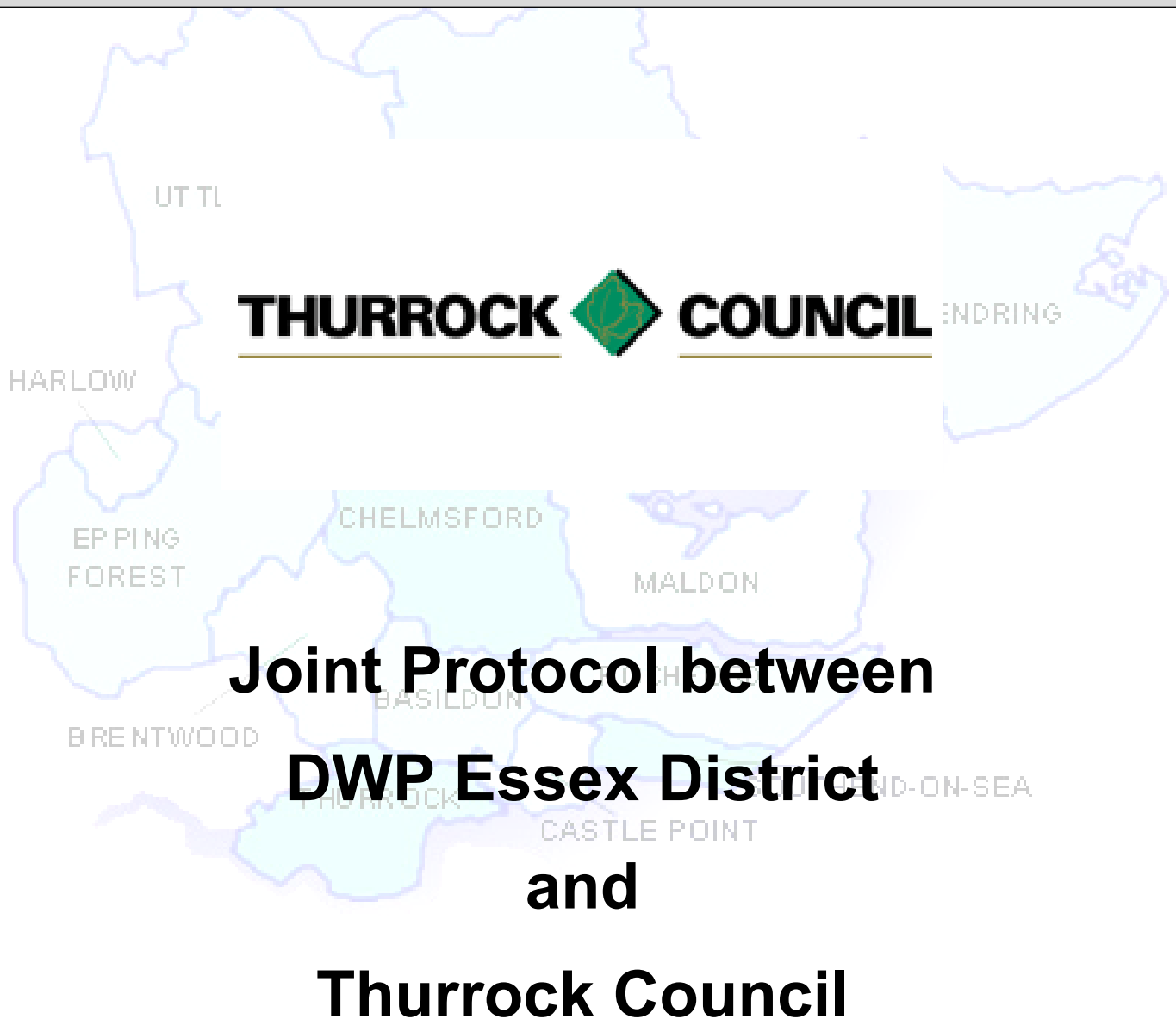


Support into Work for Care Leavers in Essex



Background

Children enter Local Authority care for reasons associated with neglect and abuse and not through any action of their own, but their past experiences and their time in care can have an impact on their outcomes as adults. Improving outcomes for care leavers is a key Government priority. Care leavers can be disadvantaged and leave care with poor educational attainment resulting in long term unemployed.

Care leavers are over-represented in many statistics, including the prison population, teenage pregnancy, mental health issues, depression, expulsion, drug misuse, homelessness and leaving school without qualifications. Care leavers are one of the most disadvantaged groups in the labour market with low skills, lack of job readiness and active job seeking, and inadequate information on suitable employment.

In Essex NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) figures continue to fall following a specific drive to target care leavers accessing and moving into the employment market. We are committed to further increase the numbers of young people who are in ETE. In Essex young people over the age of 18 make up a high proportion of NEET's and therefore require additional support.

In recognising that care leavers have additional support needs when transitioning into adulthood, and in order to promote more joined-up support for young people, Southend on Sea Borough Council and DWP Essex District have agreed on the following protocol.

