

| DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE | |
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| 1. Title of the practice | |
| Looked After Children Service | |
| 2. Organisation responsible for the practice | |
| Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) | |
| 3. Contact person(s) | |
| Name / | Melissa Mifsud |
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| 4. Summary of the practice | |
| <p>The Looked After Children Service (LAC) supports all children who are placed in out of home care in Malta. An individual care plan is implemented for every child to ensure that their needs while living in out of home care are being met. The Looked After Children Service is also responsible for supporting children to achieve stability and independent living. Children are also supported when they can return back to their birth family.</p> <p>LAC works closely with professionals who support parents when the plan is for the child to move back to their family home, to make sure that this plan is being done in their best interest. When the possibility for the child to be reintegrated with their birth family is not possible, LAC works on a care plan to achieve stability through other solutions, mainly through fostering or adoption.</p> <p>The service also works closely with young people who live in out of home care and are planning to leave the care system to live independently. They are supported and also referred to other services that can help them to achieve independence. They are supported to find stable employment or to continue their studies. The Foundation for Social Welfare Service has a specific service called Embark for Life, where professionals help young people to secure a job or find courses that can help them to continue their education. Thus, the young people leaving are referred to this service for further support. Young people are also supported by being referred to the Housing Authority in charge of different schemes that the government launched to support young people have a secure accommodation.</p> <p>LAC is continuously keeping communication with other services that can also support young people leaving the care system. Periodic meetings are held with these services and stakeholders to ensure that we keep communication on existing cases, while also keeping open the possibility to refer new ones.</p> <p>Children who are part of out of home care are followed by a Looked After Children social worker until they leave care and after they start living independently. FSWS's policy states that LAC will continue supporting young people when they leave care and support them in accessing all services that they need to improve their life.</p> | |
| 5. National/regional/local context of the practice | |
| In Malta, the new Child Protection (Alternative Care) Act, is being introduced, thus the work carried out with young people living in out of home care, falls under the remit of this | |

legislation.

Young people who reside in out of home care are involved in the implementation of their care plan mainly by participating in their care plan review meetings. The Looked After Children professional keeps ongoing contact with young people and their main carers. When they reach the age of 16, the care plan is targeted towards supporting them for independent living.

FSWS is in continuous discussions with the Ministry for the Family, Children's rights and Social Solidarity to implement Public Social Partnerships with NGOs in Malta, to offer residential placements to children and young people living in out of home care. Through these Public Social Partnerships (PSPs) professionals working with young people can refer them to these residences before the young person is able to secure a more stable accommodation.

History of the Service

The Looked After Children Service (LAC) was established at the beginning of 2001. Its main objective is to provide social work intervention to children who reside in out of home care placements, mainly foster care and residential placements. LAC works with children and young people in out of home care up to the age of 18. In particular cases, young people are supported beyond the age of 18, especially if they have no other significant support system. The LAC team aims at providing services to children and young people in care by formulating individual care plans. It also assists in the re-integration of children with their biological families, if it is in their best interest and, where re-integration with the biological family is not possible, prioritises and supports family-based care. The LAC team works to ensure stability for children and young people in the way which is most suitable for the individual child or young person.

Professionals within the LAC have, as their primary focus, the wellbeing of children in care. They keep ongoing contact with them in order to assess and monitor their wellbeing. They liaise with other professionals and carers who are involved in the provision of care, whilst also maintaining contact with their birth families. The ultimate aim is to provide these children and young people with a stable and secure lifestyle and, when possible and in their best interest, help in facilitating their re-integration with their birth families.

6. Staff involved

The Looked After Children service is made up of 24 professionals who work with children and young people living in out of home care.

There are 21 social workers, 1 psychologist, and 2 professionals qualified in social care.

7. Target group

Children and young people living in out of home care and young people leaving care

8. Aims of the practice

Support young people in out of home care and young people leaving care to achieve better outcomes and live independently once they become adults.

9. Issues for social services

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| Service Integration/ Cooperation across services | x | Service Planning | | Contracting | |
| Technology | | Skills development (of the workforce) | | Quality of services | |
| Others: _____ | | | | | |

ANALYSIS OF THE PRACTICE

10. Status

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| Pilot project (ongoing) | | Project (ongoing) | | Implemented practice (restricted areas) | |
| Pilot project (terminated) | | Project (terminated) | | Widely spread practice/rolled out | x |

11. Scope of the practice

Describe the setting of the practice, considering the following criteria:

- *Micro level practice:* practice that involves individuals at local level
- *Meso level practice:* practice that involves organisations or communities
- *Macro level practice:* practice that involves large population groups

Micro level practice: practice that involves individuals at local level

12. Leadership and management of the practice

Description of the leadership of the practice, considering the following criteria:

- *Collaborative management:* shared between large partnerships, often of central, regional and local representation
- *Organisational management:* by one organisation
- *Professional management:* managed by a single person
- *Shared management:* shared with no defined leadership

Organisational management: by one organisation. The Looked After Children Service is part of Agenzija Appogg which is one of the main agencies within the Foundation for Social Welfare Services. The Service Manager is responsible for the operations of the service. There is also a Service Area Leader in the Service who focuses mainly on staff support, case consultations and supervisions. The service also has four coordinators who support social workers in complex interventions and chair care plan meetings.

