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Policy and Procedure Feedback Form

A Policy and Procedure Feedback Form is available on the Western Care Association Intranet (under Procedures) which will provide an opportunity to comment on any policy/procedure.

Your comments will be forwarded to the person who has the lead for the on-going development of the policy/procedure.

All comments will be collated by the person responsible and will inform the three-yearly review cycle for updating procedures.

1. Leaving School –Planning Pathway to a Satisfying Adult Life

Leaving school can be an exciting time bringing with it new opportunities and increasing independence. It can also be a time of considerable confusion and anxiety for young people and their families as they move from the security of familiar services into unfamiliar terrain. It is a time to deliberate with great care about what one wants for the future as steps are taken into the adult world.

We know that above all else, people have a deep rooted desire to belong, to be in a relationship, to live within the intimacy and security of family and friends, to be included in the greater life around them with all its possibilities for fulfilment, to the greatest extent possible, on their own terms. If we are to truly understand what this means for the young person, then they must be at the centre of the process of discovery in determining their future.

If we are to be successful, then having a vision that is known and embraced by all who facilitate the young person and their family is essential.

In keeping with our mission to support people to have fulfilling meaningful lives, we endeavour to continue to expand the range of options available to young people once they leave school.

For many years, we have provided highly valued day service opportunities for a large number of people. However, it is important not to limit our imagination to this service model alone. Rather, we must consider all possibilities to ensure that options reflect the person's range of goals and interests. More recently, people and their families have sought and experienced alternatives which are more individualised. Learning from these experiences will inform future options. **Options such as flexible supports (a blend of paid and unpaid supports) to help people with employment, work experience, volunteering, social opportunities, leisure activities social roles etc. can be considered.** We must also take into account any particular concerns or requirements the young person and their family may have.

2. Values and Vision

Western Care Association supports young people to:

- Determine for themselves how they will spend their days.
- Live, work, learn and participate in the community alongside other community members.
- Have opportunities to contribute to and benefit from community life and to be seen and valued as equal members.
- Have opportunities to build and sustain valued relationships.
- Receive services, as necessary, that are person centred and sustainable and which promote respect, rights, safety and independence.

Western Care Association commits to:

- Support families to enhance their child's independence and encourage inclusion in their community throughout his/her formative years through to adulthood.
- Enable families to visualise a full life for their child and not one that only includes paid support. This will happen from the very beginning of our engagement with families.
- Work with the young person and their family in a way that promotes high expectations for him/her, and which fulfils the families' own high expectations.
- Nurture the young persons emerging identity
- Keep the young person and their family at the heart of planning for the future, taking proper account of their needs and hopes as they define them.
- Explain to young people and their families what the planning process involves and to do this in the right way and at the right time for the person/family.
- Support the young person and his/her family to influence planning for their futures throughout the process, increasing their control over the design of their services and supports.
- Enable young people and their families to consider and plan for the future in good time, at least two years before the school years end, so that their needs and choices have been adequately explored and developed.
- Provide consistent messages and helpful information to answer any queries and to support decisions and choices.
- Work to ensure the greatest possible level of co-ordination between all stakeholders so that the young person and their family experience a coherent planning process.
- Encourage and support young people, in line with their identified priorities, to develop interests and skills that will benefit them in other ways after they have left school.
- Support everyone involved in the process to recognise that taking measured risks is necessary to enable the young person to develop necessary life skills and competencies.
- Promote and support access to mainstream/non specialist/non-service opportunities, in line with the informed choices and needs of the young person.

3. Planning Considerations

Young people must always be central to their planning process.

Information about what is important to them now and in the future needs to be gathered, in the most appropriate format to him/her. This needs to be undertaken in good time so that it can inform people's understanding and affect decision making. This is not something new to be undertaken at this time - rather it is a continual process of learning about the person's preferences.

We learn about the young person in this way by planning with them using the Personal Outcomes planning process.

