

# Overview & Scrutiny

## Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission

All Members of the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission are requested to attend the meeting of the Commission to be held as follows

**Thursday 24 February 2022**

**7.00 pm**

**Council Chamber, Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street, London E8 1EA**

The press and public are welcome to join this meeting remotely via this link:  
<https://youtu.be/xn3n8yExOyM>

If you wish to attend please give notice and note the guidance below.

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**Mark Carroll**

**Chief Executive, London Borough of Hackney**

**Members:** Cllr Sharon Patrick (Chair), Cllr Anthony McMahon, Cllr M Can Ozsen, Cllr Ian Rathbone, Cllr Penny Wrout, Cllr Soraya Adejare (Vice-Chair), Cllr Ajay Chauhan and Cllr Clare Joseph

## Agenda

**ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

- 1 Apologies for Absence
- 2 Urgent Items / Order of Business
- 3 Declaration of Interest
- 4 Housing Support for Care Leavers (Pages 9 - 252)  
**Scrutiny Chairs:** Cllr Sharon Patrick (Chair of Living in Hackney) and Cllr Sophie Conway (Chair of Children and Young People)

### Session format and timings

1. (7.05) Introduction by Chairs (5min)

**2. (7.10) Care Leavers views of housing support (25min)**

**3. (7:40) Comparative models of housing support for care leavers (35min)**

**4. (8:10) Housing Support for Care Leavers in Hackney (Local Policy & Practice) (60 min)**

**5. (9:10) Related submissions - London Wide Offer (5min)**

**6. Summary discussion**

- |   |  |                   |
|---|--|-------------------|
| 5 | Minutes of the Meeting                   | (Pages 253 - 254) |
| 6 | Living in Hackney Work Programme 2021/22 | (Pages 255 - 264) |
| 7 | Any Other Business                       |                   |

To access the meeting please click in the link <https://youtu.be/xn3n8yExOyM>

Back up link <https://youtu.be/KQWehnSMVn8>

## Access and Information

### Public Involvement and Recording

#### Guidance on public attendance during Covid-19 pandemic

Scrutiny meetings are held in public, rather than being public meetings. This means that whilst residents and press are welcome to attend, they can only ask questions at the discretion of the Chair. For further information relating to public access to information, please see Part 4 of the council's constitution, available at <https://hackney.gov.uk/council-business> or by contacting Governance Services (020 8356 3503).

**The Town Hall is not presently open to the general public, and there is limited capacity within the meeting rooms.** However, the High Court has ruled that where meetings are required to be 'open to the public' or 'held in public' then members of the public are entitled to have access by way of physical attendance at the meeting. The Council will need to ensure that access by the public is in line with any Covid-19 restrictions that may be in force from time to time and also in line with public health advice.

Those members of the public who wish to observe a meeting are still encouraged to make use of the live-stream facility in the first instance. You can find the link on the agenda front sheet.

Members of the public who would ordinarily attend a meeting to ask a question, make a deputation or present a petition will be able to attend if they wish. They may also let the relevant committee support officer know that they would like the Chair of the meeting to ask the question, make the deputation or present the petition on their behalf (in line with current Constitutional arrangements).

In the case of the Planning Sub-Committee, those wishing to make representations at the meeting should attend in person where possible.

**Regardless of why a member of the public wishes to attend a meeting, they will need to advise the relevant committee support officer of their intention in advance of the meeting date. You can find contact details for the committee support officer on the agenda front page.** This is to support track and trace. The committee support officer will be able to confirm whether the proposed attendance can be accommodated with the room capacities that exist to ensure that the meeting is covid-secure.

**As there will be a maximum capacity in each meeting room, priority will**

**be given to those who are attending to participate in a meeting rather than observe.**

**Members of the public who are attending a meeting for a specific purpose, rather than general observation, are encouraged to leave the meeting at the end of the item for which they are present. This is particularly important in the case of the Planning Sub-Committee, as it may have a number of items on the agenda involving public representation.**

### **Before attending the meeting**

The public, staff and councillors are asked to review the information below as this is important in minimising the risk for everyone.

**If you are experiencing covid symptoms, you should follow government guidance. Under no circumstances should you attend a meeting if you are experiencing covid symptoms.**

Anyone experiencing symptoms of Coronavirus is eligible to book a swab test to find out if they have the virus. You can register for a test after checking your symptoms [through the NHS website](#). If you do not have access to the internet, or have difficulty with the digital portals, you are able to call the 119 service to book a test.

If you're an essential worker and you are experiencing Coronavirus symptoms, you can apply for priority testing through GOV.UK by following the [guidance for essential workers](#). You can also get tested through this route if you have symptoms of coronavirus and live with an essential worker.

Availability of home testing in the case of people with symptoms is limited, so please use testing centres where you can.

**Even if you are not experiencing covid symptoms, you are requested to take an asymptomatic test (lateral flow test) in the 24 hours before attending the meeting.**

You can do so by visiting any lateral flow test centre; details of the rapid testing sites in Hackney can be found [here](#). Alternatively, you can obtain home testing kits from pharmacies or order them [here](#).

You must not attend a lateral flow test site if you have Coronavirus symptoms; rather you must book a test appointment at your nearest walk-through or drive-through centre.

Lateral flow tests take around 30 minutes to deliver a result, so please factor the time it will take to administer the test and then wait for the result when deciding when to take the test.

If your lateral flow test returns a positive result then you must follow Government guidance; self-isolate and make arrangements for a PCR test.

Under no circumstances should you attend the meeting.

## **Attending the Town Hall for meetings**

To make our buildings Covid-safe, it is very important that you observe the rules and guidance on social distancing, one-way systems, hand washing, and the wearing of masks (unless you are exempt from doing so). You must follow all the signage and measures that have been put in place. They are there to keep you and others safe.

To minimise risk, we ask that Councillors arrive fifteen minutes before the meeting starts and leave the meeting room immediately after the meeting has concluded. The public will be invited into the room five minutes before the meeting starts.

Members of the public will be permitted to enter the building via the front entrance of the Town Hall no earlier than ten minutes before the meeting is scheduled to start. They will be required to sign in and have their temperature checked as they enter the building. Security will direct them to the Chamber or Committee Room as appropriate.

Seats will be allocated, and people must remain in the seat that has been allocated to them. Refreshments will not be provided, so it is recommended that you bring a bottle of water with you.

## **Rights of Press and Public to Report on Meetings**

Where a meeting of the Council and its committees are open to the public, the press and public are welcome to report on meetings of the Council and its committees, through any audio, visual or written methods and may use digital and social media providing they do not disturb the conduct of the meeting and providing that the person reporting or providing the commentary is present at the meeting.

Those wishing to film, photograph or audio record a meeting are asked to notify the Council's Monitoring Officer by noon on the day of the meeting, if possible, or any time prior to the start of the meeting or notify the Chair at the start of the meeting.

The Monitoring Officer, or the Chair of the meeting, may designate a set area from which all recording must take place at a meeting.

The Council will endeavour to provide reasonable space and seating to view, hear and record the meeting. If those intending to record a meeting require any other reasonable facilities, notice should be given to the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting and will only be provided if practicable to do so.

The Chair shall have discretion to regulate the behaviour of all those present recording a meeting in the interests of the efficient conduct of the meeting.

Anyone acting in a disruptive manner may be required by the Chair to cease recording or may be excluded from the meeting. Disruptive behaviour may include: moving from any designated recording area; causing excessive noise; intrusive lighting; interrupting the meeting; or filming members of the public who have asked not to be filmed.

All those visually recording a meeting are requested to only focus on recording councillors, officers and the public who are directly involved in the conduct of the meeting. The Chair of the meeting will ask any members of the public present if they have objections to being visually recorded. Those visually recording a meeting are asked to respect the wishes of those who do not wish to be filmed or photographed. Failure by someone recording a meeting to respect the wishes of those who do not wish to be filmed and photographed may result in the Chair instructing them to cease recording or in their exclusion from the meeting.

If a meeting passes a motion to exclude the press and public then in order to consider confidential or exempt information, all recording must cease and all recording equipment must be removed from the meeting room. The press and public are not permitted to use any means which might enable them to see or hear the proceedings whilst they are excluded from a meeting and confidential or exempt information is under consideration.

Providing oral commentary during a meeting is not permitted.

## Getting to the Town Hall

For a map of how to find the Town Hall, please visit the council's website <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/contact-us.htm> or contact the Overview and Scrutiny Officer using the details provided on the front cover of this agenda.

## Accessibility

There are public toilets available, with wheelchair access, on the ground floor of the Town Hall.

Induction loop facilities are available in the Assembly Halls and the Council Chamber. Access for people with mobility difficulties can be obtained through the ramp on the side to the main Town Hall entrance.

## Further Information about the Commission

If you would like any more information about the Scrutiny Commission, including the membership details, meeting dates and previous reviews, please visit the website or use this QR Code (accessible via phone or tablet 'app')

<http://www.hackney.gov.uk/individual-scrutiny-commissions-living-in-hackney.htm>



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<p><b>Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission</b></p> <p>24th February 2022</p> <p><b>Item 4 - Housing Support for Care Leavers</b></p>	<p>Item No</p> <p><b>4</b></p>
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## Outline

The Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission have agreed to a joint scrutiny session to review housing support for care leavers in the borough.

As well as reviewing the housing support and accommodation options within the within the local care leaver offer, the session will also provide an opportunity to reflect on how well corporate parenting and housing needs teams work together to support care leavers, and how current and future housing needs of this cohort are reflected in the council's housing strategy.

Officers from the Corporate Parenting, Housing Needs and Housing Strategy teams will present the local policy and practice for supporting the housing needs of care leavers. Commission members will be able to draw comparative assessments through contributions from colleagues in Lambeth and Islington. There will also be an opportunity to hear directly from care leavers themselves.

Using the evidence presented both verbally and in report form, the Commissions will make recommendations to relevant Cabinet members.

Prior to this meeting the Chair and Vice Chairs of the both Commissions have undertaken:

- A focus group with care leavers on 2nd February 2022
- Visits to two semi-independent accommodation sites in Hackney on 14th February 2022.

Session format and timings overleaf....

## Session format and timings

<b>1. (7.05)</b>	<b>Introduction by Chairs</b>	<b>(5min)</b>
<b>2. (7.10)</b>	<b>Care Leavers views of housing support</b> Q & A with Young Care Leavers	<b>(25min)</b>
<b>3. (7:40)</b>	<b>Comparative models of housing support for care leavers</b> Sophie Konradsen, Acting Lead Commissioner (Young people's supported housing & care leavers' semi-independent living) Brenda Amisi-Hutchinson, Service Manager, Independent Futures, LB Islington Q & A	<b>(35min)</b>
<b>4. (8:10)</b>	<b>Housing Support for Care Leavers in Hackney (Local Policy &amp; Practice)</b> Laura Bleaney, Head of Service Corporate Parenting Claudia Hillaire, Service Manager Corporate Parenting Jennifer Wynter, Head of Benefits and Housing Needs Service Arto Maatta, Team Manager Housing Needs James Goddard, Interim Director Regeneration Q & A	<b>(60 min)</b>
<b>5. (9:10)</b>	<b>Related submissions - London Wide Offer</b> Submissions from Become - National Care Leaver Charity Toward a London Wide Offer for Care Leavers - Become, Children's Society Greater Manchester Care Leaver Partnership	<b>(5min)</b>
<b>6. (9.15)</b>	<b>Summary discussion</b> Chairs and members of the Commissions to outline key areas for recommendations	

Reports overleaf.....

Reports for the meeting (in agenda order)

Item 4a - Report of Focus Group with Care Leavers

Item 4b - Lambeth Care Leaver Offer

Item 4bi - Lambeth Transformation Programme - Housing related support

Item 4c - Islington Care Leaver Offer

item 4d - The House Project Islington

Item 4e - [Comparator of London Wide Housing Offer](#)

Item 4f - Presentation LBH Housing Support for Care Leavers

Item 4g - Briefing LB Hackney Housing Support for Care Leavers

Item 4h - Hackney Care Leaver Offer

Item 4i - Submission from Become (National Care Leaver Charity)

Item 4j - Towards a London Wide Care Leaver Offer - Become/ Children's Society

Item 4k - Greater Manchester Care Partnership

Key Background Reports

Item 4l - Care leavers accommodation and support framework (Barnados/St Basils)

Item 4m - Joint housing protocols for care leavers - best practice (DfE and MHCLG)

Item 4n - Hounslow Housing Supply for Care Leavers (LB Hounslow 2021)

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**Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission & Children and Young  
People Scrutiny Commission  
Housing Support for Care Leavers - 24/2/22**

**Report of Focus Group with Care Leavers in Hackney**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission and Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission are holding a joint session on the 24th February 2022 to review housing support for care leavers in Hackney. To support this review process the Chair and Vice Chair of both Commissions held a focus group meeting with a number of Hackney care leavers on 2nd February 2022.
- 1.2 The focus group was supported by Hackney for Tomorrow (Care Council) and Hackney Corporate Parenting team. In total 10 young people between the ages of 18 and 23 participated.
- 1.3 The following report provides a brief summary of the key issues which emerged from members' discussions with care leavers. The report uses anonymised excerpts to protect the identity of participants. It is also important to note that given the size of this cohort the report does not purport to be representative, but does provide an *illustrative account* of some of the housing and accommodation issues care leavers face.

**2. Current Housing Situation**

- 2.1 Care leavers in the focus group described living in a range of different types of accommodation. These included:
- Supported accommodation
  - Independent tenancy with Council / Housing Association
  - Independent tenancy in private rented sector
  - A mother and baby unit
  - Supported lodgings (a room in a private home).
- 2.2 Young people lived in accommodation located in Hackney and in neighbouring boroughs. A small number of young people were attending university outside of London and therefore located much further afield.

**3. Motivation for care leavers to attend the focus group?**

- 3.1 It was clear that housing and accommodation was an issue which resonated strongly among care leavers and reflected in their willingness to participate in the focus group. Without exception, all care leavers described some personal anxiety about their current or future housing situation, or both.

3.2 In this context care leavers came with a range of expectations for their participation focus group. Some care leavers came to highlight some of the problems with their current housing situation:

*'In my situation here now, I did not choose to be here, it was imposed on me. I am in a place with my baby, but the place is full of damp and I have taken pictures of this to show people and nothing has happened. I have tried to talk to my social worker and nothing has happened and I am trying to find somewhere else to live.'*

Whilst others were hoping to find out more about their rights and entitlements to housing support and accommodation as a care leaver:

*'I am hoping to get a better understanding of the services that the borough might provide for care leavers, especially more information about housing offers.'*

Many of the care leavers came along to the focus group with the hope that by describing their experiences it would help to improve the support that was provided to other young people in similar circumstances:

*'What I hope to get out of this meeting is to help change the way that care leavers and young people are treated in regards to the housing situation.'*

*'What I want to get out of this is... to help to get more social housing for young people, and vulnerable young people.'*

#### **4. Awareness of local housing support offer for care leavers**

4.1 All care leavers are required to have a Pathway Plan, a document which they complete with their social worker or personal adviser which sets out their needs, future goals, and what support they will receive. Whilst many of the participants spoke of their own Pathway Plans, there was considerable uncertainty about the nature of housing support on offer and what housing options might be available to them.

4.2 This uncertainty was compounded by the complex system of entitlements for housing support, accommodation and other benefits, which also varied not only in respect of their age, but also in respect of whether they lived in Hackney or outside of the borough.

4.3 Care leavers described a number of specific gaps in their knowledge or understanding about the local offer and entitlements to housing support and accommodation which included:

- Entitlements to housing and other benefits after the age of 21;
- Understanding and knowledge of the social housing quota, how care leavers are put forward and eligibility decided;

- Those in accommodation outside of the borough and entitlement to housing support and other benefits (e.g. council tax exemption/reduction);
- Those attending university out of London and their entitlement to housing returning to Hackney;

4.4 As one care leaver pointed out, not being fully aware of what they were entitled to inhibited their ability to plan ahead and prepare for their future:

*'It's not clear to a young person and care leaver what is set up for them and what their options are. This creates a lot of insecurity among care leavers, and it puts you in a bit of a hole as you can't really prepare for what's to come if you don't know what's available and what you can do to prevent your future going down a dark place, you just can't do anything about it. The onus is on the social worker and local services to make this clear to care leavers.'*

## 5. Support from Social Workers (and Personal Advisers)

5.1 Care leavers were asked to indicate how well they felt they were supported by their social workers and/or personal advisers. From this discussion there were a number of themes which emerged:

- Care leavers described mixed experiences of support from their social worker/PA;
- Turnover of social workers/PA made it difficult for care leavers to form relationships;
- Problems communicating with social workers/PA
- Social workers awareness of care leavers entitlements, especially housing support and accommodation options.

5.2 It was clear that a number of care leavers had good relationships with their social workers. These care leavers described social workers as accessible and responsive, and who were able to provide a wide range of practical and emotional support through their journey from care.

*'Thankfully I have a really good relationship with my current social worker, much better than previous ones.'*

*'I have had pretty much a good experience with all my social workers. I know they have changed often but we have a professional relationship and I go to them for advice. My current social worker has been very supportive, sending me cards when I passed my driving test and on my birthday and when I went for an interview [they] helped me prepare for it and when I got the job she sent a congratulations card, these little touches make it feel really personal and that they care.'*

*'My current social worker is good though, [they] do nice things like send Christmas cards and things and it makes it personal. [They] write things like 'this year has been hard, but you are going to continue to do well.'*

- 5.3 Some care leavers present indicated that their social worker was an active advocate for them, and rigorously campaigned for additional support which was positive and welcome:

*'The good thing is that my new social worker fights for things for his young people and in terms of housing, I mean I have to message him, but as soon as I do, I get a response and if it's something he doesn't know he will find out from his managers and get back to me. For me my current social worker is pretty good.'*

- 5.4 Other care leavers described a more mixed experience with the support that they received from their social worker. One of the most common issues that many care leavers described, was the frequency in which their social worker changed which made it difficult to build relationships with them.