13. Engaging stakeholders in the practice

Description of the engagement of stakeholders, considering the following criteria:

- *Individual practice:* individuals have sought practice change
- *Network approach:* one or more organisations develop a network
- *Collaborative approach:* large collaboration with relevant stakeholders

Collaborative approach: large collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

14. Involvement of service users and their families

Description of the involvement of service users, considering the following criteria:

- *Team involvement:* service users and carers were part of the practice team

- *Consultative: a consultative body of users was set up for an on-going dialogue and feedback*
- *Involvement in care: person-centred approaches to care/support*

The Looked After Children service continues to support care leavers after they leave the care system. Once they become adults, care leavers choose themselves whether they would like to be supported further. Care leavers are supported to find a stable accommodation, to secure employment or continue their studies, and also to be able to access other services that they need, such as health services. Referrals to other services within FSWS are also carried out where and when necessary.

LAC professionals work closely with care leavers and these professionals take note of their feedback. The service values the opinion and experiences of care leavers since they are the experts in this field.

15. Costs and resources needed for implementation

Description of how the practice is financed, considering the following criteria:

- *Within existing resources: staff time and other resources are provided 'in-house'*
- *Staffing costs: costs for staff investment*
- *Joint/Pooled budgets: two or more agencies pool budgets to fund services*
- *Funded project: external investment*

Within existing resources: staff time and other resources are provided 'in-house'. The service is offered by the Foundation for Social Welfare Service, thus the budget is part of FSWS's budget. The Foundation for Social Welfare Service is a national agency funded at national level.

16. Evaluation approaches

Description of the evaluation method of the practice, considering the following criteria:

- *Multi-method: use of both a qualitative and a quantitative approach*
- *Single method: qualitative or quantitative approach*
- *Audit: looks at data sources such as existing medical records, and/or other routinely collected service data.*
- *Informal: refers to in-house service evaluation using locally designed tools and/or collecting opportunistic feedback*
- *No evaluation*
- *An evaluation is planned*

Informal: refers to in-house service evaluation using locally designed tools and/or collecting opportunistic feedback. Feedback about the service and the experience of care leavers is gathered through direct contact with them. One to one sessions are carried out with care leavers and they are asked about their experience of living in care. Moreover, when the social worker is going to close the case, care leavers are asked to sign a termination form. In this form they can choose to write their feedback and suggestions. At the moment, discussions are being held to introduce another model of evaluation.

17. Measurable effects of the practice and what it has achieved for...

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| Service users | <p>At the end of June 2019, the Looked After Children Service was working with 482 children and young persons living in out of home care and care leavers.</p> <p>At the end of June 2019, the service is following 8 adults who left the care system and are living independently.</p> <p>Out of those 482, the service is working with 26 young people who will turn 18 years of age in 2019 or in 2020.</p> |
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| Formal care givers | |
| Informal carers | |
| Organisations | |
| Other | |
| 18. Anticipated or 'aspirational' effects of the practice and what it has achieved for... <i>This category can include outcomes which are not documented, quantified or properly evaluated. They can include such elements as improved knowledge, quality, workforce, etc.</i> | |
| Service users | The aim of the service is to promote the wellbeing and social inclusion of children who are in out of home care, according to their best interests and with the long-term goal of supporting their transition to adulthood. |
| Formal care givers | |
| Informal carers | |
| Organisations | |
| Other | |
| 19. How the practice has changed the way the service is provided (lessons learned) | |
| 20. Sustainability of the practice <i>Description of whether the practice is sustainable, considering the following criteria:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Potential for sustainability:</i> practice was newly started or is on-going/not yet mainstreamed. How could the practice be sustained (in terms of resources)? • <i>Organic sustainability:</i> service users have been empowered to take the practice forward • <i>Established:</i> the project has been operational for several years | |
| Established: the project has been operational for several years. | |
| 21. Transferability of the practice <i>Description of whether the practice has been transferred, considering the following criteria:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Transferred:</i> transfer to other regions, countries, service user groups, etc. • <i>Potential for transferability:</i> there is interest from the outside; elements of the practice have been taken up and used elsewhere; material for transferability (for ex. training material) has been developed | |
| <p>Potential for transferability: there is interest from the outside; elements of the practice have been taken up and used elsewhere; material for transferability (for ex. training material) has been developed.</p> <p>The experience of the professionals working in the Looked After Children Service, with young people leaving the care system, could be potentially transferred to other entities or shared with other professionals.</p> | |