



Title	Refreshed Preparing for Adulthood (PFA) Policy
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Sunny Mehmi (Assistant Director of Operations, Adult Social Care)
Lead Councillor	Cllr Gittings & Cllr Griffith
Corporate priority	Thriving Communities
Recommendations	That the revised policy be adopted.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Preparing for Adulthood (PFA) Policy was implemented in 2019. It outlines the ways in which Brighter Futures for Children (BFFC) and RBC'S Adult Social Care (ASC) service ensure that young people and their families have the appropriate support as they move into adulthood - with no gaps in the delivery of services.
- 1.2. This policy has been refreshed to encompass the ways in which joint working between BFFC and ASC has evolved to better-support young people. It has also been amended in line with feedback received during a consultation on the draft refresh.
- 1.3. This report outlines the ways in which the Policy has been refreshed, and requests approval to formally adopt the refreshed Policy.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. Under the Care Act 2014, and the Children and Families Act 2014, Councils are required to have processes in place to ensure a smooth and seamless transition from Childrens'-to Adults' services. This is reinforced by guidance published in the SEND Code of Practice 2015.
- 2.2. Preparing for Adulthood is a time when young people and their families are thinking about their aspirations for the future, and if young people are likely to be eligible for social care as an adult, early joint planning is needed from the age of 14 in line with best practice. This will involve the young person, their parents or carers, and other people that know the young person well from education, health, social care services or the voluntary sector.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. The existing policy sets out the responsibilities of ASC and BFFC in ensuring that young people are afforded their rights to a smooth and seamless transition process; and in ensuring that those rights are actioned by the right people at the right time.
- 3.2. The policy has been refreshed to:
 - reflect changes in team structures;

- reflect the timeframes in which joint working between BFFC and ASC is expected to be completed;
 - reflect changes to roles and responsibilities.
- 3.3. Additionally, some further changes were made in line with the consultation regarding the draft refresh of the policy. These changes are outlined in Section 6.
- 3.4. A refreshed Policy has incorporated both sets of changes and therefore it is proposed that ACE Committee formally adopts the refreshed PFA Policy.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1. The Refreshed PFA Policy supports the following themes within the Council's new Corporate Plan for the years 2022/25:
- Thriving Communities
 - Inclusive Economy
- 4.2. This is because – by facilitating greater collaboration between BFFC and ASC – the Policy aims to maximise young peoples' independence, reducing their reliance on long-term support services and increasing their access to the community, supported employment and volunteering opportunities.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1. There are no environmental or climate implications directly arising from the proposed decision – the Refreshed Policy reflects current practice, and therefore no changes to existing practice are proposed.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. In line with the council's aims of co-production and inclusivity, a proposed policy was circulated for consultation for a period of 28 days from the 19th April to 18th May 2024.
- 6.2. Comments were invited from both internal partners and the following organisations:
- The Reading Families Forum
 - Autism Berkshire
 - MENCAP
 - Special United
 - Short Breaks Service
 - Family Information
 - Care to Listen
 - BFFC Participation Officer

The consultation was also open to members of the public via the main RBC website.

- 6.3. The feedback received can be summarised as follows:
- Use of acronyms made it difficult for clients to understand the full content of the document.
 - There were limited examples of how Young People's voices would inform the transitions process.

- It wasn't clear how any identified needs would be shared with Commissioning to assist with the development of new services.
- There were concerns about whether the process contained the risk of young peoples' care and support being ceased at the age of 18 in the event that the necessary steps within the transition from BFFC to ASC had not been completed on time.
- There were concerns about the lack of guidance on the RBC website to young people and their families or carers who required further support or information regarding the transitions process.

6.4. In response to this, the proposed policy was amended in the following ways:

- Acronyms have been removed and/or clarified throughout the document, so that it is clear which services are being referred to.
- We have clarified that the young person's voice, and that of their families and carers, are built into every stage of the assessment and care planning process; and that this is the vehicle for their needs and goals to be heard (and to inform) the transitions planning process.
- We have clarified how any identified care needs (especially those which may require services that do not currently exist, or that are hard to procure) will be shared with commissioning teams in order to aid the development of any required services.
- We have clarified that there are no situations in which care and support would cease, or cease to be funded, in the event that the necessary steps within the transitions process have not been completed on time. When transitions from BFFC to ASC occur, the associated funding for meeting a young person's care and support needs transfers from BFFC to ASC.
- In Quarter 2 (2024/2025), the new Head of Service for LDA will also update the flowchart currently contained in the Policy in order to better explain the transitions pathways, where they can go for help and advice, and the route between services. This will also be added to the SEND and Family Information Service website. Alongside this, we are in the process of reviewing and updating the RBC website to include more information around the transitions process.

7. Equality Implications

7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2. An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant to the decision sought in this report. While we are seeking to replace the existing PFA Policy with a refreshed policy (to ensure compliance with current legislation and national best practice), the revised policy does not reflect a new or different way of working that would have a differential impact on people with protected characteristics.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1. As a Corporate Parent, the council needs to be cognisant of this policy and the implications with regard to its statutory duties.
- 8.2. It is worth being aware that our ability to adhere to this policy will depend on both BFFC and ASC having sufficient staffing levels to ensure that children and young people are allocated and supported in a prompt manner. ASC has recently adapted its Operational structure to create an Learning Disability and Autism Team in order to try and create more staffing capacity; where possible both BFFC and ASC are also utilising a newly-developed "Enablement Service" to maximise young people's independence and reduce their long-term care and support needs, which may also help to reduce demand for Operational resources.
- 8.3. There has also been a recent increase in young people presenting to BFFC at secondary school age from abroad with high levels of needs, which can result in shorter planning timescales and a reduced ability to forecast demand and financial pressures to ASC. ASC and BFFC are now meeting on a quarterly basis to compare current demand forecasts which projections in order to monitor and where possible respond to these potential fluctuations in demand and pressures.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. The Children and Families Act 2014 sets out a range of duties towards young people preparing for adulthood. These include the provision of information, advice, and support, working together to achieve outcomes and strategic joint commissioning through the Local Offer.
- 9.2. Under the Care Act the local authority has a duty to carry out a transition assessment for a young person or carer, in order to help them plan, if they are likely to have needs once they (or the child they care for) turn 18. If a young person or young carer is likely to have needs when they turn 18, the local authority must assess them when it considers there is a significant benefit to the individual in doing so. The Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to continue to provide a young person who is receiving children's social care services with children's services until they reach a conclusion about their situation as an adult, so that there is no gap in provision. Reaching a conclusion means that, following a transition assessment or an adults' needs assessment for care and support, the local authority concludes that the young person either does not have needs for adult care and support, or does have such needs and begins to meet some or all of them, or does have such needs but decides it is not going to meet them (either because they are not eligible needs or because they are already being met).
- 9.3. Section 50 of the Children and Families Act 2014 provides that the local authority can continue to provide care and support from children's services after the young person has turned 18. This can continue until the EHC plan is no longer maintained but when the EHC plan ceases, or a decision is made that children's services are no longer appropriate.
- 9.4. Given that this is a refresh of an existing policy, there are no legal implications to its implementation.
- 9.5. We do not require a delegation in order to implement the proposed decision.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. There are no financial implications to the proposal; the Policy is already in effect and no additional resources or costs are linked to its operation.

11. Timetable for Implementation

11.1. Not applicable – the Policy is already in effect.

12. Background Papers

12.1. Not applicable.

Appendices:

1. Refreshed PFA Policy
2. Refreshed PFA Policy - Executive Summary
3. Consultation document
4. Equality Impact Assessment