*'For care leavers, the one thing that's hard to deal with is that your social workers are changing all the time and I hate that. If you are trying to bond and build a relationship with your social worker you can't because before you know it, they've left and you've got a new one.'*

*'What can I say, I have had so many social workers, I can remember at least 6, probably 7. I had a good relationship with a social worker but she left. I cried a lot then because I knew that the next social worker would not be as nice as [them].'*

*'When it comes to my experience of social workers and support, I'd like to point out that one ongoing issue we all have to face is building a relationship with them and then disappearing.'*

- 5.5 A further area of concern expressed by some care leavers in the focus groups was the poor communication and limited accessibility of some social worker support:

*'A lot of my previous social workers were difficult to communicate with and get hold of, I used to live outside of London so I needed a lot of things but could never get hold of the social worker. When I lived outside of London, it was really hard for me, especially as a young black person growing up in another city, it was so difficult to get hold of someone to talk to.'*

*'The social worker that I have now is just the communication problems that we have, all this talk about building a good relationship with the social worker is for nothing as she's not communicating. If you try to contact her and leave messages with other people [they] still do not get back to you. [They] do not tell me what's going on, which is a big problem that I am facing right now.'*

- 5.6 In relation to housing support and accommodation options, care leavers indicated a number of practice areas where they felt that social worker contribution could be improved



- Awareness of the local housing offer and accommodation options for care leavers;
- Greater clarity and consistency in housing advice;
- More effective and earlier communication of the gravity of the local housing situation.

5.7 A number of care leavers indicated that that some social workers had an incomplete understanding of local housing support and accommodation offer which left them unaware of their entitlements:

*'One thing that really does get to me is that I really don't know what I am entitled to and what my rights are and I really do feel that my social worker does not inform me of those kinds of things and I feel left in the dark. I am 23 but there are things which I am only really learning now to the things I am entitled to not just around housing but around other things like mental health support. I feel like I have been living under a rock and not part of the real world. But my main point is the lack of knowledge of my social worker, I mean if [they] don't know what I am entitled to, then how do I know?'*

*'But whenever I have asked my social worker about housing, like other people here it was like they were playing dumb and just didn't know where to point me. I know that a certain amount of properties get allocated to care leavers but [they] had no idea of that.'*

5.8 There were also issues around the clarity and consistency of housing advice provided to care leavers:

*'I did have a social worker whilst I was at university who told me I would get housing when I came back to Hackney, but I finished university with a different social worker and the advice is all different.'*

5.9 What was apparent in many of the contributions of care leavers however, was that the gravity of the local housing situation had not been communicated to them in an effective or timely way which had raised expectations as to what the borough might be able to provide.

*'Just yesterday someone from Hackney Housing was on a zoom with us and told us about our options, which realistically look like the only option is private [rented], but in preparation for housing I just wasn't really prepared because I was fed this line that it was going to be all sunshine and rainbows and everything was going to be ok when they did not tell me the real gravity of the housing situation in Hackney. As young people we should have been prepared for this a lot more, because you guys are technically our parents, and parents should prepare their child for the world and social services as our parents did not really do their job.'*

- 5.10 Without recognition of the gravity of the local housing situation, some care leavers found it difficult to comprehend how their needs were assessed and prioritised for local housing options:

*'I don't understand about the priority, I mean I have a baby and I am supposed to be a priority? This house is also full of damp and my baby has been coughing a lot, when we go to my friend's places it is fine, but as soon as I am back here he starts coughing, so the house is affecting me here but I am still not a priority.'*

*'But now I have a son, I want us to have a place which is ours and we can settle. I get that there is a housing crisis, but I still don't know why it's so hard for young people and care leavers to be somewhere safe and raise their children. I just don't understand why this is such a hard thing.'*

- 5.11 Care leavers did empathise with social workers however, and did understand that there were wider systemic problems which contributed to the limited housing options that they were presented with.

*'I can't get angry with my social worker about our housing situation we are in because its not directly their fault, I mean I voice my opinions and concerns towards her but it's frustrating because I know that if it was in her power to sort things for me, [they] would, but I know that [they] has limited control over the situation. It's not [them] it's the entire system which is setting care leavers up to fail and go into private housing which is too expensive for them.'*

## **6. Young care leavers need to know their rights and assert these**

- 6.1 In the context of the limitations of the advice and support available as described above, there was a sense that care leavers needed to be more aware of their rights and entitlements and should be more assertive in challenging social workers

*'What I would say is that this has been very much down to how vocal the young person is and knowing what their rights are, because if I was not happy with something then I am going to say something, so I would email my social worker and copy her manager in. So for example, I became pregnant and got moved to a mother and baby unit in Hackney and I was told I would get a 2 bedroom place, but when the time came I was given a 1 bedroom, but after I settled down I started to email my social workers with my concerns and eventually I was moved to a 2 bedroom which was much better. I mean it's not just down to the young person, but you have got to speak out. If there is a young person who is not as vocal then I think that they are going to be left behind.'*

*'I have to agree with what other care leavers have said, you have to be more vocal with your social worker because they will walk all over you if you are not vocal about your issues.'*

6.2 Although the Council has a Children's Rights Officer who can act on behalf of care leavers (and children in care), few of those present in the focus group were aware of this role and the support that was available.

*'We had a meeting similar to this to talk about the Children's Rights Officer and pretty much everyone at the meeting had not heard of them or what that was. People need to know how they need to access this form of support other than their social worker.'*

## 7. Care leavers living with uncertainty and anxiety about their future housing

7.1 From the focus group it was apparent that care leavers had a number of anxieties about their housing which was creating considerable anxiety. There were a number of specific areas which were creating anxiety:

- Changing eligibility for housing support past the age of 21;
- Uncertainties of living in the private rented sector;
- Uncertainty of living out of borough;
- The affordability of accommodation and ability to move on;
- Access to social housing through care leavers quota.

7.2 Eligibility for housing support changes for young people after the age of 21. For those not in a settled independent tenancy by this time, this may mean that they need to seek accommodation elsewhere, most likely in the private rented sector. Care leavers were aware of this change in eligibility and the prospective change that it may bring to their housing situation:

*'I am 21 and I live in Clapton. It's a mother and baby unit supported accommodation and because I am 21 my tenancy ends in September which means I will have to move on.'*

*'I've not been told what is next, but I know I can stay here until I am 21 so I have about 2 years left of living here. It's lovely living here, but it's always in the back of my mind that I am just here for 2 years and I really don't know where I am going next.'*

7.3 In this context, care leavers were anxious that a 'clock was ticking' in terms of their future housing arrangements and were anxious that they were prepared for such a change when they reached 21, including the options for moving to social rented accommodation (if this was available).

*'... it's 19, then it's 20 but by 21, it's too difficult to have your own place. You have got to try your best to give care leavers a place when they are before 21 and make sure that they are responsible to be able to do this. You have to try and give people places earlier. Instead of making people wait, give people a place to live rather than make them wait until past the age of 21 when everything is so much more difficult to find a placement for you.'*

*'I have heard from you guys today that you can get housing from 18-21. So I think we need to be putting young people on the housing register when they are ready from the age of 18 and not leaving it so late, because when they turn 21 they've missed it. Your social worker needs to be able to judge your maturity and how well you handle your current tenancy, rent and ASB all these typical things.'*

- 7.4 With a care leaver quota of 18 social housing lets per annum, the reality for most young people after the age of 21 is to find accommodation within the private rented sector. The transition from supported housing to more independent living was understandably a source of anxiety for care leavers:

*'Basically we are being pushed to go into the private sector, I may get some temporary accommodation which is supported accommodation, but even from there I am being told to look for private properties to rent and I am really nervous about that, as I am really not sure what's involved in being in a private property. From what I have heard I hear that you are left by yourself and you don't get that much support and if you get into debt, then you can get into trouble, these are all the things I am hearing, and it looks like I really don't have a choice in all of this.'*

- 7.5 In addition, there was a real prospect that for some young people this future housing option could be out of Hackney, or even out of London which could destabilise their existing support networks:

*'At the moment, it's stressful, confusing and frustrating because at the moment I don't know where me and my son are going to end up, it could even be out of London and away from my support system here. Not wanting to bring my personal life into it, but I have a lot going on at the moment and this is making things very hard for me.'*

- 7.6 Care leavers (alongside many other young people) were also anxious about the level of rents that they would be required to pay when transitioning from education / training to employment.

*'and now I am back in Hackney, but Hackney won't do anything because I am too old. So at the moment I am just trying to work but that's all so ridiculous as my rent is so ridiculous, but this is the only thing I can do, what else can I do?'*

- 7.7 Care leavers were aware that if they managed to get a social housing let through the care leaver social housing quota this would potentially offer them longer-term stability and affordability and were therefore keen to be nominated for such lets. For a number of young people present, the eligibility and decision making process for care leavers to be granted a social let within the quota was not clear:

*'It seems like the Board where you get nominated for a flat is always changing its agenda, changing what they want or what they expect the young person to be, so that's really nerve racking thinking am I going to be nominated or will they change'*

*their expectations of the young person and I don't meet that. I can't afford to live in London where rents are rocketing, my only option is to get a flat here. So I am really nervous.'*

*'I mean you can do everything right, follow all the rules and live like you are with no complaints, but you still might not get a house. What are the decisions being taken and what can a young person do to get a house? Who makes the decision and how is the decision taken between who gets a house and who doesn't? I got a letter from housing to say that there are other young people more in need and that's why I didn't get the place, so I really don't know what determines who gets a place and who doesn't.'*

## **8. Supported (semi-independent) accommodation**

8.1 Most care leavers participating in the focus group were in some form of supported accommodation. Care leavers raised three main issues in relation to their supported housing:

- Degree of choice where they were placed;
- The cost of provision and ability to move on to employment;
- Level of support provided on-site.

8.2 A consistent theme in the response of care leavers was that for many of them in reality, there was very little choice in the range of supported accommodation for them. For some young people this worked out well, but for others, less so.

*'At the end of last year I got offered supported accommodation, I was told that I either live here or nowhere and that this was my only option. Luckily, I fell in love with the place when I saw it so I was quite happy with the outcome, but it was shocking to think that if I didn't like this place, I had no idea what would be next or what I would do. I am thankful that I am in this situation because I know that other care leavers have not been as lucky as me.'*

*'In the semi independent accommodation I was in before, the rent was very high and I don't want to talk about that. I had to find somewhere private where I could afford the rent, but they did not want me to go there, they wanted me to be here so they pushed me to be here.'*

8.3 A significant area of discussion within the focus group was the relative cost of supported accommodation (compared to social housing) and how this inhibited young people from moving on to university or employment:

*'I was thinking about when I did live in supported housing and now I can compare that to living in a flat, the one big thing is the rent and how this is, it's just a bit ridiculous. I just don't think I was supported in the best way before moving on, and now I am living in my own accommodation, I pay half of what I used to pay. When I was in supported accommodation there was no thinking about going to*

*university or getting a job or anything like that because as soon as you start working for so many hours you have to start to pay your own rent and from there it's really easy to get into debt and it is really stressful, I mean very stressful.'*

*'Obviously rent has increased over the past few years, which is how long I have been living by myself more or less. But I am paying half of what I was paying in supported accommodation. I was paying £1,200 a month in supported accommodation but where I am now in social housing I pay around £530 a month, so you see the difference, it's massive. Opportunity wise, it really does limit you. You can't do much, you feel like you have to sit in the dark and stay on benefits because that is the only way you can afford to actually live there.'*

7.7 Care leavers were also questioned the flexibility and availability of support that was available within supported accommodation:

*'In terms of the actual support, I mean I understand that the rent would be a bit higher because of the additional support you are getting from the support worker, but to be honest, it's more like you have to approach them with your issues, it's hard to build a relationship with them and for many of them, as soon as they leave, that's it I am done, I am going home and they don't care anymore. This is the reality of what it feels like and the level of support that you get is really questionable as well.'*

*'In terms of the support that's available for you in supported accommodation, I used to live in a complex needs place and support was supposed to be 24-7 staff and I am supposed to be able to talk to them and be able to get support at any time I needed. But what I found was that with issues during the day they would be able to support you, but when it came to then switching over at night, it was not the same story and they were not that helpful.... so the support was not there if you needed it. I mean in the hostels and supported accommodation a lot can go on in those places, where you might need support so it's concerning. I feel like for the price, the support is not for the same level if you get what I mean.'*

## **9. Staying in Hackney**

9.1 Many care leavers are cared for outside of the borough. Although many care leavers in this focus group indicated that they wanted to return back to Hackney, they realised that this might be a difficult option for them given the local housing landscape.

*'I would love to come back to Hackney but with the gentrification there has been the displacement of loads of communities and what i think is really sad is that for care leavers, even though you may have been moved around a lot in this area, this area might be the only sense of normality you might have. I would love to come back to Hackney but I just dont think it's an option.'*

9.2 Even for those young people currently living in Hackney, there was a recognition that the limited housing options for care leavers (and young people in general) may

require them to seek accommodation outside of the borough which would have implications for their existing social networks:

*'I would also like to stay in Hackney, but it's just getting too expensive. With the gentrification and cost of living, it doesn't look like I will be able to stay for much longer.'*

*'The previous care leaver has said a lot of what i wanted to say, in particular, housing and finding a home in Hackney worries me quite a bit, like a lot of people living in Hackney we see a lot of new flats being built, there's an increase in gentrification which is driving up rents in London and the cost of living in London also. You ask anyone where they are going to live, are you going to live outside of London, most are saying yes and that is very scary because what if all your social networks and all your family, friends and love ones are in Hackney and then you have to move out, then it feels like you are really having to fend for yourself.'*

- 9.3 For those care leavers who chose to go to university outside of London and seeking to return to Hackney, this was felt to be particularly unfair, as most would also be over the age of 21 to be able to qualify for housing support.

*'There was a situation where before I went to university outside of London, and I was living there for 3 years and before my old Social Worker told me that I would be able to get support for housing and things when I got back from university, but when I got back I don't really get any support and now I am told that I am too old.'*

*'Yes, I did an extra year in college so that's why when I finished I was 22. It's just so unfair, there is such a big push around education and for care leavers to make something out of our lives and to be productive and then you do it like going to university, and then there is no real help or reward for it.'*

- 9.4 Living out of borough also meant that young people were not entitled to the same array of benefits and entitlements as those living in the borough:

*'In Hackney I don't have to pay up until the age of 25 as a care leaver, but in Newham I have to pay. You cannot imagine how much they are charging me for a small studio. I have been trying to get in touch with my social worker to let her know that I just cannot afford the council tax here in Newham because I am not working and just getting the support from Universal Credit. This is how I am surviving, but the money they are asking for Council Tax would mean that I would have to pay them all the support I am getting from Universal Credit.'*

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## Introduction

### What is Lambeth's Offer to Care Leavers about?

Lambeth's Offer to care leavers is a summary of the support we can provide as you begin adult life. For instance help with your housing, getting a job, getting into university and much more. The following information will give an overview of what our team of Personal Advisors can do to support you.

What sort of things are included in the Care Leaver offer?

To keep it brief and clear what Lambeth is offering you, we have broken the offer down into six sections:

Preparing to Live Independently

Your money

Your home

Education, employment and training

Health and Happiness

Participation in society

### What is meant by a Care Leaver?

Care leavers are young people who are 16 – 25 years old, who have been 'looked after' at some point since they were 14 years old, and were in care on or after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. They are entitled to some ongoing help and support from children's services after they have left care (the leaving care age in England is 18 years, but some young people leave care at 16 or 17). There are different categories of care leavers depending upon your age, when you were in care and for how long. You may also be entitled to a leaving care service if you were placed with a friend or relative under a Special Guardianship Order.

If you are classified as a *'Former Relevant'* care leaver, you will receive the full leaving care service, but please speak to your Personal Advisor or Social Worker if you are not already clear about which category you come under. For more information about the categories and the type of service you can expect to receive have a look at the "Service Entitlements – Care Leavers" document.

### 21 – 25 years old

If you are 21 – 25 years old and in Higher Education, you can continue to receive the same support as a Former Relevant Care Leaver. Even if you are not in Higher Education, you can still access some advice and support from us, but you may find that you don't need the same level of assistance as when you were younger. For instance, you may have a difficult situation with a neighbour and just want some advice about how to manage that, so you could call us to talk it through with a PA. Or it may be that you want more in-depth support if there are a range of things that you're struggling with, in which case we may allocate you a PA and complete a pathway plan with you.

You can contact our duty phone number on phone: 0207 926 6315 to request assistance.

### **Pledges**

We have made a list of promises which guarantee looked after children and care leavers that we will provide consistent support to improve their life chances and quality of life. These pledges include: helping you to stay safe, enabling you to make a difference, helping you to stay happy and healthy, supporting you to be successful and preparing you for your future.

<https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/children-looked-after-and-care-leavers/our-pledge>

### **Don't live in Lambeth?**

Whilst some of the information on this website is relevant to Lambeth care leavers whether you live in the borough or not, there will be some services that you won't be able to access if you are not a Lambeth resident. We are keen to support you with finding out what's available locally to you, to make sure that you still have access to the resources you need. Sometimes we will contact the care leaver's team in your area for information, and some of the organisations we work with also operate in other areas of London and the UK.