Planning is a lifelong process of reflecting and acting, however at particular points in life, there is a requirement for additional focus, such as school entry, school leaving etc.,

Two years before leaving school each young person along with their family, will be supported to begin the process of planning more deliberately for his/her future. It should begin early enough to ensure that adequate time can be devoted to gathering information about what the person considers important and planning about how best to deliver this.

The planning process should inform the shape of supports provided to ensure that each young person can achieve his/her goals.

Planning for what the young person will do once they leave school involves a number of internal and external stakeholders. They will always include the young person themselves, and/or their family and friends, additionally WCA supports (Social Work, Psychology, BSS, Family Support etc.), schools, HSE Vocational Coordinator, other day service providers such as NLN, Rehab etc., may be involved depending on the wishes of the young person and their family. Western Care endeavours to ensure that all stakeholders will work in a coordinated manner to deliver the best possible outcome for the young person leaving school.

This process can be adapted for any person requiring support to plan their future.

- Each future plan should be based upon the individual's preferences, strengths, and interests, with a view to supporting a person to find their place in the world.
- Plans should aim to help people reach their goals and not merely seek to fill days with activities on a day to day basis. Plans are not just about somewhere to go during the day; they must identify what the person needs to lead a good life in the fullest sense possible.
- A spectrum of options should be considered for the person. Included in the appendix is summary of some WCA examples where it has been possible to

ensure that people are engaged in life in a way that reflects their interests in an individualised way.

- We should aim to be innovative and imaginative in our responses.
- We should aim for individualised and not congregate solutions, in order to allow people to pursue their own interests.
- People's plans should be community based. We should aim to include the young school leaver in their community or the community of their choice.
- Plans should include the use of Natural Supports. Natural Supports are unpaid and can be family, friends, neighbours, colleagues etc. If a person enjoys going to the gym then they could go with a fellow gym member as opposed to a staff, for example.
- Plans should include opportunities for valued social roles based on the young person's preferences. People should be able to contribute to their community in a meaningful way. We need to support people to find ways of contributing in a way that is worthwhile and satisfying for them.
- Plans should involve a move towards increased independence.
- Plans should utilise a blend of paid and unpaid support
- Plans should include identification of existing valued relationships that support the person and should aim to include these. We recognise that paid supports can play a valuable role in supporting a person but should not be the only source of support.
- Plans should be future focussed.
- Plans should be multi dimensional and include social, leisure, vocational, learning opportunities etc. to reflect the richness of the person's life.
- Plans should be flexible and able to respond to changing needs and preferences.
- Any new school age referrals to Western Care should involve discussion / information sharing about school leaving options.

4. Translating into Practice

Leaving school is a time of major transition, where both the young person and their family have to adjust to the fact that they do not have to attend school from 9.00 am – 3.00 pm each day. The challenge is for us to help them find a replacement for this that is meaningful and fulfilling. This will of course be different for each individual.

The following are some examples of the kinds of things a young person may want to be involved in once they leave school – the possibilities are limitless.

A job	A 3 rd level course	A night class	Volunteering	Gardening
Visiting the elderly	Going swimming	Going to the gym	Going for a walk	Playing tennis
Playing basketball	Learning to play a musical instrument	Joining a drama group	Joining a hill walking club	Joining a kayaking club
Joining a dance class	Visiting family members	Walking the dog	Rock climbing	Playing a role in church.
Learning pottery	Taking an art class	Learning to cook	Helping a family member	Visiting friends
Watching TV	Going to the cinema	Going to the theatre	Going to a concert	Helping a neighbour

It is not suggested that a number of things are selected and are done every day, more that people have full lives which include things that are important to them and that they engage in independent activities to the level of their ability. This could be provided with a mixture of paid and unpaid supports. A paid support may source a job and a volunteer provide the support for the person to perform their role.

The person may be able to go an art class with another member of the class and they may go swimming with their brother, etc.

Included in the appendix are some real examples of life after school for a number of young people receiving supports coordinated by Western Care.

