

**Support Policy**

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**CONTENTS**

**1.** **Introduction**

**2.**  **Support Principles**

**3.**  **Support Planning Tools**

**1.**  **Introduction**

1.1 This policy outlines Pathways to Independence UK (PTIUK) support principles and approaches, so that the young people we support have their needs assessed and met in a consistent planned way so that we can work with young people towards achieving positive outcomes.

1.2 PTIUK provides support to residents, aged sixteen plus, in the care of the Local Authority, ordinarily in our semi-independent accommodation, in the form of daytime Monday-to-Friday keywork support. Outside of these hours we operate an emergency On Call system. We also offer a support-only service.

1.3 As a provider of support and accommodation for young people, in the care and support of the Local Authority, we have a duty to provide good quality and consistent support.

1.4 This policy is designed to help PTIUK keyworking staff to plan, design, deliver and evaluate support for young people. As such, it should be read with reference to other organisational policies such as those that relate to Safeguarding, for example.

1.5 Ensuring that consent is informed, and support plans are accessible to residents may mean accessing an interpreter for important conversations and getting documents translated into residents’ first language or language of choice, where required. This accessibility requirement relates to all aspects of this policy and of staff practice.

1.6 Our aim is to enable continuous improvement by empowering young people to improve their skills, and we do this through taking a **trauma-informed, strengths-based, person-centred** and **outcome-focused** approach. We also promote participation of young people and **coproduction** at both an individual and organisational level.

1.7 Support planning should be easy to understand, collaborative, person-centred and act as a record to demonstrate the accountability of the Service. It should be based on the needs and wishes of the young person first and foremost.

1.8 We use Outcome Star**™** to track progress towards outcomes and measure our support delivery.

1.9 We complete Monthly Support Plans with SMART objectives to track progress towards outcomes in order to report to Local Authorities on young people’s support needs and progress on their pathway to independence.

**2.**  **Support principles**

2.1 Our support has six core interrelated principles:

* Trauma-informed
* Strengths-based
* Person-centred
* Coproduction
* Outcome-focused
* Triple planning throughout the asylum process

**2.2**  **Trauma-Informed approach**

2.2.1 Our organisational structure and support systems involve understanding, recognising and responding to the psychological needs of our young people including the impact that all types of trauma can have on our lives.

2.2.2 Underpinning our support are a range of approaches, theories and frameworks to ensure we best meet needs, below are some examples of this:

* Approaches - outcome-focused, strengths-based, person-centred, solution-focused, collaborative, restorative practice and trauma-informed
* Theories - Adolescent development, attachment and loss, unconditional positive regard, emotional intelligence, and motivational interviewing (taking into consideration the cultural differences and experiences of asylum seeking and refugee young people)
* Frameworks - Community Well-being Framework; resilience framework, Trauma Informed Environments

2.2.3 Taking a trauma-informed approach means that we begin to respond by asking the question: “What has happened to this person in their life that has meant that they are presenting as they are?”. This may be because they are engaging in unhelpful, risk-taking or challenging behaviours or perhaps they are behaving in a way that is unexpected or out of character. This question enables us to focus on the root cause of behaviour rather than the behaviour itself.

2.2.4 Being trauma-informed means recognising behaviour as coping mechanisms and recognising peoples’ potential for change. Being trauma informed makes us careful to avoid triggers; helps us identify steps that may lead towards recovery; and highlights the transformational nature of safety, stability and participation.

2.2.5 We support the recovery from a range of adverse childhood experiences that are specific to young people from asylum seeking or refugee backgrounds including trafficking, abuse, neglect, exploitation, war, forced displacement and other traumas; and we encourage meaningful engagement in exercise, therapeutic activities and group work and one to one key work to support trauma processing.

**2.3 Strengths-based approach**

2.3.1 Employing a strengths-based approach means viewing our young people as worthy individuals in their own right with their own thoughts, beliefs, views, wishes, desires, qualities, strengths, talents, experience and skills, and empowering them to remain at the heart of all decisions and actions that affect them.

2.3.2 Adopting a strengths-based approach compels us to identify the positive aspects in a young person’s character (e.g. being resourceful or inquisitive), in their life (e.g. key relationships, or religious beliefs), or in their community (e.g. having a place of worship or a supportive network locally), that can act as protective factors, helping them overcome adversity and enhance wellbeing and mental health.

2.3.5 The Outcomes Star**™** enables us to begin the support planning process with the question “What can the young person do for themselves?” focusing on their strengths or assets rather than on their needs, thereby highlighting these as deficits. It means being solution-focused rather than problem-focused. It means young people coproduce their support, rather than being simply passive recipients of support.