## Preparing to Live Independently

### What is a Personal Advisor (PA)?

Lambeth's Personal Advisors are a team of friendly and helpful workers who work with care leavers once they turn 18. As you begin to make independent decisions as a young adult, your Personal Advisor (PA) will provide you with advice, information and guidance to help you make the best choices. Your PA will be your go-to-contact, meeting you in your home or in the community, and you will hear from her / him at least every 8 weeks (often more). You can also contact your PA in-between meetings if you want some advice, or even just to say hello.

With your agreement, your PA will also work with other agencies to make the transition into adult life easier for you. This may include health, housing, colleges / universities, DWP, probation and community organisations.

If you are 16 – 18 years old, your Social Worker will continue to be your worker.

Do get in touch with your Personal Advisor or Social Worker if you see anything in this offer which you are interested in.

### Your Pathway Plan

Around the time of your 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, your Social Worker will complete a pathway plan with you. This plan will help you and those around you identify what support you need to prepare you for living independently as an adult. It will also help you to think about things like your goals for your education, where you want to live, and your relationships. The plan is for you, so it's important that you have your say and can talk about what's going well, but also any worries you might have. The plan will be reviewed every six months, to make sure it's still relevant for you.

You will continue to have a pathway plan until you are at least 21 years old (or older if you are in higher education).

If you want to learn more about what's in a pathway plan, have a look at this 'Become' factsheet: [http://www.becomecharity.org.uk/media/1414/factsheet3\\_pathway\\_plans\\_english.pdf](http://www.becomecharity.org.uk/media/1414/factsheet3_pathway_plans_english.pdf)

### Learning new skills

Most of us look forward to having more independence and eventually moving on to our own accommodation, but it can also be a hard time for young people and so it's important to be well prepared for such a move. Your carer or keyworker will help you learn skills so you can feel more confident when living independently in the future. This will include things like:

- Budgeting your money each week so you have enough money to pay your rent and bills.
- Preparing and cooking meals so you can eat cheaply and healthily.
- Looking after your living space and doing minor maintenance.
- How to get along with your neighbours and resolve problems.
- Making and attending appointments independently (ie GP, housing).

To plan for your transition, it's also important to think about who you can rely upon to offer support when needed, and ways to reduce the pressure on you - including managing feelings such as loneliness or stress.

### **What Happens Next?**

When you and your PA think that you have done well with developing your independent living skills, the next step for you may be to attend the What Happens Next course. This is a 6 – 8 week course (one night a week), which tells you about what to expect when you get your own flat, and your rights and responsibilities when you have a tenancy. The course gives you lots of good information about subjects like your tenancy agreement and legal issues, who to go to for help, setting up utilities and paying bills, effective communication, and how to keep yourself safe in your home. There will be guest speakers, and these may include other care leavers to give you lots of valuable tips from their own experiences.

Once you have completed this course, you can discuss with your PA about whether you are ready to receive a bidding number for your own tenancy in Lambeth (see accommodation section for more information). You will only be eligible if you are a former relevant care leaver between the ages of 18 to 21 years old, your PA assesses you to have the skills to manage a tenancy (with the right support), and have an immigration status such as British citizenship or Leave to Remain which means you are eligible to access public funds to support your tenancy.

### **Gracefields Hub**

The 18+ team is currently based at Gracefield Gardens in Streatham. We have other services join us there to make it easy for you to access their support (ie DWP, Drive Forward and DASH / Brooks). It's a bit like a one-stop shop! More information about these other services can be found on this website, or speak to your PA.

### **Become Coaching**

If you want a bit of extra help from someone independent to think about your life and the changes you'd like to make, then you might benefit from the Become Coaching programme for care leavers. Coaching isn't the same as having a counsellor, mentor, or adviser. In coaching, you learn how to create goals for yourself, and move towards the life you want. Its free, and they will even pay for your expenses when you attend sessions:

<http://www.becomecharity.org.uk/for-young-people/the-become-coaching-programme/>

# Money Matters

## Financial guidance

What financial support you may be able to access depends upon your age, whether you are working or in education, and whether or not you come under the 'former relevant' group of care leavers. So we have a separate Care Leavers' Financial Guidance document which can be found on the homepage, your PA can go through this with you.

Now that you're 18 you will no longer receive a weekly leaving care allowance. If you are not receiving an income from employment, apprenticeship or in Higher Education then you will need to make a claim for benefits for your weekly income and rent.

If you don't have British citizenship or a biometric card, you may not be entitled to public funds such as Universal Credit, and so your Personal Advisor will speak with you about what financial support you can access.

## Regular income

We have a dedicated work coach from DWP who you can support you with gaining financial independence. With your permission, we'll share your details with the work coach to make sure you get all the help you need to get a job, training, some education or general help with money. Even if you're in education, you may be eligible for some financial support. The work coach also has access to great apprenticeship opportunities. If you are eligible to apply for benefits, your work coach will meet with you prior to your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday to help you apply for benefits so that everything is in place for when you turn 18. If you're not in education and chose to look for work instead, its still best to apply whilst you are looking for that great job, as sometimes it can take at least a month for your first pay to come through from your employer.

Check to see if you are eligible for universal credit here:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/universal-credit/before-you-apply/Check-if-youre-eligible-for-Universal-Credit/>

Visit the TURN2US website for more money advice <https://www.turn2us.org.uk/>

## Budgeting

We want you to learn how to manage your finances and feel confident that you can do this well. Making sure you have enough money for all your bills can become stressful though, so we also want you to have enough support when things are difficult. Budgeting might seem like an annoying job, but it is important to learn this skill so you can have enough money to cover your rent and other living costs. Thinking about your spending now can help you to develop good habits which can last a lifetime. Your PA and keyworker / carer can help you with preparing your own budget plan, and there are also lots of good tools around to help you stick to a realistic budget.

Work out your budget with the Citizens Advice Bureau budgeting tool:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/budgeting/budgeting/work-out-your-budget/>

### **The Share Foundation**

The Share Foundation runs a Junior ISA Scheme for looked after children. An ISA is a savings account where money can be kept and gain value, and the Share Foundation sets this up on your behalf and puts £200 in your account to get you started. You can only access the money after you turn 18 years old, and your PA will help you to do this. <https://sharefound.org/>

### **Council tax**

If you are a resident in Lambeth and a former relevant care leaver, your PA can help you apply for the Care Leavers Relief Scheme so that you do not have to pay council tax. This scheme is currently valid until your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.

# Your Home

## Where can I live?

There are several different types of accommodation available to you, depending upon your age and how independent you are. The main options are outlined below. To help decide what's best for you, your PA or Social Worker will need to understand how you are getting on with developing your independent living skills - feedback will be needed from your foster care or keyworker, some direct observations of you completing tasks may take place, and your engagement with the What Happens Next programme will also be considered. All of this information will be part of your pathway plan, and your progress will be reviewed regularly as we want to make sure you have the right support to eventually manage your own tenancy (if this is the best option for you).

## Staying Put

You may already be living with a foster family, and if you're happy there and your carer is in agreement, then you can still stay there between 18 to 21 years old. This arrangement is called 'Staying Put'. Staying with your carers will enable you to continue your relationship with them, and it can be really helpful instead of feeling the need to rush into having your own place. We will support you to decide upon an agreement with your carer, which will set out what support you will receive, what is expected of you and your carer in the home, and the financial contribution from you and the leaving care team. You will usually have to claim housing benefit to help cover the costs of your rent, and make a contribution towards bills.

## Semi Independent Accommodation

This is generally shared accommodation, some of which will have staff on site 24/7. There are also some units that are standalone, and with less support. You will have access to a keyworker who will help you with learning the skills for living independently. Many young people will either stay with their foster carer, or move into this sort of accommodation between the ages of 16 – 18 years old. Remaining in this accommodation may still be an option if you are over 18 years old, but this has to be agreed with your PA, and you will be expected to be regularly meeting with your keyworker and making use of the support being offered.

## Pathways Housing

When you are 18 and becoming more independent, you can access Pathways Housing, where you will be responsible for paying your own rent via housing benefit or wages. There are different organisations which provide this housing, such as Evolve, Camberwell Foyer and Look Ahead. The accommodation may be in a larger hostel, but there are also some smaller units. You will also have access to keyworker support, and sometimes workshops such as budgeting and cooking skills. Pathways Housing is a good option as a stepping stone towards finally managing your own tenancy.

## University Accommodation

If you intend on going to university then staying in Halls of Residence may be an option. University accommodation can offer you invaluable opportunities to meet new friends. You're also likely to be conveniently placed close to your lectures and social events. You're also likely to be well supported by the university if anything goes wrong or you need assistance.

## Friends and Family

Some young people chose to live with friends and family once they turn 18. This can be a big adjustment for both you and your family, and so it's important to talk this over with your PA or social worker, to help you think through the pros and cons, and consider what support might be needed if it's the right arrangement for you.

## Social Housing Tenancy (Council Flat)

Social housing is low rent accommodation that is offered on a secure basis, and as a Lambeth 'former relevant' care leaver, you may eventually be offered priority bidding to get your own tenancy. This will be either a studio or one bedroom flat. You will be responsible for paying the rent on time, paying for all of the bills such as gas and electricity, furnishing the flat (with our support), and reporting any maintenance issues. This is a large responsibility, and you only have one chance for a priority bidding number, so we need to know that you are definitely ready to manage a tenancy before we will consider making an application for you. For some young people, the reality of being in their own flat is not as they had imagined, and it can be a real struggle to keep on top of all of the demands and responsibilities – this has sadly led to some people losing their tenancy.

Your PA will be responsible for assessing whether you are ready for your own tenancy, and you will be expected to have successfully completed the What Happens Next course.

To be eligible for a bidding number, you will also need to be a former relevant care leaver between the ages of 18 to 21 years old, and have an immigration status such as British citizenship or Leave to Remain which means you are able to access public funds to support your tenancy. There are some people who, in special circumstances are able to access a tenancy after they turn 21 years old (i.e. if you have deferred getting a tenancy due to attending university). After we have made the recommendation to housing, the final decision about providing you with a bidding number rests with Lambeth Housing.

## Setting Up Home Allowance

When you leave care to set up home for yourself independently, we will provide you with financial support to buy household essentials such as furniture and kitchen appliances. Lambeth will provide you with up to £2,000 to purchase these items and an additional £200 cover for broken or forgotten items. If you are a parent, we will provide an additional £500 to support you to buy furniture for your child / children.



### Living outside of Lambeth?

If you don't live in Lambeth, and want to stay where you are currently living, we will help you to explore what options are available to you in that area. Unfortunately it can be difficult for young people to access social housing in some areas, and you may not be put on the council's priority bidding list. In this case you could consider either renting privately, or moving back to Lambeth for a year to access social housing here and then do a housing swap in the future. Your PA can help you think through the possibilities.

## Education, Employment and Training

### Financial Help

There is a lot of support available to help you continue with your education, or to find that ideal job. Please see the financial guidance on the homepage to find out what funding is available from Lambeth. We can also help you to apply for scholarships if you intend to go to University, or support you to access some smart clothing for job interviews. You can also access the 16-19 Bursary Fund, which means that if you are in a Further Education college you can get paid up to £1,200 a year to support you during your college course.

### Drive Forward - Help with Finding Work

We have a dedicated Employment Consultant from Drive Forward who works alongside us in our office at least once a week, and is also available to meet in their Waterloo office. This person will help you think about what your skills and strengths are, match you to employers who might spark your interest, and support you to secure an interesting job. Drive Forward can also offer you peer mentoring from other care leavers; updating CVs and interview skills; working through difficult workplace scenarios; mindfulness courses; and ongoing support once you've started your job. You can have a look at everything they offer here <http://www.driveforwardfoundation.com/momentum-made-by-you/>

### DWP Work Coach

We also work very closely with DWP and have a dedicated care leavers work coach who is sometimes based from our office. The work coach is able to support you with any issues with your benefits, but also help you to find employment or an apprenticeship. Check out DWPs website where you can search for jobs <https://findajob.dwp.gov.uk/>

You can also get advice from the National Careers Service <https://www.gov.uk/careers-helpline-for-teenagers>

### Lambeth Apprentices

Throughout the year we have new apprenticeship opportunities available within Lambeth Council. These are in areas such as ICT, Recruitment, Customers Services, Adults Social Care and Parks. As a Lambeth Apprentice, you will gain experience in the normal day-to-day job, and also have off-the-job training to complete a course of study. There are also a range of other apprenticeship opportunities through Lambeth Council's supply chain and partners.

If you think you're not quite ready for taking on an apprenticeship, you could join the Lambeth Council Pre-Apprenticeship training programme. This will help prepare you for employment, and in particular apprenticeships. The programme consists of personal development workshops, workplace visits and one to one tailored support to help you overcome your barriers to employment. On completion of the course, you will be given the opportunity to apply for, and interview for apprenticeships within Lambeth Council, or with one of their partners.

## Employment and Education Fairs

As there are so many different organisations we work with, sometimes we will organise an employment fair where we get lots of businesses and providers in one place to offer you advice, and hopefully an interview. The fair is specifically aimed at care leavers, but there are other employment fairs going on in other areas of Lambeth and wider London.

We also work with some of the following agencies who can help you into employment or training:

Working Chance, work with young women leaving care to find employment  
<https://workingchance.org/>

Spear is a personal and career development programme for 16-24 year olds, offering six weeks of coaching workshops to get you work-ready, and 12 months of personalised in-work support  
<http://www.resurgo.org.uk/spear/>

## Continuing in Education?

Going on to college, or even university may be a sensible move for you, and could improve your chance of getting a good job later. We can support you with enrolling in a local college, or making an application for a university. You are entitled to certain financial support if you go on to further education such as studying A-Levels, or starting training or an apprenticeship. There is also support if you are a new parent returning to education, and you may be eligible to have child care costs paid for. Check out more information here about what is on offer, including info about bursaries and student finance, courses and qualifications <https://www.gov.uk/browse/education>

## University

You may be entitled to various grants, loans and other benefits if you are studying. Also see the financial guidance document on the homepage for details about other support, including a Higher Education Bursary of £2000 and holiday rent. Some of the universities have their own care leaver leads, who can offer a lot of good advice, and preparation for entrance interviews, so ask at your chosen university about this. Our Virtual School are also available to answer any tricky questions.

You can apply for a scholarship with Unite Foundation to have your bills and rent paid for a year!  
<http://www.unitefoundation.co.uk/get-a-scholarship/>

Click here for more information about student finance <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance>

## Virtual School

Our friendly teachers in our Virtual School work hard to help make transitioning between schools, colleges and university run smoother for you. If you are in education (age 16-18) they will offer you support via your PEP meetings to help you achieve to the best of your ability. If you are retaking your Math and/or English at GCSE level or below, you can get 10 hours of 1:1 support to assist you to achieve the grade that you need, and also 10 hours of 1:1 support with English if you are doing an ESOL course. The team are also available to meet with you if you are at University, to discuss any

problems you may have and signpost you to services that can offer you further support. Any meetings with the Virtual School can be made through your SW or PA. Your contact at Lambeth Virtual School is: Prash Sothinathan [PSothinathan@lambeth.gov.uk](mailto:PSothinathan@lambeth.gov.uk)

### **Learning needs**

If you are struggling with your learning and you'd like some extra support, or if this is putting you off attending college / education, please do speak with your PA about this. Sometimes a bit of extra support and understanding can make a big difference to your learning. We can also help you apply for an education, health and care plan (EHCP), which is for young people aged up to 25 who would benefit from some extra support. For further information about support in Lambeth for educational needs, visit the Lambeth SEN Local Offer website <https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/send-local-offer/young-adults-14-to-25/going-to-college-sixth-form-or-university>

### **Reach for the Stars**

We hold an event every year which you will be invited to, so we can all celebrate the achievements of our young people, including your academic successes. This is a fun time of music, food, games and good company, and often involves a dress up theme. We hope that you can join us!

# Health and Happiness

## General health

When you leave care it is important that you have access to good health advice. If you're under 18, you will be supported by the looked after children nurse, so that we can make sure you're getting good medical support. After your last health assessment when you are 18 years old, the nurse will provide you with your 'Health Passport'. This has information about your health history and advice for your future health needs. You can give a copy to your G.P. Most health services for adults are accessed through your G.P. so your PA can help you to register with a local doctor if you change addresses, and also with a dentist and optician. NHS Go is an online confidential health advice service designed by young people, with lots of important and interesting information about your health. Download the app here <https://nhs.go.uk/>

## Lambeth Leisure Card

A great way to stay healthy is to stay active through sports and fitness. If you'd like to get involved with local sports groups, or use a leisure centre to go swimming or to the gym, then you may qualify for a Lambeth Leisure Card which will give you free access to a network of leisure centres across the borough. You can get some great tips about how to stay healthy here: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/>

Or why not join a sports team <http://blackprincetrust.org.uk/activities/>

## Not feeling yourself?

Being healthy isn't just about your physical body, but also about your mood. We all have times when we're feeling low, angry, or anxious, but if you feel like this a lot of the time, you can talk with someone to help figure out why you're not feeling so great. You can speak with your G.P about these things, or your PA could help you to access someone from the Well Centre (<https://www.thewellcentre.org/>), or a similar service close to where you live.

You might find one of the mindfulness groups at Drive Forward helpful for learning how to manage stress.

There are also websites that have lots of helpful suggestions:

Young Minds <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/>

To chat to a professional online, try the Mix <https://www.themix.org.uk/> or Kooth <https://kooth.com/>

If things are really difficult for you and we think a higher level of support might help, then we can refer you to one of our CLAMHs workers (if you're 18), or to one of the adults mental health services such as the Living Well Hub (<http://lambethcollaborative.org.uk/lwn-hub>), or the Community Mental Health Team via your GP.

## Don't forget...

If you drink alcohol or use cannabis (or something harder), and this is worrying you or you'd just like some advice, you can speak to your PA or someone at DASH (<https://www.brook.org.uk/find-a-service/regions/london/dash-lambeth>).