5. The Process

- The Regional Services Manager for Children will generate a five year list of projected school leavers from the General Intellectual Disability Service. An actual list of actual school leavers for the upcoming two years will also be developed using database information and local knowledge. The Deputy Director of Service will generate the same lists for Children with Autism
- The Deputy Director of Services will verify the lists with the Vocational Coordinator to ensure that no school leaver is omitted from the process. The Vocational Coordinator has overall responsibility for all school leavers in Co. Mayo
- A meeting will be arranged each June by the Deputy Director of Services and will include the Adult Regional Services Managers, the Regional Services Manager for Children, the School Age Manager for Autism Services, the Principal Social Worker/Relevant Social Workers and the Manager of Individualised Supports This meeting will identify young people that will be leaving school two years later and the responsible Regional Services Manager will be identified based on where the young person lives
- The Regional Services Manager in the area where the school leaver lives will oversee each school leaver. There may be exceptions to this, and they can be dealt with individually
- The Regional Services Manager will identify a person who is best placed to lead out the School Leavers Process for each young person
- The lead person will identify key stakeholders (the circle of support if one exists), and they should decide whether any additional assessments/reports are required to support the School Leavers Process. The lead person will arrange for a Personal Outcomes Interview to be conducted with the young person and their family, if appropriate. The information from this should inform the shape of the support for the young person. They will also arrange any required circle of support meetings required to tease out the details of the plan, will coordinate with any external agencies required for implementation of the plan, and will provide the Regional Services Manager with regular updates with regards to the plan. The lead person may delegate actions pertaining to the School Leavers Process to others involved in the process
- The lead person should ensure that they are connecting with the schools, (where that is relevant) i.e. if they have an involvement in the child's school leaving. In general, this is the case with the special schools
- The key stakeholders should develop a vision for the person

- The deadline for a completed and costed plan is December the year before the young person leaves school. This plan should be submitted to the Deputy Director of Services. It must be made clear to all parties that no funding is committed to any school leaver until there is a formal announcement from the HSE regarding any availability of school leavers funding. All plans are pending funding
- Regional Services Manager's and lead persons will come together on a quarterly basis to share learning and promote problem solving. This will be arranged by the Deputy Director of Services.

The Deputy Director of Services will have the responsibility for the oversight of the School Leavers Process.

The Deputy Director of Service will collate plans for all school leavers and forward to the Executive Director by the end of December each year.

APPENDIX A

The following are some real life examples of experiences of school leavers throughout the Organisation. These represent our first efforts at trying to support people differently after leaving school, using available resources. These stories will continue to grow and evolve as we continue to learn.

Michael's Story

Michael is a young man who previously attended St. Anthony's School, Castlebar.

As part of his School Leavers Process, it was identified that an individualized approach to his activities and supports would best meet his needs and preferences. Soon after, planning started for Michael to move out of a group home to his own home.

This has culminated in the following:

- Michael has an individualized service with a support staff and accesses his preferred options for activities.
- Michael has purchased and runs his own car.
- Michael has moved into his own home on the outskirts of Castlebar.
- Michael has a part time job (Friday mornings).

Michael's week

Michael has a range of things he chooses to do in the morning, sometimes he goes swimming, other mornings he goes to the library and he washes the car once a week.

There are several things that Michael fits into his week, such as:

- His part time job on Friday mornings
- Horse riding once a week
- Bowling once a week
- Art
- Computers
- Music
- Dancing

Michael also enjoys golf, so he makes sure there's time for a couple of rounds each week.

He enjoys the Farmer's Journal so he makes sure there is time in his week to do this too.

He does some housework throughout the week to keep on top of things.

Michael has a nice pub lunch once during the week too.

Pauls' Story

Paul was a school leaver in 2009. Paul's family, the school, WCA Social Work and Regional Services Manager attended a number of school leavers meetings where different options for Paul were discussed.

We were not happy that these were the only options for Paul as he already had missed schooling due to difficulties he experienced. He was sharing a classroom with just one other individual and there were two staff with him. We agreed that if Paul found this difficult then he would not cope with a day centre which was much busier, noisier and with a lot less supervision.