**2.4**  **Person-centred support and Collaboration / Coproduction**

2.4.1 Being person-centered means putting young people at the heart of planning and the decisions that affect them, which is not only best practice, but is their right as outlined in human rights legislation.

2.4.2 We believe that when young people are meaningfully involved in decisions that affect them, it can result in meaningful positive changes throughout their transition to adult life. We value coproduction.

2.4.3 Being person-centred means that we can be flexible with how we do things and adapt our support model to ensure that it meets the needs of the young person in relation to:

* **Hours** - We can increase or reduce the number of hours that we offer to support them and this can be flexible and change over time – this may be needed after an episode of poor mental health or after a bereavement. This will need to be agreed and funded accordingly.
* **Style** – We can take a range of approaches – some people may need a more directive approach and others a more coaching style – young people will need a wide range of styles as some tasks may require a more direct style or visual mapping for example
* **Venue** – We meet young people in a range of community venues and their residence depending on where they feel comfortable, we can walk and talk if young people prefer this approach for instance.
* **Tasks** – Some tasks will require more support from a key worker than others; this may be the case when dealing with the Home Office or with asylum processes and legal advice.
* **Delivery Model** – We can teach different life skills lessons suited to language, skills and independence readiness in both groups and one-to-one

2.4.4 A person-centred approach means that we start with the young person where they are and help them create a support plan to help move them forward. We know that a one-size-fits-all model does not work.

2.4.5 A person-centred approach means being culturally sensitive and competent by giving due consideration to a person’s culture, language, religion, beliefs and identity as integral to helping them move forward and be understood. For example, support staff should have consideration that limited eye contact or not saying ‘thank you’ can be a cultural norm for some.

**2.5 Outcomes-focused support**

2.5.1 Outcomes are the difference our support makes to young people and they are holistic. Being outcomes-focused means being driven by the change you want to achieve; mapping out how an outcome is likely to be achieved and setting SMART goals that progress the person towards this end. We want to achieve individual outcomes for our residents so that they can live happier more independent and more fulfilling lives.

2.5.2 We want young people to be healthy and therefore we take steps to help them improve their physical and mental health. We want our young people to have safe, stable accommodation and therefore we take steps to help our young people understand how to make that happen and maintain it long term. We want young people to be financially stable in the future, so we help our young people learn to manage money and prioritise their resources.

2.5.3 Outcomes can be about future changes, keeping things the same or preventing them from getting worse. They can also be short-term, medium-term and long-term goals. An example of an outcome could be ‘to sleep better’ for instance.

2.5.4 As outcomes relate to changes for young people, they tend to be achieved over time and may relate to behaviour, skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, immigration status, or other attributes. We also recognise that for some young people, and particularly for groups of disadvantaged young people, progress towards outcomes that tend to be recognised by society may be slow, such as gaining employment for example.

**2.6**  **Triple Planning Throughout the Asylum Process**

2.6.1 Triple planning is support for young people without permanent immigration status, so that they can plan for the possible asylum outcomes and their impact. It is fundamental to our support of young people of an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child (UASC) background and is an outcome area on the Planning Star – the Outcomes Star**™** for young people from a refugee background.

2.6.3 Staff must work collaboratively with the young person and their Social Worker, Personal Advisor, relevant professionals and especially their legal representative, to ensure they are supported to navigate and understand the process of claiming asylum and the possible outcomes.

2.6.4 Key is that support should be adjusted when status changes or is resolved. It is possible, that support planning may have to be based around short-term achievable goals whilst entitlement to remain in the UK is being determined.

2.6.5 Support planning will usually be focused on planning for transitions during periods of uncertainty without resolved asylum status. This includes support to plan for:

* Remain - Longer term plans should status be granted in the UK
* Return - Refused asylum with no grant of leave, appeals rights exhausted and a return to country of origin
* Destitution - Remaining in the UK with refused asylum, with no grant of leave or recourse to public funds, and being appeals rights exhausted with risk of detention or removal

2.6.6 It is crucial for young people to be supported to develop their skills and abilities, throughout all points of the asylum process: encouraging engagement in education alongside a trauma-informed approach is essential.