Talk to Frank is also a good website which has lots of interesting info and live chat for instant advice: <https://www.talktofrank.com/>

### Sexual health

It's important that you can feel confident accessing sexual health services to keep you and your partner safe if you are sexually active. There are a lot of places in Lambeth to get this support, including the Well Centre, or you can speak with someone at DASH (previously Brooks). They currently have a clinic at Gracefield Gardens on Wednesday and Friday afternoons, but also work out of colleges and can see you at home

<https://www.brook.org.uk/find-a-service/regions/london/dash-lambeth>

Try this NHS website for online information, including where to find your nearest centre, <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/> or <https://sxt.org.uk/>

### Young parents

If you are pregnant and you're not sure what to do, don't worry in silence. Speak to your GP or PA. If you don't feel comfortable talking to them, you can also speak with someone from DASH <https://www.brook.org.uk/find-a-service/regions/london/dash-lambeth>

If you have made a decision to continue with your pregnancy, there is a lot of support available. We work closely with the Family Nurse Partnership who provide advice and emotional support for young parents living in Lambeth. We can also help you with practical things such as living arrangements, getting baby items together, and parenting classes or young mother's groups.

### Staying Safe

Some young people are suffering from bullying, sexual abuse, being used by gangs, being targeted online, or are experiencing physical or emotional abuse from a partner or family member. For more information about the many ways that other people can make you feel unsafe, have a look at childline <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/abuse-safety/>

It's really important to us that you do feel safe in your home, college, online, and in your community. If you are worried, please speak with your social worker or PA, or another adult you trust.

The Mix also provides free professional help on the phone, by email or on their webchat, and they have a phone counselling service - Freephone: 0808 808 4994 (13:00-23:00 daily). Check out their website with lots of helpful information [www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)

The Gaia Centre in Lambeth provide emotional and practical support for women who have experienced domestic violence. This is a free and confidential service, ph 020 7733 8724.

## Participation in Society and Key Contacts

### Visions of Success

Visions of Success is the voice of Children in Care in Lambeth. It is a group which represents young people in care and helps to identify ways that Lambeth children's social care could be improved. Visions of Success members talk to senior managers about changes they want to see and get to meet fellow young people in care, or care leavers who have had similar experiences.

For more information, contact Victor Searle, our participation officer who runs the group on ph: 020 7926 0648.

Also check out these other opportunities for having your say

<https://www.coram.org.uk/youngpeoplesprojects>

### Community Groups and Activities

There is a lot going on in Lambeth and being involved in different activities can be a good way of meeting new people, learning new skills, and just generally having fun. Explore the rest of the Lambeth Made website for ideas <https://lambethmade.com/>

Interested in spoken word, recording and theatre? Oval House and the Big House have some exciting opportunities <http://www.ovalhouse.com/participation>

<https://thebighouse.uk.com/the-big-house-programme/>

A range of activities for care leavers are also being offered by the Change Foundation

<https://www.thechangefoundation.org.uk/programmes/>

### Advocates and Independent Visitors

Advocacy is about supporting young people to make sure that their rights are respected and their views and wishes are heard. An advocate can provide support by helping you to say what you want; making sure you understand your rights; and obtaining the services you are entitled to. Independent Visitors are adult volunteers who are matched with young people in care to form more informal, long-term friendships and can also provide some advocacy.

Speak with your SW / PA if you want to request this support, or contact Loretta Nwanze (participation officer) on: 020 7926 7084

We work with Barnardos, who provide the service <http://www.barnardos.org.uk/london-advocacy.htm>

### Accessing Your File

If you make the decision that you would like to gain access to your file, you can request this from the age of 18 years. It is a good idea to speak to your PA before making the final decision, as reading your file may be a difficult experience, and we can help you to think about whether the timing is

right for you, and whether you might benefit from some support when you are going through the information.

### **Making a Complaint**

You are entitled to let us know if you are not satisfied with the support you are getting, or feel that you have not been listened to. We hope that you will first speak with your PA or SW about this, as it may be an issue that can be easily resolved. If this approach doesn't work, or you don't feel comfortable talking to your worker, then you could request contact details for their manager to speak to. If you find that you are still not being listened to, then you can make a formal complaint with the Complaints and Business Support Team. Email them on [CBSTeam@lambeth.gov.uk](mailto:CBSTeam@lambeth.gov.uk).



## Transformation programme – Housing-related support pathway for young people

Briefing - Lambeth Together Executive Group

15 February 2022

Author: Sophie Konradsen, Acting Lead Commissioner, Supported Housing Commissioning Team

### 1. Background

1.1 The Council currently commissions two separate housing-related support options for young people aged 16+:

- Supported housing: This accommodation is offered to young people who are homeless and are considered vulnerable or in priority need in accordance with The Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. This accommodation is commissioned via block contracts of a total of 225 units with four providers. The majority of these are across two large hostels; the Centrepoint service at Camberwell Foyer (80 units) and Evolve Housing + Support at King George' House, Stockwell (87 units).
- Semi-independent living services: This accommodation is offered to children looked after and care leavers who are assessed as being entitled to accommodation under Section 20 of The Children Act 1989. The majority of this provision is outside South London and is commissioned via spot purchase agreements, currently accommodating 159 young people.

1.2 In October 2020, a needs assessment was successfully completed, which reviewed the needs of all young people who require housing-related support. This work focussed on four key areas:

1. Prevention of homelessness/ increased use of foster care and staying put arrangements
2. Assessment of needs
3. High quality, specialised housing-related support provision
4. Successful moves into independent accommodation with appropriate transitional support

1.3 Although the focus of the needs assessment was on all young people requiring housing-related support, specific attention was given to the following sub-groups: looked after children, care leavers, children in need, homeless young people, unaccompanied asylum seeking children, young parents, victims of contextual harm (sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour), young people involved in gangs and serious youth violence, young people with mental ill health and those identifying as LGBTQ.

1.4 The needs assessment was developed through three main sources of information: data, consultations, and review of best practice from elsewhere. Data was collated and analysed from databases including Northgate and Hope (Lambeth Council Housing), Mosaic (Lambeth Council Children's and Adult's Social Care), Police, MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference for victims of domestic abuse),

and provider's local databases. Consultations were conducted with all relevant stakeholders including young people, providers, Children's Social Care, Housing, Public Health, and the Youth Offending Service. Best practice was reviewed from services and Local Authorities across the United Kingdom.

- 1.5 The needs assessment highlighted significant problems with our current processes and services, which resulted in the services failing to meet young people's needs. With that in mind, an options appraisal was presented to Children's Services Management Team and Resident Services Management Team in December 2020. A direction of travel was approved to embark on a large-scale transformation programme, which will include greater emphasis on prevention services including mediation and floating support, de-commissioning existing services, opening smaller more specialist housing-related support provision across one pathway that will meet the needs of all of our young people, and commissioning floating support services for young people in independent living to improve chances of tenancy sustainment.

## 2. The transformation programme

- 2.1 The programme commenced in January 2021, with a target date of completion of March 2023. Not only will this innovative and trailblazing programme drastically improve outcomes for young people, but it is projected to make significant cost savings.

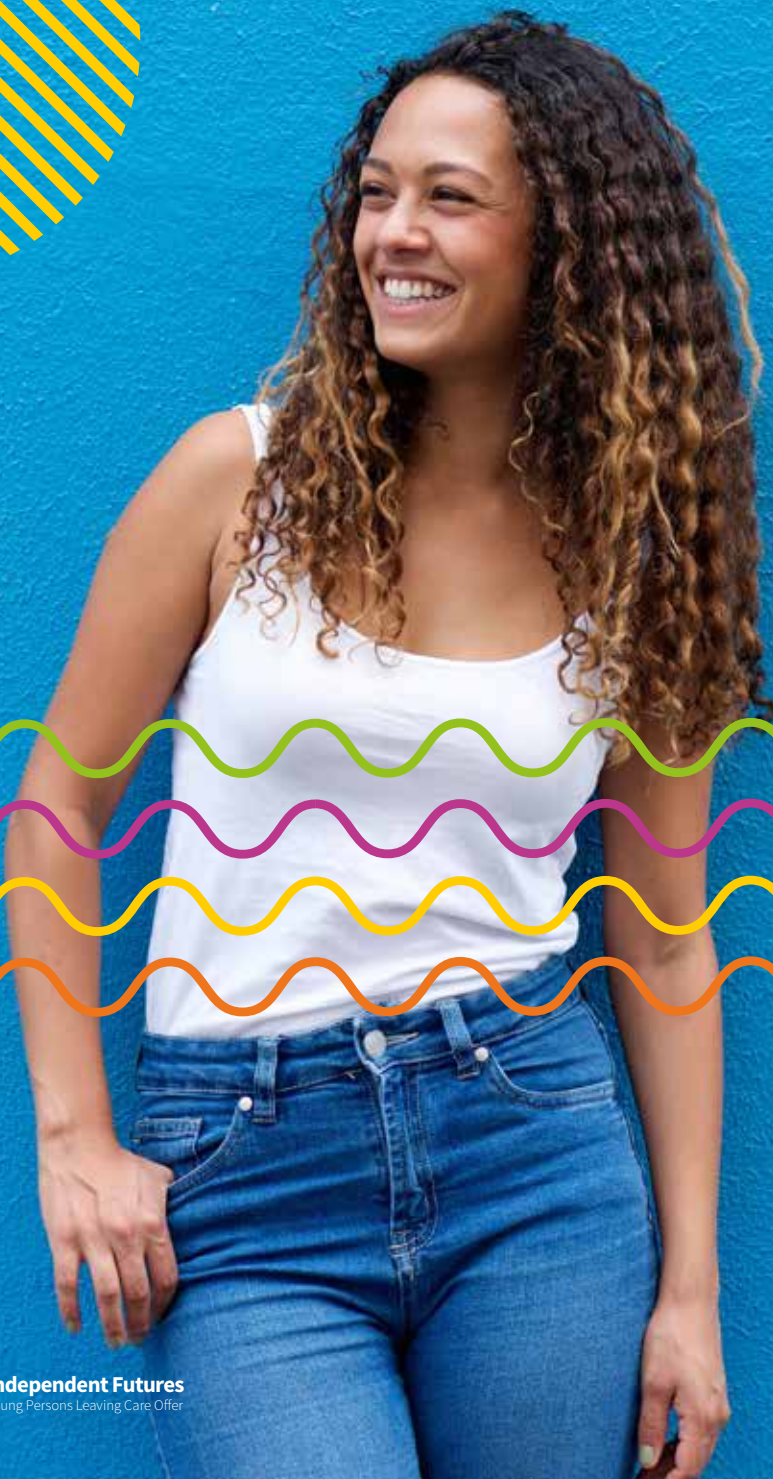
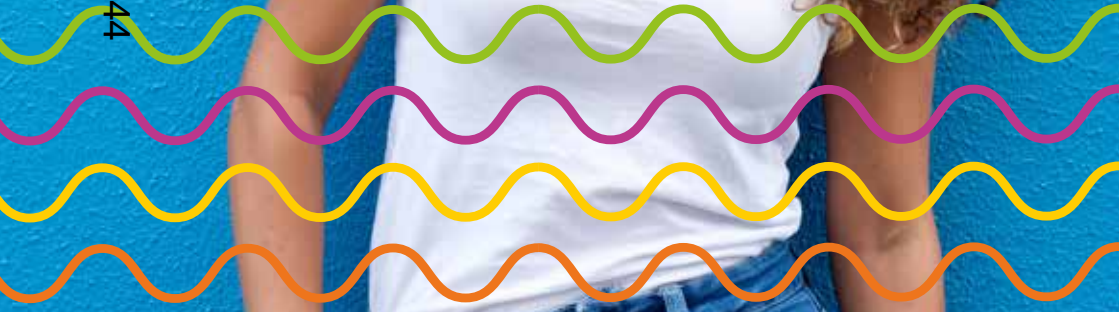
### 2.2 Work includes:

- De-commissioning all current housing-related support services including the two large hostels in Stockwell and Camberwell,
- Commissioning several non-accommodation-based services including mediation; floating support; early intervention; floating support; and housing first,
- Commissioning approximately 200 units of small, specialist housing-related support provision within Lambeth that will meet the needs of all young people,
- Setting-up an integrated youth hub, with co-location of all youth services including Children's Social Care; housing; sexual health; substance misuse; Youth Offending Services; education, training, and employment; and contextual safeguarding,
- Commissioning a clinical psychology service to provide interventions both directly and indirectly to those young people provided a service through the pathway,
- Commissioning an innovative two-year pilot housing-related support service outside South London for high risk young people,
- Working with Centrepoint to build 40-50 modular homes in Lambeth for employed young people.

# Independent Futures

Young Persons Leaving Care Offer





# 1. Introduction

As your corporate parent, we want to ensure that you have the best start into adulthood. This leaflet tells you about all the support that we have for you in Islington as a care leaver. We know that preparing for adulthood is difficult and we want to make sure that this big change is made as easy as possible.

In Islington we strongly believe a good way of doing this is through building relationships with you and working in a way that acknowledges that your journey to this point may have been difficult. We believe that by working in this way, we are better placed to then understand your needs and support you to make important decisions. Our way of working is called motivational practice.

We have consulted our Child Active Involvement Services (CAIS) and other care leavers. They have helped us make this leaflet. We will continue to listen to your views to make sure the services we offer are what you need.

To be able to get the support set out in this leaflet, you must have been in care for at least 13 weeks between the ages of 14 and 16 (including your 16th birthday) or for 13 weeks after your 16th birthday. If you are not sure whether you qualify for support, then ask your young person's adviser or social worker.

Your Young Person's Adviser will talk with you about the information in this leaflet.





Your pathway plan is written with you and important people in your life.



## 2. The Law

### A Young Person's Adviser (YPA)

A Young Person's Adviser is a professional who will support and work alongside you to achieve the goals that the law says we need to support you on. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 says that if you want the support of a Young Person's Adviser you can have one until the age of 25. This is to try to make sure care leavers receive similar support to young adults who live with their families.

Your YPA is there to help you to prepare to live independently and to offer advice and support after you leave care. YPAs get involved in discussions about your needs and your pathway plan.

Your YPA will sometimes speak to professionals that you are working with, support and guide in all ways that they can. If you want to get the support outlined in this booklet, they will need to sometimes speak to some of these agencies: your Educational Establishment, your Employer, Housing, Benefits Agencies and the Home Office. We will not share any unnecessary information.

If you have a social worker or support worker in an adult social care services or a social worker in the Transitions Team they would also work alongside the YPA.

Your pathway plan identifies the work you would like us to undertake with you and says exactly how we will support you to achieve this. Your pathway plan is written with you and important people in your life. It is important that we review your pathway plan with you at least every six months to make sure we are giving you the right support.

Wherever possible, we will try to let you keep the same YPA - where this is not possible, we will explain why. The amount of support that you receive from your YPA will depend on what you want and your circumstances.

Your leaving care team will consider with you what additional support you may need. You might, for example, need extra support because:

- ▲ You have special educational needs or a disability.
- ▲ You have a significant sensory impairment such as being Blind or Deaf
- ▲ You have significant physical or mental health needs.
- ▲ You are an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC) and your immigration status is unclear.
- ▲ You are in or leaving custody or you have had contact with the criminal justice system;
- ▲ You are a young parent; or
- ▲ You are going through a difficult time in your personal life.

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## Leaving care before turning 18

- ▲ We will encourage you to stay in care until you are 18. Most young people still live at home with their families at this age.
- ▲ If you choose to leave care before age 18, the law says we must provide you with suitable accommodation if you are not able to stay with your family.
- ▲ We encourage you to make decisions for yourself which are safe and in your interest. This may also involve returning to the care of your family or legally being cared for by a carer, friend or other family member before you are 18 years old.
- ▲ If you remain with your family for six months before your 18th birthday and we do not have a care order for you, you will no longer be considered a care leaver for purposes of the support in this booklet. Your social worker will advise you of what support we shall continue to provide to you.

### Other support we offer

Some young people leaving care tend to live with important people in their life until they are ready to move into their own accommodation.

We also use semi-independent accommodation to help you start to prepare to manage a tenancy. Just because you are leaving care, or have already left care, we haven't stopped caring about you. We want to make sure that you feel safe and supported and know where and who to go to for advice and help.



## A. Accommodation

**We want you to feel safe, supported and happy in your placement and in your home.**

If you are aged over 18, your YPA will help you to find suitable accommodation. This might involve:

- ▲ Working with your YPA and our Housing Team to agree suitable housing options for you, including supported accommodation, where you will be supported to develop the confidence and skills to manage your tenancy. You will be expected to make some financial contributions to your living arrangements and also claim Housing Benefit where this is appropriate to you.
- ▲ If it is your wish and that of your foster carers, you can remain with your foster carers under what is called a 'Staying Put' arrangement. This means that you stay with your foster carers until you are 21. You would begin to develop skills around managing your tenancy and make some financial contribution to their household.
- ▲ If you want to stay in a family type arrangement, we can support you to live in supported lodgings where you can live with a family or another adult. You would make some contribution to the household finances as you develop your skills around managing a tenancy.
- ▲ Support to access different housing options including social housing, when you are ready (this is accommodation managed by Islington Housing Department or a housing association).



- ▲ We will invite you to our Independence Skills training group to prepare you for managing your tenancy. Your YPA may also encourage you to attend other specific workshops to help you develop necessary skills to hold down a tenancy.