Paul had almost fortnightly appointments with Psychiatry, Psychology and Behaviour Support Specialists due to the difficulties he was experiencing on a day to day basis. He was receiving 2:1 support and was limited in the daily activity he took part in.

The Planning Group looked at the activities Paul enjoyed and his parents were able to identify the things he did as a child which he enjoyed. We applied for development funds for Paul but were not successful. We looked at existing services where there was some flexibility and used funds from there.

We agreed that Paul would need someone to support him and this person needed to have the same interests as him and also connections where he could extend Paul's friendships and connections in his own community.

An Outcomes Interview was carried out by Paul's Social Worker. The result of which confirmed for us that he wanted something different to a day service and what those things were. It was interesting getting feedback from so many different perspectives and some of whom didn't agree with the 'no day centre' ideas. Some people were not on board with this as they couldn't imagine a service without walls i.e. one that didn't involve going into a building everyday.

The Planning Group described the type of person and the skills they needed to do this role i.e. needed to be a driver and car owner, they needed to have an interest in farming and country life and needed to be aware of what goes on in small communities. He also needed to be no more than a few years older than Paul.

The Regional Services Manager conducted targeted recruitment and was successful in employing John.

John was inducted and became part of the Planning Group. There was set expectations identified for John and he was set targets to achieve e.g. Paul would have a social role in his local community within a set period of time.

John spent time with Paul getting to know him and building a trusting relationship with him. They went out in the community and started getting to know the locals. They started to use the local facilities and this has led to Paul getting to know more people who now stop and talk to him.

Paul goes to John's home where he socializes with his family. He has met John's friends and John has connected Paul to his social circle. John is just a few years older than Paul.

The local Gardai all know Paul by his first name (not because of anything untoward!) but because they are used to seeing him around. The local shopkeepers all know Paul and at times he gets freebies thrown in.

Paul has a very important social role in the community in which he lives. Paul is responsible for ensuring all plants, flowers, pots etc., are looked after in a local tourist centre and it is important role in determining how people view the place. Paul has got to know so many people through this social role.

He also has a role with the Rural Social Scheme, again with the help of John. Paul's responsibility is to ensure the tourist signs are maintained i.e. briars/grass is cut back to ensure the signs are in view. As a result of this Paul is part of a team in his town and he is treated as such.

Paul uses the gym in every morning at the same time. As a result of this he is keeping fit and people have got to know him from seeing him regularly. If Paul misses a day at the gym they now ask why he wasn't there. People miss Paul when he is not around.

Paul works at horse riding stables cleaning out the stables. He eats lunch there and has built a real friendship with the boss.

Paul has been invited around for lunch by a couple of people who have met him out and about and got to know him over the last 8 months.

Paul is learning new skills which were set out in expectations of John. He makes his own lunch, he has been learning personal care skills, he has learnt gardening skills etc., These are reviewed on an ongoing basis and more added when he is ready.

Paul now goes home with his parents which was not able to happen 1 year ago. Paul's wellbeing has improved dramatically.

Paul has a volunteer who lives nearby and has strong links with local GAA and sports in general. Paul has linked in with them and enjoyed the social aspect.

He now sees the Psychiatrist a few times in the year, psychology no longer have input in Paul's life, BSS connect in with Paul on occasion and his medication is being reduced and reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Paul's communication and interaction has improved dramatically. He is a happy young man who has an active busy life doing the things he likes to do with people he would choose to do them with. We feel this has improved his mental and physical health.

Paul attends all social occasions in the evenings related to any of his roles and activities during the day. This gives him additional opportunities to make real friendships. This would not happen if Paul went out in groups of people from day centres.

Paul does other activities and connects with other people and we are always looking for opportunities for Paul in building a positive future for him. Our main aim is that Paul gets full time employment in the future. Our expectations of Paul are as high as we would have for ourselves and that way nothing can be ruled out until we try it first.