**3. Support Planning Tools**

**3.1 Outcomes Star™**

3.1.1 PTIUK uses Outcomes Star™ as a support planning tool and in-house licensed trainers train staff to ensure consistency of practice. It is an enabling support planning tool that focuses on building on a young person’s strengths by exploring and collaboratively scaling outcome areas. Many of the Local Authorities that we work with now either require or encourage use of this tool due to its suitability in providing a framework for a person-centred approach to supporting young people. Further details of the Outcomes Star model can be found at <https://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/>

3.1.2 We use Outcomes Star™ to assess needs, and help young people plan their support, work towards their personal SMART goals and plan their future. The process is by nature person-centred, strengths-based, outcome-focused and builds resilience, as it is a participatory tool underpinned by a Journey of Change.

3.1.3 The Journey of Change is a theory of change that sets out the stages people go through when making sustainable change in their lives, meaning the attitudes and behaviour expected at each of the points on each scale are clearly defined.

3.1.4 They are reviewed every six months by the young person and their allocated keyworker, so movement is captured, and progress reports are compiled each quarter to ensure we capture progress towards outcomes. They may also be reviewed in partnership with the young person, keyworker and allocated local authority worker during the Pathway Planning process.

**3.2**  **Young Person’s Star**

3.2.1 PTIUK have used the Young Person’s Star since 2013 in order to support plan with care experienced young people. We will continue to use this version of the Outcomes Star™ in our support of young people of a non-UASC background.

**3.3**  **Planning Star**

3.3.1 For support planning with young people of a refugee or asylum seeker background, we use Planning Star. Planning Star encompasses our support approaches, including Triple Track Planning throughout the asylum process.

3.3.2 Between 2018 and 2020, we worked with Triangle Consulting and South East Strategic Partnership for Migration to design and pilot a specialised UASC Outcomes Star, with the intention of improving the support that is offered to young people of a UASC background.

3.3.3 Planning Star is therefore a specialised version of Triangle’s Outcome Star™, which was designed and tailored for young people with an asylum seeking or refugee background. It is now known for being the best practice support planning tool for young asylum seekers and refugees. It was designed for UASC’s by UASCs and it places the young people’s best interests and wishes at heart.

3.3.4 Planning Star, unlike the Young Person’s Star, focuses on ‘immigration process’ and ‘understanding life in the UK’ as vital outcome areas. The full star is reviewed every six months like other Outcome Stars; however, the action plans are reviewed monthly to maximise the goals that can be achieved and recorded in one quarter.

**3.4** **Monthly Support Plans**

3.4. 1 These reports are completed monthly and include setting SMART goals to achieve outcomes. The report also provides a summary of the work done with the young person that month.

3.4.2 It is the responsibility of the allocated keyworker to complete a good quality Monthly Support Plan with the young person and to ensure this is sent to the relevant Social Worker or Personal Advisor copying in the Team Leader.

**3.5**  **Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plans**

3.5.1 To further plan our support, we complete risk assessments and risk management plans specifically tailored to capture contextual safeguarding. We do this by discussing risk with young people and local authority workers, in a collaborative and trauma-informed way.

3.5.2 We create both individual risk assessments and management plans in addition to matching ‘house’ risk assessments and management plans. Both are updated 1 month into placement, then at 6 monthly thereafter, or after any significant changes or presentation of new risks.

**3.6** **Referral Matching and Risk Assessment**

3.6.1 When a young person is being referred to the PTIUK service, and if the initial response to the expression of interest is successful, then the referral is transferred and held by the relevant Team Leader or Manager. Next steps will involve setting up an invite to interview and further information gathering on the referred young person. This will inform on a matching assessment for a suitable property as well as our risk assessment. Once a viable placement is identified then viewings, key worker allocation and a planned move in will occur.

3.6.2 Team Leaders and Managers must ensure that young people are matched to the services we provide. For example, if someone has low support needs they can only be accepted for low-level accommodation and support and they must be able to manage without access to live in staff. Ultimately interviews, matching and risk assessments will determine whether we offer a placement.

3.6.3 We will assess suitability of placement against a matching framework before placement or an internal move. Team Leaders must carefully consider which property the young person is best suited to because careful matching of residents is critical to success in placement. Consideration is given to:

* Views of young person
* Referral information
* Support needs
* History of trauma
* Ethnicity, language, religion and culture
* Triggers and risk-taking behaviours
* Protected characteristics (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disabilities etc)
* Immigration status
* Vulnerabilities
* Smoking
* Risk if placed alongside certain young people
* Property (bedroom, location, etc)
* Travel distance to education, employment, support networks

3.6.4 Shared accommodation for two or more residents should have an assessment and risk management plan in line with our matching framework. This is to ensure residents do not pose a risk to each other and that placing young people together does not increase individual vulnerabilities.