- ▲ Advise you about holding down a tenancy, including avoiding rent arrears, paying bills and budgeting. We know it can be very exciting but also challenging having your own place for the first time. We will do whatever we can to support you.
- ▲ Helping you to claim universal credits if needed.
- ▲ We will offer floating support and access to mentoring as you move towards living and settling into your own home. A floating support practitioner is a professional who can come and work with you on a variety of areas in your home. These include, help with managing your benefits and help with managing a tenancy/bills.
- ▲ Practical support with moving into and furnishing your new home. This includes help moving your belongings and ensuring your home is safe.
- ▲ Supporting you if you are struggling, including helping if you are threatened with the loss of your tenancy.

▲ We know that moving home and living on your own is a very enjoyable yet daunting experience and so, we will come and visit you more frequently in the first three months of you moving home. We would like you to tell us what is most suitable for you.

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We will do whatever we can to support you.



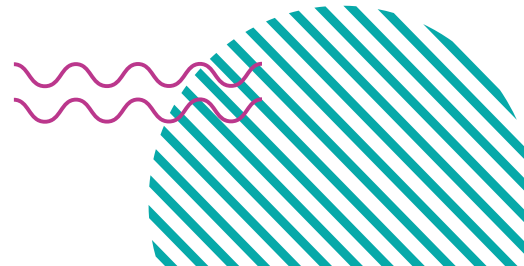
## B. Education, Training and Employment

**Being in Education, work or training is really good for your well-being, your health, your confidence and for meeting new people and gaining new skills.**



We will offer you:

- ▲ Careers support and advice as well as access to our dedicated advisors in the Virtual College.
- ▲ If you attend University, a bursary of £1000 per term to support with the costs of attending university during your undergraduate study.
- ▲ Care leavers are a priority group for the 16-19 Bursary Fund, which means that if you are in a Further Education Course or College you can receive up to £1,200 a year to support you during your college course, this is subject to attendance. If you are not able to claim this directly from the college due to your immigration status, we shall make a similar payment to you.
- ▲ Support to meet your public transport costs when travelling to training, school/college, apprenticeships or job interviews. You will need to use the cheapest option available on public transport.
- ▲ Support to buy tools, equipment, essential clothing, and books which are necessary for your course up to £150 per year.
- ▲ If you are in employment- including an apprenticeship, employment, education or training and your income falls below £100.00 per week after you pay your rent and water bill, we will top up your income to ensure you have £100.00 per week to live on.



- ▲ Support if you choose to go to university, such as helping you obtain tuition fees and maintenance loans, apply for bursaries that maybe available, travel costs at the start and end of term, and making sure you have somewhere to live during the holidays. We will help you choose the right course and university that matches your talents and interests.
- ▲ Opportunities for work experience, apprenticeships and employment within the Council.
- ▲ If you have an Education, Health & Social Care Plan (EHC Plan) we will monitor this and attend any EHC Plan review meetings.
- ▲ The chance to attend and help organise celebration events where young people achieve education, training and employment milestones.
- ▲ Access to programs of support, if you find yourself not to be in education, training or employment including access to work or education support for young people with additional needs or disabilities.

Support to buy tools, equipment, essential clothing, and books which are necessary for your course up to £150 per year.

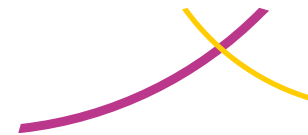
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## C. Health and well-being

You are important to us and we want you to feel happy, safe and well. We will provide the following support and guidance:

- ▲ Work with you to make a 'health passport' containing key information from your childhood (for example, when and if you have had immunisations) and your current health needs. At your last Child Looked After Review before you turn 18 years old, we shall give you your health passport.
- ▲ Offer information on healthy living and community support and advice, including access to health led initiatives such as Choice and Control. This is a national initiative to support you with managing your emotional health by accessing activities that you define as improving your mental well-being.
- ▲ You can come along to the Healthy Futures Drop-In every Wednesday between 2pm and 4pm at 3 Elwood Street, where you can see our nurse and other support services in confidence and without an appointment.
- ▲ Access to the Sexual Health Drop in Service from our LAC Health Nurse or Pulse as above, as well as ongoing support and advice on healthy relationships.
- ▲ Give information on getting help to pay for prescriptions if required.
- ▲ Support you to register with a local GP.
- ▲ Support you to move from CAMHS to Adult Mental Health Services if required.
- ▲ Provide information about counselling services that are available locally.
- ▲ Give you help with transports costs when attending health appointments if required.
- ▲ If you a young person expecting to become a parent, we will offer support and advice as well support from specialist services such as the Family Nurse Partnership.
- ▲ If you are a young parent, we will take an interest in your child/ren and support you to do the best for them. We will help you arrange childcare, if this is what you want.





- ▲ Give you information about health drop-in centres.
- ▲ If you have a significant sensory impairment such as being Blind or Deaf we will sign post you to the sensory outreach team to access any sensory equipment.
- ▲ If you are a young person aged under 18 living in accommodation other than residential care or foster care, we will support you with a contribution of up to £100.00 per annum towards glasses or NHS dental treatment, in addition to the NHS funding available.
- ▲ In consultation with your YPA if you need support with managing your emotional health and are not accessing mental health services, you will be able to draw on a fund of £500.00 under our Choice and Control Personalisation budget. To be able to obtain this funding, you would need to let us know how you believe you would benefit from the service and also talk to us about the outcomes you hope to achieve. You can use these funds for a specific item or a hobby that helps you manage your mental health.

Provide information about counselling services that are available locally.



## D. Finances

We will try to support you financially, just like any parent would for their child. This includes:

- ▲ Support to open a bank account if you don't already have one. You will also be provided with information on how to access your Junior ISA or any savings should you have these.
- ▲ Support to apply and obtain important identification documents like a passport and/or provisional driving licence. You will be entitled to one set of documents in the duration of your involvement with Independent Futures.
- ▲ Support to apply for benefits when you turn 18 and to liaise with the benefits agency when need be. Whilst your benefit application is considered, we will give you your weekly subsistence of £60.00 for up to 2 weeks while you make your application. If you have additional needs that relate to a disability, we will support you with payments if there is no additional means of claiming an interim benefit.
- ▲ If you have a job or an apprenticeship, we would want you to have £100.00 as a minimum weekly income after you have paid your rent and water bill. Should this be less, we may be able to top up your income to that amount.
- ▲ You will be supported to access the Residential Support Scheme which offers you the opportunity to access some council funding when you initially move into your permanent accommodation.
- ▲ Providing a leaving care grant of £1,500 for essential items when you move into your own home. We will also help you cover some of your moving-in expenses such as connection fees for a gas cooker, removal costs, annual TV license and household insurance for the first year only.



- ▲ You will not pay council tax until you are 25 years and living in London.
- ▲ If you are living in semi-independent accommodation and are aged 16-17-year-old you will have access to a care leavers fund of up to £300.00 per annum to use for: a choice activity such as a holiday, a hobby or birthday or celebration allowance. If you chose to, you can also access gym membership from Better Gyms by contributing £110 to your gym membership from your care leavers' fund.
- ▲ 18-21 year olds you will have access to a care leavers fund of up to £200.00 per annum to use for: a choice activity such as a holiday, a hobby or birthday or celebration allowance. If you chose to, you can also access gym membership from Better Gyms by contributing £110 to your gym membership from your care leavers' fund.
- ▲ 16/17 year olds in supported/semi-independent accommodation will receive a payment of up to £480.00 per annum for clothing or £40.00 per month.
- ▲ 18-21 year olds discretionary financial support in times of crisis/emergencies if all other sources of crisis payments, for example through the Job Centre, are not successful.
- ▲ 22-25 year olds, we shall advise you of relevant departments that can offer financial assistance such as food banks, Resident Support Scheme if you haven't recently drawn on these finances. We would only provide any financial support in highly exceptional circumstances.



## E. Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (uasc)

As an UASC we recognise that achieving a settled immigration status is very important towards building your life in the UK.

An unresolved immigration status can affect your ability to access further education, work, housing and welfare benefits. Independent Futures is committed to helping you to understand what your immigration status means and entitlements that are available to you.

We can only provide a service to you if you have an active application for Asylum if you are appealing this decision made not to grant you status. We cannot provide a service to you if you are in breach of Immigration Law as we would be breaking the law.

We will provide the following support and guidance:

- ▲ We will explain the processes that can be taken to achieve a settled status i.e. appeal processes, Indefinite Leave to Remain and British Citizenship.
- ▲ Your social worker or YPA will assist you with finding and accessing regulated and specialist legal immigration advice to help achieve this.
- ▲ We will work with you to ensure that you have a financial plan around your savings to enable you to make an application for settled status. This detail will be recorded in your pathway plan from the point you receive time limited leave to remain status.
- ▲ We also recognise that this period of uncertainty can be distressing for you to go through and your social worker or young person's adviser will help you plan for all possible outcomes. These will be recorded in your pathway plan.
- ▲ If you have received a negative immigration decision, we will assist you to obtain legal immigration advice on the merits of any appeal/fresh claim by supporting you to access organisations that assist with immigration for care leavers.

- ▲ If an appeal or fresh claim does not have merit, you will be given a Human Rights Assessment; taking into consideration all aspects of your life in the UK and any barriers to return to your home country.
- ▲ Independent Futures will assist with any Voluntary Return applications. You will receive assistance with making safe travel plans back to your country of origin and receive help to plan your life in your home country. This will be reflected in your pathway plan which you will be able to take with you upon return.
- ▲ We cannot offer you a service if you do not have an active immigration application and are in breach of immigration rules.

We will explain the processes that can be taken to achieve a settled status

▶ ▶ ▶  
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## F. Young people in custody

We understand that being in custody can be very difficult for young people and at times may mean that the significant people in your life are not able to support you due to a variety of reasons.

We hope that custody may give you an opportunity to reflect on actions.

- ▲ We will support you by visiting you monthly wherever possible and providing you with an opportunity to think about how reduce your offending. We will think with you about other opportunities that maybe available for you and how we support you to access this if you are not already doing so.
- ▲ If you are aged 18 and do not have any family providing you support, we will support you by providing a £15 per month allowance to cover your basic necessities. We would expect that you would take on employment in prison to support you.
- ▲ If you are aged 16 and 17 years old, you will receive a £10 per week as there are no work opportunities within the system to enable you to maintain contact with your family and also purchase basic necessities.
- ▲ Plan with you and your probation or Young Offender Service as to what support will be most helpful to you on your release including accommodation should you wish to access suitable accommodation.

### 3. Relationships

We will support you in all aspects of your life and make sure you have the support you need from others. As well as support from your Young Persons Adviser, we may be able to offer you additional practical and emotional support, such as through:

- ▲ Referral to a Grandmentor or other mentor service which is deemed appropriate.
- ▲ Providing you with an advocate should you need one.
- ▲ Where appropriate, continuing to support contact with the 'Independent Visitor' you had while you were in care;
- ▲ Help to maintain or regain contact with people special to you or who cared for you in the past, like former foster carers or social workers. This support will be available until your 19th birthday. After this, we would expect that you would be able to fund this out of your allowances.
- ▲ As part of our Independence Life Skills training, offer you workshops on Healthy Relationships.

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### 4. Participation in society

We want our care leavers to be active members of society, and to have all the chances in life that other young adults have. We can help you participate in society in the following ways:

- ▲ Providing information on groups and clubs you may wish to join;
- ▲ Informing you about relevant awards, schemes and competitions you can enter, in line with your talents and interests;
- ▲ Encouraging and helping you to enrol on the Electoral Register, so you can vote in elections;
- ▲ Informing you about voluntary work and apprenticeships that we think you may be interested in;
- ▲ Giving you advice and helping you to challenge any discrimination you face as a care leaver;
- ▲ Regularly update our website with information about the support available to you and things that you can do;
- ▲ We can advise and support you to keep yourself safe in the community and sign post you to services who can assist you such as police and adult safeguarding services.



## 5. Who can help me?

### Service Hours:

We are open Monday to Friday 9:00am to 5:00pm and generally work around those hours. However, depending on your needs and in agreement with your social worker or YPA, we shall visit you outside these hours as required.

You have said to us that you would like to be able to see a staff member outside the times that you work. Therefore, for a six-month trial period from September 2019, Independent Futures will remain open late one evening (Thursday) a week until 7:30pm to enable young people who are working, in training or education or unable to see their YPA during our normal working hours to be able to come in and see a staff member who can support them. There will be no petty cash payment made during these times.

We shall also have a telephone duty system that is dedicated to care leavers between 5:00pm and 10:00pm Monday to Friday and between 9:00am and 5:00pm at the weekends. The staff member will be able to offer telephone assistance on immediate issues you require support on and again we shall review the use and effectiveness of this support in six months to then decide if we shall continue to provide it if young people are making use of the service.

We will be contactable via **0207 527 8561** and **020 7527 8585** during these times.

### Key contact numbers for:

- Independent Futures Team 1 Duty: **020 7527 8561**
- Independent Futures Team 2 Duty: **020 7527 8585**
- Islington Housing Advice Team: **020 7527 2000**
- Education, employment or training support: **020 7527 2540 / 020 7527 8552**
- Service Manager **0207 527 7152**
- Head of Service: **020 7527 7236**
- Islington CAIS Team: **020 7527 8694**
- Action for Children: **020 7254 9408**
- Looked After and Leaving Care Dedicated Health Team: **020 7527 8810**
- Pulse Sexual Health Service Islington: **020 7527 1323**
- Mind Connect (Emotional Support): **020 7278 4224 / 07977 283 660**
- Islington Learning Disability Partnership **0207 527 6600**
- Islington Adult Social Care Service: **0207 527 2299**
- Islington Adult Sensory Outreach Team: **0207 527 7359**
- Islington Children Sensory Outreach Team: **020 7704 8127**



### Other places you can go for help:

1. Rees: The Care Leavers Foundation <https://www.reesfoundation.org>  
Provides small grants for care leavers aged 18-25
2. The care leavers association <http://www.careleavers.com>  
A charity aimed at improving the lives of care leavers
3. Become <http://www.becomecharity.org.uk>  
Online advice and information for care leavers
4. Propel <http://propel.org.uk/>  
UK Information on what support is available for care leavers at university
5. Shelter <https://england.shelter.org.uk> Provides housing advice
6. National government benefits calculator <https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators>
7. Citizens Advice Bureau <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk>

### Your right to be heard and taken seriously:

It is really important that your wishes, feelings, aspirations and views are always taken into account when decisions are made for you. Sometimes the decisions we may need to take are complex and we might not always get this right, it is helpful to be able to access someone who is independent from the local authority who can help us understand your wishes and feelings.

### Independent Advocacy:

An advocate is someone who understands the law, knows what our duties to you are and knows about your rights. An advocate can speak up for you or help you to speak for yourself. It's their job to make sure that you are listened to and that your issues are taken seriously. They can accompany you to meetings or help you put your areas of disagreement to us in a written complaint.

Advocacy is provided by the national charity, Action for Children who can be contacted on: **020 7254 9408 / 0800 043 9553.**

### Other rights:

- ▲ You have a right to see the information we keep about you, including the files and records written about you when you were in care. We will prepare you to read the files and support you to understand why some decisions were made for you.
- ▲ We want to make sure every young person leaving care has the support to achieve their goals in life.
- ▲ If you have a disability or a communication difficulty, we can offer you additional advice to support you to access to community based services.

What's it called?	Who can get it?	How much? How often?	Comments
<b>Living Allowance (Subsistence)</b>	Young people aged 16-17 who are living in supported housing or semi-independent accommodation and are in full-time education or looking for work or training.	£60.00 per week	You are expected to let us know of any other income that you might have. If you have any other income, we may reduce the amount that we pay you. Young mothers can get Income Support (through Job Centre Plus) and so are not entitled to this living allowance.  Young people living with foster families or in residential care receive their income in the form of allowances from their foster carers.
<b>Rent/ placement costs</b>	Young people aged 16-17	The full cost of your rent (or your placement costs). This is inclusive of utility bills (bills for gas and electricity and water).	When you are 18 years old you become responsible for your own rent. If you are in education or training/ working and you are on a low income, or you are not working when you turn 18, you will be able to claim Housing Benefit to enable you to pay your rent. We expect you to make an application for your Housing Benefit within 2 weeks of your 18 <sup>th</sup> Birthday.
<b>Finance</b>	Young people aged 16-17 who are living in supported housing or semi-independent accommodation	Clothing up to £480.00 per year allowance for,  Care Leavers Fund of £300	Payments need to be agreed by your social worker in discussion with you. This allowance is to purchase clothing and is £40.00 per month.  Agree in advance with your social worker or young person's adviser how you would like to receive this payment. It could either be as a gift or a payment made to your account. Purchases need to be agreed with your social worker or YPA and supported by receipts. £300.00 is to be split between one important festivity such as Ramadhan, Dewali, Christmas or Hanukkah and your birthday or for use on a hobby or holiday. If you chose to, you can also access gym membership from Better Gyms by contributing £110 to your gym membership from your care leavers' fund.

What's it called?	Who can get it?	How much? How often?	Comments
<b>Care leavers fund</b>	Young people aged 18-21	£200 for your birthday/ celebration or a holiday or hobby	Agree in advance with your social worker or young person's adviser how you would like to receive this payment. It could either be as a gift or a payment made to your account. Purchases need to be agreed with your social worker or YPA and supported by receipts. £200.00 is to be split between one important festivity such as Ramadhan, Dewali, Christmas or Hanukkah and your birthday or for use on a hobby or holiday.  If you chose to, you can also access gym membership from Better Gyms by contributing £110 to your gym membership from your care leavers' fund.