A Sample of what Paul's week could look like

<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>	<i>Sunday</i>
<i>Walk 30 to 60 minutes as recommended by Dietician</i>	<i>Walk</i>	<i>Walk</i>	<i>Walk</i>	<i>Walk</i>	<i>Walk</i>	<i>Walk</i>
<i>Parke Community Centre Sports</i>	<i>Admiral Browne Centre (Social Role) Maintenance of Flower beds and plants RSS Walk Maintenance of Sign Posts</i>	<i>Swimming</i>	<i>Swimming</i>	<i>Recycling Housekeeping Support with related skills</i>	<i>Housekeeping Shopping Spends time in Garden Watch TV/DVD Music videos Relax</i>	<i>Family</i>
<i>Prepare Lunch</i>	<i>Prepare Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch out</i>	<i>Prepare Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch out with Family</i>		
<i>Grocery Shopping (Support with related skills)</i>	<i>Walk Train or Bus to Ballina twice a month</i>	<i>Walking Trek</i>	<i>Butchers Fruit & Veg Supermarket Chemist Errands</i>	<i>Social Activities Calling to friends Visit family etc</i>	<i>Laundry Window Cleaning etc</i>	<i>TV Social Life</i>
<i>Social Life</i>	<i>Social Life</i>	<i>Social Life</i>	<i>Social Life</i>	<i>Social Life</i>	<i>Social Life</i>	

Paul's Social Life in the evening can be any of the following;

- Going to pub or local restaurant
- Goes to local events
- Attends Dinner Dances
- Attends Music Concerts
- Meets up with a few buddies
- Meet up with Family
- Paul's day is very busy and he also likes to relax in the house and not bother to go out.

Joe's Story

During Joe's school leaver process, he indicated that he wanted to continue with secondary school following special school. He is now attending a secondary school, doing Leaving Cert Applied He is doing well and his current school leaver process is heading towards him going into work experience.

Joe has applied to Work Web West to register his name for support when finished school. He may also consider Fas Supported Employment.

Joe receives quarterly social work support.

Mary's Story

Mary finished school in 2009. She receives individualised supports and currently attends VEC training 2 afternoons per week and work experience 1 day or ½ day per week.

She has found an apartment that she is spending time becoming familiar with and is gradually spending more time there. She also goes to the gym a number of times per week. She enjoys doing some odd jobs, for which she gets paid. Mary attends a basketball club, one evening per week, and is beginning to get involved in other sports groups. Mary's support staff is available during the evening to support Mary to attend events that are of interest to her. This flexibility is crucial to support Mary in the way that she wishes.

Tom's Story

Tom is currently planning his future as he is leaving school shortly.

So far in this process Tom has avoided looking towards or sampling traditional services as we have learned from Tom's that these traditional services do not work well for him. It is important to note that Tom used to require a 2:1 staffing ratio.

So far the vision for Tom's transition into adult life looks like this,

- Tom will move from his WCA rented house in Castlebar.
- Tom has put his name forward to the County Council housing waiting list.
- He will rent independently his own apartment or house in Newport town.
- He will pay for all his own household items, provisions and household bills etc.
- Tom will attend private art tutorials twice a week to build up a portfolio of work.
- He will take part in Art College, through ongoing involvement in art projects.
- He will develop his own unique style of art work, and continue to be exposed to other forms of art.
- Tom will convert a room in his house or apartment into his own art studio.
- He will then work from his home studio, while linking with other artists through sales of work and local exhibitions.
- As a talented local artist, Tom will have the opportunity to raise his profile and welcome unpaid supports into his life.

Although Tom's life at the moment is very comfortable, he is very vulnerable as he relies on services and paid supports for all of his needs. His future plan needs to address this substantially.

The aim of this process is that Tom gain independence in his own right, to rent and eventually own his own home free of the label of being in care, to establish friendships and relationships outside of paid supports based on his own skills and interests.

Tom will steer and shape his own life with support and he will find his place in the community based on his preference and idea of happiness.