Thurrock Council Care Leaver's Service

The Children in Care Teams and Leaving and After Care Teams within Essex Children's Service supports Looked After Children until the age of 18yrs. From 18yrs to 21yrs (or up to 25yrs if the young person is in education or has learning difficulties), the young person is supported by the Leaving and After Care Service and have an allocated Personal Adviser. The service works closely with the Targeted Youth Adviser who supports the team with helping young people to access education, training and employment. Each care leaver has an individualised Pathway Plan setting out their needs and future direction. This is updated every six months by the care leaver Personal Adviser and the young person. The young person also has regular contact from their Personal Adviser.

Aims of the Protocol

Essex Job Centre Plus and Thurrock Council will work together to provide an enhanced service to support young people leaving care into education, employment and training. This will ensure:-

- Co-ordinated support to engage young people into Education, Employment or Training
- An early entry system and a smooth transition for those young people leaving care and needing to claim benefits
- Prompt and accurate payment of benefits where these are required
- Young people are empowered and enabled to gain sustainable paid employment through individual route ways

Jobcentre Plus will:

- Deliver Care Leaver Awareness sessions to the designated care leaver Work Coaches
- Provide Essex Children's Service with up to date contact details of the designated Work Coaches supporting care leavers
- Provide an early entry system for care leavers (processing forms in readiness for 18th birthday)
- Ensure a 'warm handover' – a three way diagnostic interview between the young person, Work Coach, care leaver Personal Adviser and/or Targeted Youth Adviser at the start of a new claim for benefit.
- Work Coaches will ensure that the young person is aware of all the assistance available to them through the Youth Contact and Get Britain Working measures including;
 - Voluntary fast track to the Work Programme
 - A voluntary work experience place for every young person who wants one
 - Apprenticeships
 - Traineeships
 - Wage incentives (6 months+)
 - Sector based work academies (sbwa)

- An opportunity to be referred to the National Careers Service from day 1 of making a claim
- Work together volunteering opportunities
- New Enterprise Allowance
- Work Clubs
- Appropriate training
- Employability Skills
- In addition, the DWP Work Coach will provide support for all 18 – 24 year olds on Job Seekers Allowance by:
 - At least weekly contact from day one (through face to face interviews, SMS, texts, emails, phone calls and group sessions)
 - From month 5 a weekly face to face meeting – either signing on or an adviser doing intensive job search. Where the young person is still unemployed, this meeting will be a 3 way meeting between the JCP Adviser, the care leaver Personal Adviser and the young person
- All care leavers will have the opportunity to be added to a Social Justice caseload for more intensive support
- The first time a care leaver fails to attend an appointment (FTA) with JCP, the JCP Adviser will contact the young person wherever possible, and the Care Leaver Personal Adviser to reiterate conditionality before considering a sanction. Subsequent FTA's to be treated as normal
- When required a case conference between JCP Adviser, Care Leaver Personal Adviser and the care leaver should be arranged
- Once a care leaver starts employment, fortnightly contact will be made by the JCP Adviser to avert any crisis of confidence or transition difficulties.
- Will incorporate this protocol into operational policies

Services for Young People (on behalf of ECC will):

- Provide DWP with up to date contact details for Care Leaver Personal Advisers
- Seek consent from young people to share information with Jobcentre Plus
 - Will inform DWP of care leavers (by district) of those already 18yrs+ (with young person consent)
 - Will inform DWP in advance of CLA young people nearing 18yrs (and support processing of paperwork for an early entry system (with young person consent)

- Ensure that young people are aware of the enhanced service they will receive from DWP
- Ensure a 'warm hand over' – 3 way diagnostic interview between the young person, DWP Work Coach, care leaver Personal Adviser and / or Targeted Youth Support) at the start of a new claim for benefit.
- Will reiterate conditionality with care leaver if / when the first infringement occurs
- Where appropriate, the Care Leaver Work Coach to attend a case conference between JCP and the care leaver to strengthen and support the recommended pathway with the young person
- Will incorporate this protocol into operational policies

Summary

ECC and DWP aim to support young people leaving care to access an enhanced service. It is hoped that through jointly supporting these young people, outcomes and aspirations will increase, enabling and empowering them to gain sustainable employment.

Organisation: DWP Essex Jobcentre Plus District

Position: Essex District Manager; Debbie McMahon

Signature:

Date:

Organisation: Essex County Council Family Operations

Position: Director for Local Delivery Children, Young People & Families West; Jenny Boyd

Signature:

Date:

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Event

Action

By Whom

Young Person's last CLA Review at 17.5yrs

Where young person is uncertain regarding education/career pathway, information provided to young person regarding Jobcentre Plus services.

Consent to share information form signed by

Young Person's Social Worker (CLA Team)

Contact JCP to initiate JSA1 forms

Once call received from social worker, JCP Adviser will send forms to young person to complete.

Young person needs to complete and return them to JCP to set up early interview (which then ensures benefits in place and paid at age 18yrs)

Young Person's Social Worker (CLA Team)

First meeting with Job Centre Plus Adviser

JCP Adviser ensures Children's Services are invited to JCP interview with young person (sending email confirmation to the allocated Personal Adviser with as much notice as possible).

JCP Adviser to ensure allocated care leaver Personal Adviser is informed/able to attend.
Confirmation email back to DWP Work Coach

DWP Work Coach

and Personal Adviser