What's it called?	Who can get it?	How much? How often?	Comments
<b>Education Travel Allowance: FE</b>	Young people aged 16-24 living in supported housing, semi-independent accommodation or living independently and who are in further education or training.	Costs of travel from home to college during term-times only.	<p>If these costs are not met through other sources, such as free student travel in London (and elsewhere). Students must apply for Student Travel Card/Oyster Card.</p> <p>Travel costs are for the cheapest reasonable journey by public transport. To claim allowances in relation to employment, apprenticeship, and education, you need to provide us consent to liaise with relevant professionals.</p>
<b>Learning Agreement Allowance</b>	For young people aged 16-24 who are engaged in an agreed program of education or training that is recorded in a learning agreement with Independent Futures	£2.50 for each training or guided learning hour, up to a maximum of £30.00 per week. The allowance is paid on the basis of attendance.	<p>Not available for those young people who are entitled to full 16-19 Bursary. Evidence of regular attendance in line with the learning agreement is essential, and verified on a weekly basis.</p> <p>To claim allowances in relation to employment, apprenticeship, and education, you need to provide us consent to liaise with relevant professionals.</p>
<b>Education/ Employment/ Training income guarantee</b>	Young people living independently, in supported housing or semi- independence, who are in education, training, apprenticeship or employment with training.	After meeting rent, and water, and the cost of travel to college, training or work or apprenticeship you income will be at least £100.00 per week.	<p>Evidence of regular attendance at college/ school/training or work is essential.</p> <p>All your income from: Wages; 16-19 Bursary, Learning Agreement Allowance; Training Allowance; and Benefits is taken into account. If the money that you have left after paying your rent, water and your travel costs, is less than £100.00 per week, then we will top up your income to the guarantee level of £100.00 per week.</p> <p>To claim allowances in relation to employment, apprenticeship, and education, you need to provide us consent to liaise with relevant professionals.</p>

What's it called?	Who can get it?	How much? How often?	Comments
<b>Education Items: Further Education</b>	Young people living independently, in supported housing or semi-independence and who are in school, Further Education, or training.	Up to £150.00 per year for books, materials, equipment, registration/ enrolment fees, trips etc.	<p>Where recommended by tutor in writing, or where this is part of your course.</p> <p>To claim allowances in relation to employment, apprenticeship, and education, you need to provide us consent to liaise with relevant professionals.</p>
<b>Higher Education Fund</b>	Young people studying in Higher Education undertaking a course that is not a degree.	£2000.00 paid in two instalments in the first two terms of a course in Higher Education	<p>Payments of £1,000.00 in each of the first two terms. Young people must produce a letter from their tutor/ admissions office each term to confirm continuing attendance on the course before payment is made.</p> <p>To claim allowances in relation to employment, apprenticeship, and education, you need to provide us consent to liaise with relevant professionals</p>
<b>Higher Education Support Grant</b>	Young people studying in Higher Education	£1,000.00 per term whilst studying. We will contribute to your learning as long as you are eligible for student finance. This means, we will pay a maximum of 12 payments for any young person.	<p>Paid in termly payments of £1,000.00 each. Young people must produce a letter from their tutor/admissions office each term to confirm continuing attendance on the course before payment is made. Young people are also required to supply a copy of their rent statement to show that they are not in rent arrears at the start of each term. The support grant is first used to clear any outstanding arrears, and the balance paid to the young person. This Higher Education Support Grant includes your higher education bursary and Islington's contribution to your living costs. For students undertaking any postgraduate learning, we will only offer a higher education support grant if you have not claimed your 12 payments.</p> <p>In the event that your course will end after your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday- agree a plan with you as to how payments will be made. You would not have the support of an YPA beyond your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.</p>

What's it called?	Who can get it?	How much? How often?	Comments
<b>Graduation grant</b>	For new graduates to meet the costs of attendance at graduation events	£150.00	A letter from the university setting out arrangements must be produced by the young person.
<b>Higher Education Holiday Accommodation</b>	Young people in Higher Education who are unable to stay in their term-time accommodation during a vacation.	Negotiable, to cover the cost of vacation accommodation.	Requires minimum of 12 weeks' notice by young person. Wherever possible this accommodation will be in a student halls type setting in borough or as close to Islington as possible. This is a separate additional contribution in addition to your Higher Education Support Grant.
<b>Emergency/ Crisis Payment/ food etc.</b>	Young People living independently or in supported housing or semi-independence aged 18-21	A one-off discretionary payment, or parcel of food, depending on circumstances and assessment, to provide food, or payment of essential utility bills.	Young people are expected to have tried all other sources available first including assistance available through Jobcentre Plus. Young people may be provided with food vouchers, or a food parcel or have money added to a pre-payment key rather than receive cash.
<b>Support for Interviews training/ starting work or apprenticeship</b>	Young people in semi-independent and independent accommodation, or aged over 18	Cost of interview clothes/travel up to £100.00 per year.	Discretionary paid only where there is evidence of an interview. Young people will be supported to use services such as "dress- for-success" and "suited and booted". Additional costs which are essential to a young person being able to take up employment may be considered.
<b>Support for starting work or apprenticeship</b>	Young people in semi-independent and independent accommodation, or aged over 18	Living allowance at £60.00 per week and cost of travel to work during the first month (or in advance of the first salary payment if less than a month) where no other income is available from Jobcentre Plus or the employer.	Discretionary paid only where other funding is unavailable and where there is evidence of a confirmed job. Additional costs which are essential to a young person being able to take up employment may be considered  To claim allowances in relation to employment, apprenticeship, and education, you need to provide us consent to liaise with relevant professionals.

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What's it called?	Who can get it?	How much? How often?	Comments
<b>Passports and Documentation</b>	Young people in semi-independent and independent accommodation, or aged over 18	A one off payment to cover the cost of the actual documents required.	All young people should be provided with a only one set of documents - Passport, Birth Certificate, Travel Document or Permit to Travel whilst awaiting a Home Office decision if applicable. Includes the costs of any Photographs.
<b>Provisional Driving Licence</b>	All young people	Cost of a provisional licence	A one off payment to cover the cost of the actual documents required.





What's it called?	Who can get it?	How much? How often?	Comments
<b>Settled Status for UASC</b>	All UASC who are eligible to apply for indefinite leave to remain and are unable to access legal aid.	Cost of indefinite leave application at the time of application.	Where you are not able to obtain your settled status via the use of legal aid, we will support you with making this application. To do so, we would need you to have worked in partnership with your YPA on a financial savings plan for your status ahead of this application and not able to obtain any support around this.  To claim allowances in relation to your immigration need to provide us consent to liaise with relevant professionals
<b>Contact Arrangements</b>	Young people aged up to 19 living in supported housing or semi-independent accommodation or living independently.	A contribution towards the costs of maintaining contact with family or carers.	Arrangements should be discussed at a Statutory Review or Pathway Plan Review. This support is discretionary. Any amounts discussed at a Review are provisional until agreed by the Independent Futures Service Manager.
<b>Health support</b>	Young People under 18 not living in foster or residential care	Up to £100 per annum contribution towards glasses or NHS dental treatment (over and above the NHS entitlement)	Requires written confirmation of costs from Optician/Dentist
<b>Living Allowance whilst in Further Education</b>	Young people aged over 21 who are in full-time education or training without another source of income	Up to £60.00 per week whilst studying and ineligible for benefits. An application for rent costs may be considered depending on income and circumstances.	Discretionary payment. Wherever possible young people will be supported to find suitable alternative courses which enable them to be self-funding. Young people may need to move to part-time study in order to be entitled to Job Seekers Allowance and Housing Benefit. The young person and their personal adviser must complete an application if an alternative is not available.  To claim allowances in relation to employment, apprenticeship, and education, you need to provide us consent to liaise with relevant professionals

What's it called?	Who can get it?	How much? How often?	Comments
<b>Living Allowance while making a fresh claim for benefits</b>	Young people under 21	Up to £60.00 per week for up to 2 weeks while making a fresh claim for benefits, (e.g. when first living independently at 18)	Young person must provide evidence of making a fresh claim for benefits. Other sources of income / savings must be taken into account.  To claim this allowance, you need to provide us consent to liaise with relevant professionals at the Department of Work and Pensions.
<b>Setting Up Allowance (SUA)</b>	Young People who are moving into their own independent accommodation	£1500.00 (Up to £300.00 can be made available when a young person moves to furnished accommodation)	For essential items of furniture, equipment.  £300 can be made available for portable items before the move to permanent housing (e.g. for young people living in furnished supported accommodation and semi-independent accommodation.)  You would need to discuss and agree this with your YPA. This offer is only available for young people aged 18 and over.
<b>Moving-in Expenses</b>	Young People who are moving into their own independent accommodation	Up to a total of £750 for: Connection fees for a Gas cooker/ washing machine: up to £130 Removal costs: £75 TV Licence: £160.00 Household (contents) insurance (one year): up to £150 Moving-in starter pack: £55 Health & Safety pack: £65 Decorating grant: £125	These allowances are to be used only for these specific purposes. Young people should use recommended insurers.  Details of moving-in starter pack - The Health & Safety pack comprises: Two smoke detectors, one carbon monoxide detector, door security chain, chub lock, fire blanket and first aid kit if not provided by housing.  Decorating grant only available where there is no grant payable by the housing provider







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# ABOUT OUR PROJECT

## THE HOUSE PROJECT ISLINGTON

The House Project Islington started in August 2018. We support care experienced young people as they make transitions to greater independence by helping them to:

- develop a community of support
- gain essential skills for independent living
- move-into their own property and make it their home

A group of 10 care experienced young people joined the first cohort of the project – they refer to themselves as the OG's (the originals). Our second group named themselves the Next Steps and are now settling into their properties. Our third group is underway - their team name is New Beginnings.

The House Project Islington has achieved lots of positive outcomes so far, including:

- Eighteen young people have moved into their own properties
- Young people gaining new skills and opportunities including residential trips, social activities and workshops on topics including budgeting, cooking, healthy relationships and DIY
- Firm friendships developing between young people
- Evidence of young people feeling a sense of ownership and growth of new confidence and skills
- Young people gaining new education and employment experiences – several young people have found permanent employment since joining the project
- New partnerships developing between the leaving care team and local agencies to broaden opportunities for young people
- Young people co-designing and delivering training sessions

## WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE THINK?

[HEAR WHAT OUR YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THEIR LOCAL HOUSE PROJECT](#)

## WHAT DOES EVERYONE ELSE THINK?

“ The House Project Islington is a great opportunity for young care leavers as it offers more support with independent living skills and when they eventually move into their own properties. The community aspect is also very good and needed for young people especially when living by yourself ”

– Kiri Scamp - Young Person - Chair of Children's Active Involvement Service (CAIS)

## LATEST NEWS



### **WARWICKSHIRE'S HOUSE PROJECT RECOGNISED FOR SUCCESSFULLY SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE IN RECENT OFSTED INSPECTION**

The Warwickshire House Project, is delighted to be judged as good in all areas for its children's services according to a recent Ofsted inspection.

[READ MORE](#)



### **MARK WARR MEETS WITH THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF CAMBRIDGE TO DISCUSS ISSUES FACING CARE LEAVERS**

We were delighted to be part of the Foundling Museum's roundtable with The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge on Wednesday 19 January 2022, to highlight current issues surrounding our young people leaving care, share our perspective of the challenges our care leavers face and the opportunities that are available in improving their futures.

[READ MORE](#)



### **NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2022**

The pandemic has been a challenge for a number of reasons and where the impact has been positive, it has largely been related to the value of relationships and the way that individuals have been supported in, and by, their communities.

[READ MORE](#)





THE NATIONAL  
HOUSE PROJECT



[NHP PRIVACY POLICY](#)   [NHP SAFEGUARDING POLICY](#)   [NHP COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE](#)   [HOW DO WE KEEP YOU SAFE?](#)



						Care Leavers have to be former relevant and need to evidence their readiness to live independently through through Care Housing Panel. The Council's Children's Leaving Care Team can sponsor care leavers for housing priority. If care leavers have not moved in to permanent accommodation within 6 months then the application will be included on lists for all suitable and reasonable vacant homes that become available.											
Waltham Forest	WF Care Leaver Offer	691	317		21			25	1			£2,000					
						Priority is for Band 1 for 3 months.											
Wandsworth	Wandsworth LC Offer	638	252		21			25	1			£2,100					
						Banding priority for care leavers is a specialist queue called the Social Care Queue. CL are supported by PA through this process.											
Westminster	Westminster care leaver offer	689	166					(21) 25				£2,000					
						Priority is until 21 or 25 if in education.											



**Scrutiny Commission**

**LIH and CYPS**

**Housing Support for young  
people leaving care**

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# Levels of demand



- Hackney's Leaving Care Service provides an offer of support to all young people with leaving care rights between the age of 18 and 25. **This includes a statutory duty to support care leavers to access suitable accommodation between the ages of 18 and 21.**

Page 66 As of January 2022, the Service was supporting a total of **399 care leavers** age 18 to 25, including **296 young people age 18 to 21.**

- **The number of care leavers is going up over time:** there were 316 at the end of March 2019, 335 at the end of March 2020, which had risen to 376 at the end of March 2021.
- As of January 2022, there were 413 children in our care, **129 of them are age 16 or 17.**
- The forecasted spend within the Children and Families Service for care leavers accommodation for 2021/2 is **£4.9 million.**

# Care leaver accommodation options 18 - 21



Accommodation Type	Numbers	2021/22 Budget Forecast
Semi independent accommodation	145	£3,806,000
Independent tenancy	27	0
Staying Put (with former foster carers)	48	£1,052,000
Supported Lodgings	6	£76,000
Living with friends or family	20	0
Prison	24	0
No fixed abode/homeless	2	0

# Supported accommodation options for care leavers 18 - 21



**Staying Put:** This is our preferred option for care leavers and most similar to the experience of most 18 year olds growing up in Hackney

- **Trend:** Currently 54 young people in Staying Put, up for 33 in March 2021.
- **Challenge:** If all our foster carers kept all their children Staying Put until 21, we would have few fostering places available for younger children.

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## Supported Lodgings

- **Trend:** Since 2020 we have recruited 12 Supported Lodgings hosts.
- **Challenge:** Promoting the potential benefits of this option to care leavers.

## Semi Independent Accommodation

- **Scope:** Ranges from floating support (5 hours plus key work support) to 24 hour staffed provision
- **Challenges:** Variability in quality, availability of provision in the areas we want it (both local and in areas where looked after children have lived before turning 18), costs.

# New Young People's Pathway



Re-procurement of semi-independent contract informed by scoping exercise led by Hackney of Tomorrow around what care leavers want from supported accommodation. 30 young people living across 7 semi-independent homes were consulted.

- 80% felt adequately supported when they moved into their current homes;
- Only 63% felt they received the support they needed in their homes;
- On average, young people said they were accessing 2.5 hours of key worker support per week;
- 70% said they felt harassed rather than supported by staff at their homes if they fall into rent areas;
- 90% felt the home was adequately preparing them for independent living;
- Only 57% described their homes as safe and secure;
- Only 37% felt that anti-social behaviour in their homes were dealt with effectively;
- 77% said they felt financially trapped in their accommodation;
- Only 57% said their homes were in a good state of repair.

**50 concrete recommendations were made, which informed the new service specification.**

# New Young People's Pathway - from April 2022



## The Ambition:

- To increase the number of semi-independent homes available for care leavers in Hackney and neighbouring boroughs;
- To procure a service that is able to meet the complexity of young people's presenting needs;
- To secure good homes for care leavers at competitive rates (7 year contract);
- To offer a flexible model of support, which can respond to changes in young people's circumstances over time;
- To have high expectation of key worker support e.g to work within a psychologically informed environment (PIE) or with a trauma informed approach;
- To offer affordable accommodation, particularly for young people who are working;
- Support young people in understanding their realistic move on options and empower them to be able to access private rented accommodation when they are ready.
- The service specification was co-produced with care leavers and young people who have experienced homelessness.

# What we know care leavers want long-term



- To know, long before they turn 21, where they will live going forward;
- To have stable, affordable accommodation options;
- To have some feeling of agency in important decisions about their housing future;
- To have access to consistent advice about their housing options from housing specialists;
- To have a choice about where they live: Not all young people want to live in Hackney. *As of January 2022, 148 care leavers were living in Hackney, 66 more living in neighbouring boroughs, 185 were living further afield.*

# Nominations for quota places



## Leaving Care approach to nominations

- Is the care leaver approaching or recently turned 20?
- Do they want to live in Hackney?
- Do they have leave to remain in the UK?
- Are they likely to be able to maintain a tenancy?
- Do they have rent arrears?
- Are they most 'in need'?

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## Practice dilemmas

- How do we make the nominations system as fair as possible, given demand outweighs supply?
- Should the nomination process be a positive incentive for those doing well, or to be used for those most 'in need', in line with the Council's wider lettings policy?
- How do you determine who is most 'in need'?
- How do you manage young people's expectations?
- What can we do for those care leavers who do not want to live in Hackney?



# What we think would help



- A dedicated leaving care housing officer, who can offer advice and support to our care leavers;
- Access to specific private rental schemes;
- A rethink of the quota system;
- New, diversified housing opportunities for care leavers with a range of strengths, needs and ambitions;
- Clear pathways that are easily communicated.

