Secure Care and Pathways Scotland

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The Secure Care Pathway and Standards Scotland (referred to as Pathway and Standards) for the first time set out what all children in or on the edges of secure care should expect across the continuum of intensive supports and services. They apply to all children:

- On the edges of secure care: children experiencing extreme vulnerabilities, needs and risks in their lives, who are at risk of entering secure care, or have recently left secure care; and
- In secure care: Secure accomodation is provided for the purpose of restricting the liberty of children (aged under 18) in a residential establishment, where care services are provided and which has been approved by Scottish Ministers for that purpose. Children from across the UK may be placed in secure accommodation on welfare grounds, and Scottish children may also be placed on remand, sentence, via powers of the Chief Social Work Officer, or temporary Police powers.

The Pathway and Standards apply to all individuals and agencies supporting these children. They provide a framework for ensuring rights are respected and improving experiences and outcomes for these children. They are not service led, rather they follow a child's potential journey before, during and after a stay in secure care and are written from the young person's perspective. The Pathway is made up of 44 Standards focusing on the areas that children and young people who have been in or on the edges of secure care detailed were the most important to them and had the greatest impact on their experiences. These standards are what everyone in the system should expect: for children and young people, their families, staff involved in providing secure care, and those professionals involved in supporting children before and after any potential stay in secure care.

The development of the Pathway and Standards was one of the key recommendations and calls for action from the Secure Care National Project, which concluded there were a range of expectations and standards which should apply for every child in or on the edges of secure care. These findings echoed those of Scotland's previous secure care review, Securing Our Future Initiative. As a result, in the 2017-18 Programme for Government, the Scottish Government committed to developing secure care standards and establishing a transformative model for secure care through a new Secure Care Strategic Board. A multi-agency Pathway and Standards work stream was established under the Board, who co-produced the draft set of Standards based on the Calls for Action from young people during the Secure Care National Project, with children and young people with current or past experience of being in or on the edges of secure care and key stakeholders. This included significant involvement from the STARR group, who aim to ensure that people with lived experience of secure care advise, influence, inform and challenge professionals and decision makers, and an extensive co-production programme with young people currently in secure care known as 'From me, for me, with me', supported by 'Standards Champions' in each of the secure care centres. From this work, and the sharing of accounts and concerns, the draft Pathway emerged which was developed through a series of enhanced iterations of the draft Standards, agreed at the conclusion of the Strategic Board.

The Pathway and Standards were then finalised through stakeholder engagement and validation and agreed by Maree Todd (MSP, Minister for Children and Young People); COSLA leaders and the STARR group in 2020. It is important children and young people remain at the heart of this work.

The Pathway and Standards are rooted in the existing statutory requirements, ethos and principles set out in the relevant legislation, policy, regulation and guidance. They are based on the legislatively enshrined human and children's rights and are crucial in the integration of intensive community supports and secure care within the Getting it Right for Every Child framework. They also complement, provide further context and, through the specific calls for action from children and young people with experience of secure care, give unique voice to the outcomes set out in the Health and Social Care Standards, adhering to the same key principles. Having collectively agreed a set of standards for the evolution of Scotland's approaches to children in or on the edge of secure care, the launch of the Standards is an important, critical moment. It is also a time when Scotland's approaches to children deprived of their liberty has arguably never had greater scrutiny and attention.

If the Standards are to achieve their aims of improving the experiences and providing better outcomes for children and young people, they must be fully implemented. This is part of the journey towards transformational change to improve the experiences and outcomes for children who are experiencing extreme vulnerabilities, needs and risks in their lives. People, rather than the Standards themselves will achieve this, requiring the involvement of all individuals and agencies supporting children in or on the edges of secure care working collectively. For each child, the implementation of the Pathway and Standards should be individualised based on their assessed strengths, needs, vulnerabilities, risks and circumstances. Similarly, each agency's role and responsibilities, how far they are currently delivering, what is working well and areas for improvement in respect of the Pathways and Standards, will vary. While parts of the Pathway and Standards will already be in place and working well, others could be improved upon quickly and easily, or form part of existing plans for, or journeys of, improvement. It is recognised that others may be more challenging and take time to fully implement. All agencies should however be working towards fully implementing these standards to make things better for everyone.

Implementation of the Standards is also a key vehicle for supporting the achievement of, and responding to the recommendations from, the Vision, Purpose, Values and Principles of secure care agreed by the Secure Care Strategic Board; Calls for Action made during the Secure Care National Project; Scotland to Keep The Promise; UNCRC incorporation into Scots law; and the conclusions of the recent Scottish Parliament Justice Committee Inquiry into Secure Care Places and the Care Inspectorate's Report on the deaths of looked after children in Scotland 2012-2018.

CYCJ with the Secure Care Group have developed a range of tools to support planning and implementation, including a workshop session to raise awareness of the Pathways and Standards and to enable participants to contribute local areas or agencies baseline self-evaluation and plans for improvement. CYCJ can facilitate this session or share resources to support delivery. We are also keen to capture learning about the implementation of the Standards, journeys of change and good practice. One way in which we intend to do so is by regularly updating a new website that has been co-designed with young people which includes information the Pathway and Standards; quotes on why these Standards matter to children and young people and images developed by children to represent each Standard; associated legislation, policy and guidance; and illustrative links to the Health and Social Care Standards and How good is our school? Quality Indicators. CYCJ will continue to provide practice development support related to children in, or on the edges of, secure care.

Discussions on the supports needed for implementation will continue with key stakeholders. In terms of evaluation and monitoring, a phased approach will be adopted initially focused on self-evaluation, learning and improvement, with the Standards having also been incorporated into the Care inspectorate's Quality Framework for the Inspection of Secure Care Services.