# Housing demand and affordability



- In the last 10 years Hackney has seen the second highest jump in property prices increasing by an average of 105 % to an average of £604,000
- 8500 households on the Housing Register
- More and more households are in priority need; over 4,700 applicants are considered to be in acute need and many have multiple and complex needs including previous care leavers
- Homelessness levels are also increasing- 2020/21 up nearly 9% and up over 52% from 2017-18
- Number of social housing lets reduced from 1638 in 2010 to 409 in 2019/20 (215 were one bedroom properties)
- Demand for one bedroom properties is the highest - 2500+
- Renting is a challenge for single individuals with rents for an average one-bedroom dwelling in the borough standing at 61.2% of median pre-tax pay in London, one of the highest ratios in London.
- Only affordable option in PRS in Hackney and most of London is shared accommodation (benefit cap)

# Current offer - social housing and financial



- Quota : 18 social housing properties ringfenced and allocated pa
  - 16 x 1 bedroom properties
  - 2 x 2 bedroom properties
- Waiting times for HR bidding is c.3 years for 1 bedroom, c.12 years for 2 bedroom
- Cannot gauge where or when these will become available - main reason for empty properties is the death of a tenant
- Maintained quantum figure for care leavers quota despite reduction of 75% in available properties
- Setting Up Home Allowance of up £2000 to all care leavers assessed as ready for a tenancy, to support them in furnishing their first property.
- Deposit and 1 months rent in advance and support to find affordable PRS if prevention of homeless ie 56 days prior to homelessness
- Peer Landlord Scheme - Thamesreach shared accommodation with support

# Housing Strategy -accommodation for Care Leavers



- A new Hackney Housing Strategy 2022- 2027 under development
- Care Leavers will form a priority objective
- Development of a new housing pathway
  - Step up/down
  - Housing Supply options (inc Hackney Housing Company)
  - Support models
  - Single pathway / service?
  - Personal Housing Plans
  - Corporate Parent Principle

# Care leavers outside the borough



- Whether careleavers can join the Housing Register in the borough they live, depends on that local Councils allocation policy.
- Hackney care leavers only have an automatic local connection to the area outside the borough due to being a care leaver if they have been resident in that area for a continuous period of 2 years or more, of which some of the 2 year period falls before the person attained the age of 16.

If they move to an area outside Hackney after they are 16 they would have to meet any residency requirements that area impose. In most areas they would have to show a level of housing need to access the register.



# Next Steps

- Dedicated workstream with managers from BHN & LC
- New process to utilise homeless preventions monies earlier in the process whilst able to show DLUCH return on investment via HCLIC
- Continued housing advice on affordability and realistic options directly with CL and in relevant professional settings
- Explore setting up a LBH Youth & Careleaver Homeless Prevention forum
- Design & implement a finding and keeping my new home toolkit
- Amend Lettings Policy to accept care leavers housing application at age 18 whilst still in care placement
-

# More than a leaflet- what is personalised housing advice?

The Benefits and Housing Needs Service are committed to providing meaningful advice and assistance to all households in housing need in the borough.

- **Personal Housing Plans** - developed by residents with Housing Advice staff - a realistic plan agreed and developed with the resident that documents the needs and aspirations allowing residents to set their goals. Outlines key actions required by residents with the councils support. Documents all options and assists with decision making. Resident can use to chart their progress.
- **Income maximisation and affordability** - Officers will assist residents to maximise their income through welfare benefit advice, access to employment and training advice through JCP and Hackney Works. Utilising LHA rates, rental market data and household circumstances residents will be able to identify affordable areas to concentrate their efforts.
- **Securing Properties** - Utilising contacts already in place the B&HN Service can assist residents to negotiate the Private Rented Sector, ensure that landlords and agents fulfill their legal requirements and that properties meet required standards. Residents have access to HomeswapperUK that advertises Social Tenancies throughout the UK

# Any Questions?



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**London Borough of Hackney**  
**Meeting the Housing Needs of Young People Leaving Care**  
**Prepared August 2021, updated February 2022**

**Accommodation support and Leaving Care rights**

Hackney's Leaving Care Service provides an offer of support to all young people with leaving care rights from the age of 18. As of July 2021, the Service was supporting 374 care leavers between the ages of 18 to 25 years old. Whilst there are some nuances related to the types and level of leaving care rights, essentially children accrue leaving care rights by virtue of being looked after by the Local Authority before turning 18. Whilst children can come into our care at any age, a significant proportion of the children that come into care in Hackney do so in adolescence. Where a young person aged 16 or 17 approaches the Council as homeless they are automatically referred to Children and Families for an assessment. Wherever safe to do so, the child is supported to return home to their family or extended network, but where this is not possible, they are brought into our care. If a young person refuses to be looked after, they can be offered accommodation on grounds of being in need of housing only, but in Hackney it is rare for a 16 and 17 year old to be offered accommodation other than under the Children Act 1989.

One of the most important statutory duties of the Leaving Care Service is the responsibility for ensuring that care leavers have access to suitable accommodation from the age of 18 up until their 21st birthday, whilst support is focused on other aspects of their life, in the hope of preparing them as best we can to live independently by their 21st birthday. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced a new duty on leaving care services, to support care leavers who request support until the age of 25. This does not include a duty to provide accommodation. Instead, the focus is on supporting care leavers, where required, to access universal services and improve their outcomes, which can include accessing housing support from Housing Departments and Adult Social Care support, in addition to support around accessing further education. As of July 2021, the Leaving Care Service supported 122 care leavers aged between 21 and 25. Approximately a third of these young people were receiving support primarily in relation to their access to further education or training; a third had complex needs which required additional support; and the remaining third needed a shorter period of advice or assistance.

***Accommodation options for care leavers age between 18 and 21***

There are a range of options for care leavers accommodation between the ages of 18 and 21, which include:

- ***Living with former foster carers:*** This can be arranged under a Staying Put agreement, which is supported financially by CFS;
- ***Living with friends and family:*** Care leavers may choose to make their own arrangements, for example, returning to their parents' home, or staying with their partners or extended family members;
- ***Living in private rented accommodation:*** Care leavers can choose to rent privately, which can happen particularly if they are not happy with the alternative options we are able to offer them;
- ***Living with supported lodgings hosts:*** Since 2020 we have recruited Supported Lodgings hosts. These are people who are willing to offer a young person a room in

the home and a level of support, but significantly less than would be expected of a foster carer. All supported lodgings hosts are carefully assessed and approved via our Fostering Panel. As of July 2021 we had successfully recruited 10 supported lodgings hosts.

- **Living in semi-independent accommodation:** CFS commissions a range of semi-independent providers to offer homes to care leavers. These range from low support (shared accommodation with floating support, generally 5 hours per week), to high support arrangements, in homes that are staffed 24 hours a day.

Out of a cohort of 342 care leavers aged between 18 and 21 supported by the Leaving Care in 2020/21, they were living in the following types of accommodation arrangements:

<b>Accommodation Type</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
Semi Independent accommodation	215
Independent tenancy	40
Staying Put (living with former foster carers)	33
Living with friends or family	25
Prison	21
No fixed abode/homeless	8

### ***The costs of semi-independent provision***

The average weekly cost to the Leaving Care Service of each semi-independent accommodation home is £430 per week. This cost - on average - will include a breakdown of £280 towards rent and £150 towards key worker support. The cost of supported lodgings is significantly lower at £241 per week. The cost of Staying Put for a child living with an in house foster carer is £410 per week. This was increased from £241 a couple of years ago, to match what a foster care receives when a child is 17, in the hope of supporting more Staying Put arrangements. The numbers of Staying Put arrangements have more than doubled in this period. With independent fostering agencies, the Staying Put fee is negotiated on a case by case basis, but we always start from the same point in terms of matching what the carer is currently receiving for the child when they are 17. In practice this varies between £300-£400 per week, however, the main difference is that the independent fostering agency will charge Hackney a supervision fee of between £100-£150 per week for the ongoing supervision and support of their foster carer, which makes these arrangements slightly more expensive than with in-house carers.

The 2020/21 budget forecast for care leavers accommodation is £4.9 million. This includes £3.8 million semi-independent accommodation, £1.05 million on Staying Put and £76,000 on Supported Lodgings arrangements.

Semi-independent accommodation can vary significantly in the level of staffing and support and therefore the cost. Whilst most care leavers are able to manage in shared accommodation, with floating support, where a young person's needs are more complex, high levels of on site support may be required into their young adulthood. As of January 2022, bespoke arrangements were made for 6 young people with complex needs at a cost of more than £1,000 per week each.

### **New Young People's pathway for semi-independent accommodation from 16 to 21**

With the contracts for these services coming to an end in 2020, the process of recommissioning began in 2019. This was informed by a consultation exercise with young people living in semi-independent homes, co-designed with and led by our Children in Care Council, Hackney of Tomorrow. Thirty young people living across 7 semi-independent homes were consulted. Feedback shared included:

- 80% felt adequately supported when they moved into their current homes;
- Only 63% felt they received the support they needed in their homes;
- On average, young people said they were accessing 2.5 hours of key worker support per week;
- 70% said they felt harassed rather than supported by staff at their homes if they fall into rent areas;
- 90% felt the home was adequately preparing them for independent living;
- Only 57% described their homes as safe and secure;
- Only 37% felt that anti-social behaviour in their homes were dealt with effectively;
- 77% said they felt financially trapped in their accommodation;
- Only 57% said their homes were in a good state of repair.

Fifty concrete recommendations were made, which informed the new service specification, which aimed:

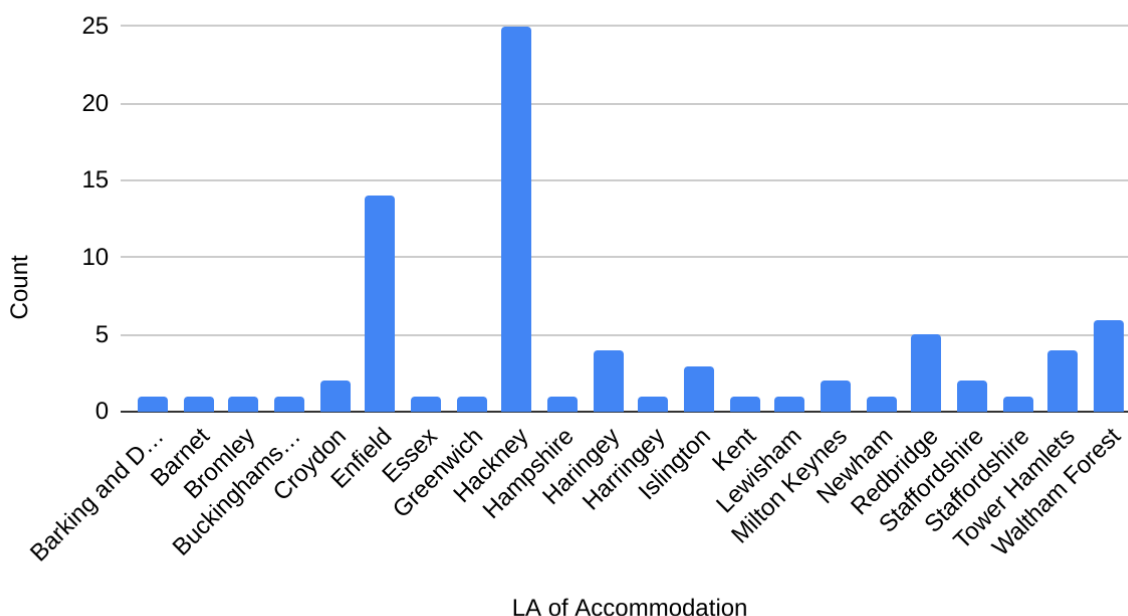
- To increase the number of semi-independent homes available for care leavers in Hackney or neighbouring boroughs;
- To procure a service that is able to meet the complexity of young people's presenting needs;
- To secure good homes for care leavers at competitive rates (7 year contract);
- To offer a flexible model of support, which can respond to changes in young people's circumstances over time;
- To have high expectation of key worker support e.g to work within a psychologically informed environment (PIE) or with a trauma informed approach;
- To offer affordable accommodation, particularly for young people who are working;
- Support young people in understanding their realistic move on options and empower them to be able to access private rented accommodation when they are ready.

The re-procurement process has now concluded, with new 7 year contracts for semi-independent homes for 16 and 17 year olds, 18 to 21 year olds and young parents

being awarded to Outward, One Housing and Irish Causeway. Following some delay related to the pandemic, these contracts will begin in April 2022.

The below table illustrates where care leavers aged over 20 were living as of November 2021. Out of a cohort of 80, 25 young people were living in Hackney, 14 in Enfield and 6 in Waltham Forest.

### Distribution of LA of Accommodation



### Accommodation options post 21

The Service continues to offer all care leavers a support service between the ages of 21 and 25, should they wish to access this, but this no longer includes a duty to support them with accommodation. Instead, any housing duty beyond the age of 21 will fall to housing colleagues. This can be a difficult transition for many care leavers, for a number of reasons. The housing options for care leavers turning 21 include:

- **Living with friends or family:** Care leavers can continue to make their own arrangements to do this.
- **Private rental:** Unless care leavers are earning a healthy wage, the reality is that the only affordable option for most care leavers - like other young people their age - is shared accommodation.
- **A social tenancy:** In Hackney, we have a small quota of social tenancies for care leavers each year (see more below), although sadly, the demand significantly outweighs the supply.
- **Temporary accommodation through a homelessness application route:** This is a last resort for many and one which we try hard to avoid.

The Leaving Care Service provides a Setting Up Home Allowance of up to £2000 to all care leavers assessed as ready for a tenancy, to support them in furnishing their first property.

Not all of our care leavers live in Hackney. Many have lived in foster care homes that are out of borough before the age of 18 and express a preference for remaining in that locality once they turn 18. Others need to live out of the borough on safety grounds. Around 40 care leavers at any time are at University and may be studying outside of London in student accommodation. As of July 2021, a total of 374 care leavers between the ages of 18 to 25 were open to the Leaving Care Service: 157 were living in Hackney, a further 68 were living in neighbouring boroughs (Islington, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Newham or the City of London), with the rest living further afield.

For those young people who have made a life for themselves in another part of London, or the country, and who have no desire to return to Hackney - potentially due to trauma they have experienced here - they can choose to present themselves for housing in another borough. However, different boroughs have different criteria for evidencing a local connection and this is not always a straightforward process. If a Hackney case leaver has lived in another local authority for at least 2 years including sometime before their 16th birthday they automatically have a local connection for the Housing Register in that area. Alternatively, a young person can seek to rent privately in another area. They may or may not be eligible for support from the local authority in which they have been living. Whilst they would potentially be eligible for financial assistance with a rent deposit and rent in advance once they approach 21 to access privately rented accommodation, it is likely that affordability constraints mean that often this is not within the borough of choice.

No Local Authority can ordinarily access social housing for residents outside their own borough, other than utilising the Homefinder scheme which is a national scheme. However, most of these properties tend to be in areas outside of London ie Newcastle Upon Tyne and South Somerset.

### **Joint working between Housing and Leaving Care**

Both services recognise that the housing options for young people leaving care at 21 can be limited and the housing supply issues sadly mean we cannot support all young people on their first choice of housing pathway.

There is a good working relationship between the Leaving Care Service and the Benefits and Housing Needs Service. The Head of Benefits and Housing Needs Service is a member of the Corporate Parenting Board and has supported Children and Families to develop and strengthen their work during the transition period for youth and care leavers with agencies and organisations involved in youth homelessness. Benefits and Housing Needs managers attend the Leaving Care Working Party bi-monthly, where there is an opportunity to discuss the housing quota for care leavers.

The Service Manager for Looked After Children and Care Leavers attends the monthly Homeless, Health and Housing Multi Disciplinary Meetings to discuss vulnerable adults with multiple and complex needs at risk of homelessness in Hackney, which tend to include a small number of care leavers. Those individuals who are at risk of homelessness post 21 have a shared plan that provides joint working and oversight to reduce homelessness.

Hackney of Tomorrow, Hackney's Children in Care Council, is also planned an inspection in the spring on how well care leavers are supported in the first year after they have moved into

their council property, so we can learn from any messages now that we are supporting more care leavers post 21.

The Benefits and Housing Needs Service have identified one off funding of £50k to assist with more focus on care leavers homeless prevention. The grant funding can be used as long as the outcomes are identified via the Services statutory government returns on homelessness preventions. Both teams will devise and pilot new process to identify what can be achieved.

Senior managers from Children's Social Care and Housing Needs and Housing Strategy are now meeting on a monthly basis to discuss how to continue to develop our care leavers housing offer.

### **The Care Leaver Quota**

The Leaving Care Service is offered 18 social housing properties (quota places) a year for care leavers, this consists of 16 x one bedroom properties and 2 x two bedroom properties for young parents. Since 2019, the Benefits and Housing Needs Service has given a guarantee to offer 18 quotas a year, even though the amount of social housing available has reduced by 50%.

The process for the Leaving Care Service of selecting who to nominate, in the context of demand significantly outweighing supply, is complex. Factors considered include:

- Is the care leaver approaching or recently turned 20?
- Do they want to live in Hackney?
- Do they have leave to remain in the UK?
- Are they likely to be able to maintain a tenancy?
- Do they have rent arrears?
- Are they most 'in need'?

Whilst a moderation panel was implemented this year, to try and support the process, there are ongoing significant practice dilemmas in relation to the quota places, which include:

- How do we make the nominations system as fair as possible, given demand outweighs supply?
- Should the nomination process be a positive incentive for those doing well, or to be used for those most 'in need', in line with the Council's wider lettings policy?
- How can we fairly determine who is most 'in need'?
- How can we manage young people's expectations?
- What can we do for those care leavers who do not want to live in Hackney?

This is the Corporate Parenting commitment to care leavers and it has provided reassurance to the Leaving Care Service in terms of being able to prepare the care leavers who they plan to nominate. Historically, the quota number was confirmed around April of each financial year, with care leavers being nominated over the summer and care leavers

bidding through the Choice Based Lettings system from the autumn and moving into their tenancies between December and March.

Due to the pandemic and the cyberattack, there was a delay in being able to confirm the allocation of available tenancies and the quota was confirmed at the end of November 2020, with nominations being made by the end of December 2020. To account for this delay it was agreed for care leavers to be given direct offers, taking into consideration any preference for a specific area. All documents were submitted by the of February 2021, however by the end of June 2021, only 2 out of 18 care leavers have been offered a direct offer. As a result of the delay, the Leaving Care Service has had to continue to support 67% of the care leavers nominated to remain in their accommodation post 21, to cover the shortfall in any rent and/or support costs.

The leaving care service is working to improve the decision making process by which care leavers are put forward for social housing. It has been identified that the window of opportunity to be nominated for a social letting under the current processes is narrower for some care leavers depending on when their 21st birthday falls. To remedy this the Leaving Care Service will hold a moderation meeting in October to ensure that a fair and equitable process is applied to the nomination process, and that all care leavers are treated equally. This will make sure that there is a clear evidence based framework in place for comparing need, and that decisions about which care leaver gets a social letting are robust and stand up to scrutiny.

The service is currently working with Benefits and Housing needs to examine how we can further increase access to the private rented sector for care leavers. Care leavers who are unable to obtain or sustain accommodation at 21 are referred to the Greenhouse or their local authority where they reside for housing advice. Where appropriate housing options can not be sourced, the service will support them to make a homeless application for temporary accommodation as necessary. A referral will be made to the Benefits and Housing Needs service up to 56 days before the young person turns 21, so that the service can work to try and resolve their housing situation. Should care leavers become homeless, or at risk of homelessness after the age of 21, they can access housing advice via the Benefits and Housing Needs Service.

### **Homeless care leavers**

Where a care leaver over 21 is identified at risk of homelessness, they will be owed a prevention and relief duty by the Benefits and Housing Needs Service under the Homeless Reduction Act 2017.

The Service will provide the Care Leaver with an in-depth advice appointment, and undertake a holistic assessment of their housing and support needs, working in collaboration with the Leaving Care Service.

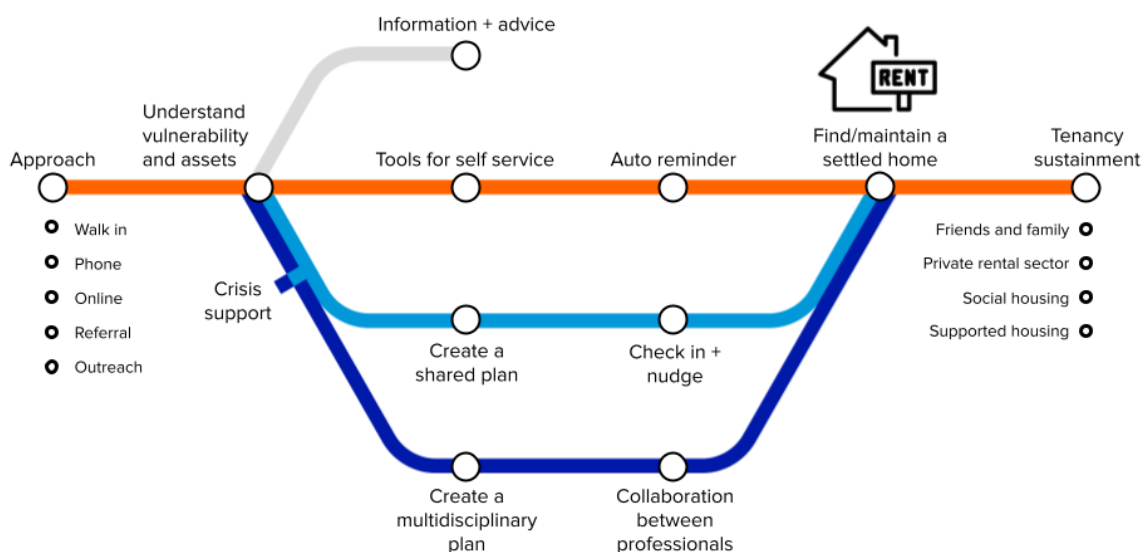
The Care Leaver will be directly supported by the Benefits and Housing Needs Service, and will see a specialist housing advisor. The advisors are empathetic and helpful and trained to assist young adults through a trauma-informed approach by listening to the person's experience, and then working to agree a personalised housing plan based on their individual needs.

Their personal housing plan sets out a series of reasonable steps that the care leaver needs to undertake to resolve their housing situation and outlines how the Council will assist and support them with this. Normally if they are accommodated the service would mediate with the landlord or host or resolve disputes, help to reduce rent arrears through maximising Housing Benefit or Universal Credit entitlement, and where appropriate use money from Discretionary Housing Payments, and our Homeless Prevention Fund to cover rent shortfalls. Where the care leaver is struggling, the service will look at how we can support additional needs, whether that be additional support with budgeting and money management, or floating support provided by Riverside to help them sustain the tenancy.

If an eviction cannot be prevented, or the placement is ending, the Service will work with the individual to help them find alternative accommodation. An affordability assessment is conducted to identify the types and locations of accommodation, which are affordable to the care leaver, and the service will support them to find them a potential private letting. The service will negotiate with prospective landlords over rent levels, and the term of the tenancy and provide help towards deposits, rent in advance and removal costs. The Service will aim to secure a 24 month tenancy at Local Housing Allowance rates to ensure they have the best possible chance of a stable home.

The Benefits and Housing Needs Service will work intensively with the care leaver to manage their expectations regarding potential housing solutions. For the majority of care leavers social housing will not be an option and the main housing solution will be a room in shared accommodation in the private rented sector. The current housing market is extremely challenging and housing options close to Hackney are unfortunately very limited if not impossible.

## Benefits and Housing Needs service vision



The most vulnerable individuals receive holistic wrap-around assistance and intensive multidisciplinary support, pulling in professionals and services from across the Council, public and third sector. With care leavers the service will provide a more intensive support offer, and although the support will vary depending on the individual's needs, they are more



likely to require holistic wrap-around assistance and intensive multidisciplinary support. The Benefits and Housing Needs Officer will work jointly with the leaving care service, the care leavers support workers, health professionals, adult social services, and mental health services, as necessary to help the care leaver find and sustain accommodation

### **Care Leavers with multiple and complex needs**

In recent years the Benefits and Housing Needs service has seen a significant increase in the number of care leavers approaching as homeless with multiple and complex needs. These individuals have a wide range of issues including:

- Childhood trauma
- Dysfunctional family relationships
- Poor Mental Health, Autism, and Aspergers
- Difficulty sustaining relationships and friendships
- Addictions and Substance Misuse
- History of Violence Behavior
- Involvement with the Police Criminal Justice System
- History of Financial Abuse and mate crimes from individuals who pretend to be their mates

The individuals have periods of stability interrupted with periods of crisis. But with the reductions in the adult supported pathway, and higher entry threshold to acute services - especially mental health treatment, it is increasingly problematic to source appropriate accommodation and support, as they transition into adulthood.

The Benefits and Housing Needs service, including two designated social workers embedded within the Service, work holistically, arranging case conferences between all relevant parties to agree a shared plan, and will look at all the options available to provide additional support and help them to retain their home. However, where this fails, all too often they currently end up in general needs Temporary Accommodation. Some care leavers struggle to cope with this situation, exacerbating existing conditions and leading to a risk of abandonment and rough sleeping. The Benefits and Housing Needs Service are working with adult social services to plug this gap - but providing a complete solution is challenging.

### **Who is responsible once Care Leavers have left Hackney if they are threatened with homelessness or have housing need?**

Many young people who have been in the care of Hackney children's services will have left Hackney, either voluntarily or due to a placement out of the borough, and built up links in their new area. In all cases these care leavers automatically retain a local connection to Hackney for Homeless and Housing purposes, until they reach 25.

In addition where a Hackney Care Leaver has been resident in another district or authority outside Hackney for a continuous period of 2 years or more, of which some of the 2 year period falls before the person attained the age of 16 - they will also have an automatic local connection to their new area. This change introduced by Clause 8 of the Homeless Reduction Act, was designed to prevent young individuals who had been housed by Hackney under Section 22A of the Children's Act, but had left Hackney at 14 or 15, being

forced to return to Hackney against their wishes if they subsequently became homeless. Once a local connection is established they can also approach their new Council

### **Numbers of Hackney Care Leavers Subsequently Approaching Benefits and Housing Needs as Homeless**

While numbers of approaches from Care Leavers who have subsequently become homeless and approach Hackney remain small, they have been growing in recent years - with just over 6% of youth homeless approaches now coming from Care Leavers

<b>Year</b>	<b>Numbers of Homeless Approaches from youths under 25</b>	<b>Numbers of Approaches from Hackney care leavers under 25</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
18/19	201	1	0.5%
19/20	243	13	5%
20/21	296	19	6.4%
21/22 to date	111	7	6.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>851</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>4.7%</b>

Once a care leaver turns 25 they are treated no differently to any other individual or family who are at risk of homelessness. Many individuals will therefore not inform Benefits and Housing Needs that they have previously been in care once over 25, as there is no benefit for them to do so. However it is worth recognising that every year we get a small number of homeless approaches from individuals above 25, who proactively inform us they have been in care at a young age suggesting that for some individuals the challenges around sustaining accommodation years after leaving care may be ongoing.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Numbers of Homeless Approaches</b>	<b>Numbers of Approaches from Hackney care leavers over 25</b>
18/19	3462	3
19/20	3460	2
20/21	3769	1
21/22 as of 30 June	900	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>11591</b>	<b>7</b>

### **Challenges in finding care leavers accommodation - Housing options and affordability**

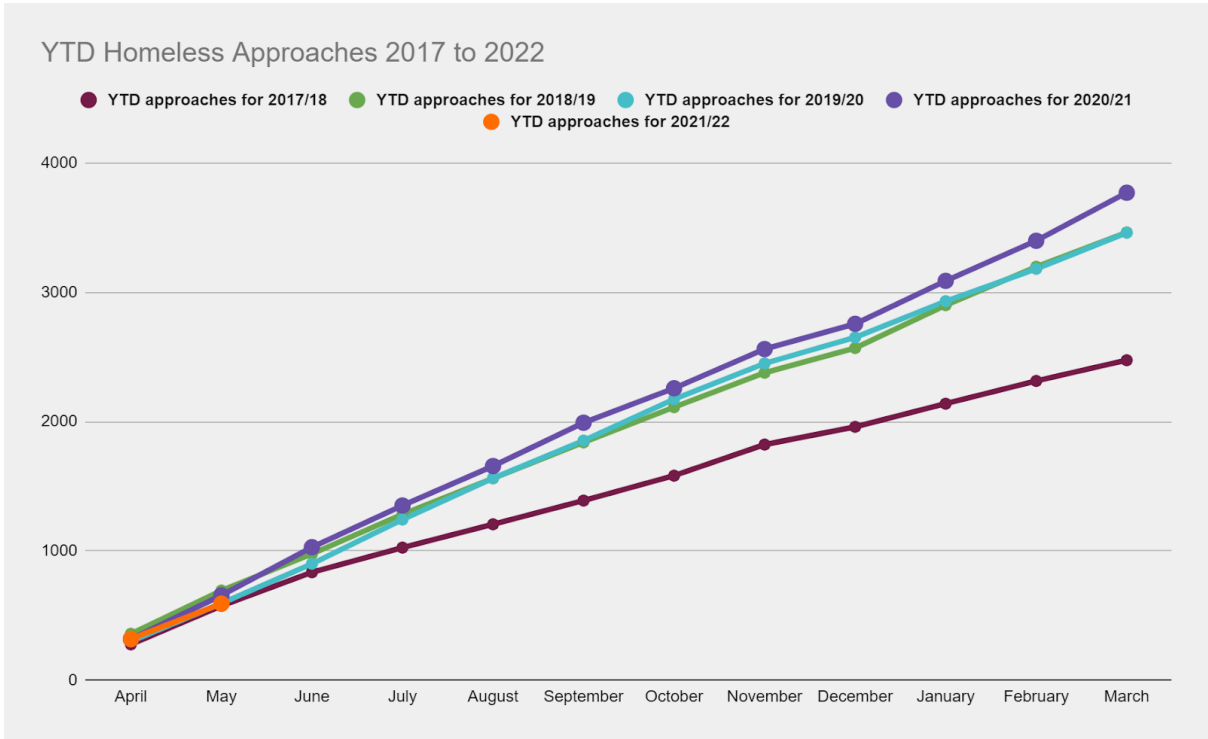
Hackney is in the midst of a severe housing crisis. The borough has seen some of the biggest house price increases in the country, meaning that buying a home is out of reach for most low and even middle income families.

In the last 10 years Hackney has seen the second highest jump in average House prices, with property prices increasing by an average of 105 per cent to an average of £604,000. This is second only to neighbouring Waltham Forest with an average increase of 126% since 2011. Over 20 years Hackney has seen the highest rate of house price growth of anywhere in the Country. The average house price in the borough has increased by 489% in the last two decades.

This increase in property prices- and its direct impact on local rent levels has made the borough highly unaffordable for much of our population including Care Leavers. Renting is a challenge for single individuals with rents for an average one-bedroom dwelling in the borough standing at 61.2% of median pre-tax pay in London, one of the highest ratios in London.

The inadequacy of Local Housing Allowance (LHA), the benefit designed to help households on a low income rent in the private sector, means that just a small proportion of local private rent properties are affordable. As Hackney has become extremely desirable for young working professionals due to close proximity to the City, and its thriving nightlife and cafe culture, low income singles are pushed out. Those wanting to remain in Hackney continue to feel the impact of spiralling rents. Welfare reform in reducing benefit rates has led to a situation where local private rented options in Hackney are not sustainable in financial terms due to the shortfalls between benefits and Market rents for residents on the lowest income.

As a result of the paucity of accommodation, Hackney has one of the highest rates of households in temporary accommodation with 26.83 households per 1,000 in Hackney in temporary accommodation compared to an average of 16.55 across London. The borough has over 3,000 households in temporary accommodation, and levels of homelessness are also increasing rapidly, year on year with the number of approaches in 2020/21 up by 52% compared to 2017/18, with 76% of approaches coming from singles.



It is a constant struggle to find suitable accommodation to place households - especially singles. While Hackney has the largest temporary accommodation hostel stock in London, it is inadequate to meet the level of demand, with more and more households placed out of borough. In Sept 2014, Hackney placed 293 households placed outside the borough; as of Sept 2020 it was 1342.

This situation has a direct impact on Care Leavers. At the point at which care leavers are no longer owed an accommodation duty by children's services, it is increasingly difficult to find sustainable options in the private rented sector close to Hackney. Whilst suitable private rented accommodation is available, this all too often is rooms in shared accommodation, located on the fringes of London.

**Temporary Accommodation and Homelessness**

Where the benefits and housing needs service is unable to prevent the young persons homelessness through helping to maintain their existing accommodation, and are unable to help the youngster to secure suitable alternative accommodation, even with tenancy sustainment the service will assess the individual to see whether they are owed a homeless duty.

Whilst Care Leavers over 21 are not automatically deemed to be in priority need for Temporary Accommodation, when considering priority need, we would consider whether the individual is more vulnerable than an average single person as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered. The service will make expensive enquiries into the individuals childhood history, and take into account various factors including:

- the length of time that the applicant was looked after, accommodated or fostered;
- the reasons why they were looked after, accommodated or fostered;

- the length of time since the applicant left care, and whether they have been able to obtain and maintain accommodation during any of that period;
- whether the applicant has any existing support networks, particularly including family, friends or a mentor.

Housing Needs take particular care in assessing whether a care leaver aged 21 or over is vulnerable, and will take into account whether, if homeless, they would be at particular risk of exploitation, abuse or involvement in offending behaviour as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered.

In reality the threshold for determining priority need in Hackney for Care Leavers is set extremely low. The Council is more flexible in accepting a homeless duty for Care Leavers than most other authorities - and the vast majority are accommodated under a homeless duty by the Council.

Where a Care Leaver does become homeless and placed in temporary accommodation, the service will not use bed and breakfast accommodation, including hotels for care leavers aged under 25 except in an absolute emergency. Under our placement policy we aim to place Care Leavers in Temporary Accommodation which is either in Hackney or in a neighbouring borough. While due to the pressures of the market this is often hostel accommodation - the accommodation is of high quality- with most hotel units being self contained with their own ensuite bathroom and kitchenette. While they remain in Temporary Accommodation, ongoing support is provided by both the Temporary Accommodation service and Children's Services to help them transition to independence.

### **Welfare Reform and the Benefits Cap**

The situation has been made significantly worse due to the Government's total Benefit Cap, and the fact that Care Leavers are not exempt

For singles the Benefit Cap in Greater London is **£296.35 per week**. The Cap takes into account all state income a person receives from a range of benefits, and if the total income from these benefits is above the Cap Limit, then the individual's Universal Credit gets reduced by the difference. The main benefits that would be included in the Benefits cap are as follows:

• Universal Credit	• Bereavement Allowance
• Child Benefit	• Child Tax Credit
• Employment and Support Allowance	• Housing Benefit
• Incapacity Benefit	• Income Support
• Job Seekers Allowance	• Maternity Allowance
• Severe Disablement Allowance	• Widowed Parents Allowance
• Widowed Mothers Allowance	• Widows Pension

A group of individuals are exempt from the Benefit Cap. To be exempt from the Cap individuals must be:

- In work, earning £617 per month net after tax or NI,
- Disabled and in receipt of the 'limited capability for work and work-related activity' element within their Universal Credit, or
- Living in Support Exempt Accommodation

For care leavers in Hackney the Local Housing Allowance rate which applies to them (the maximum amount of rent which would be included in their UC calculations) is **£295.49 per week** until they are 25.

Using an LHA rate of £295.49 per week - if a Care Leaver was to pay their rent after the Cap, they would be left with **£0.86p** per week to live on per week. The level of the Benefits Cap essentially means that Hackney and most of London is not affordable for care leavers who are not working.

Where individuals are owed a duty by the Leaving Care Team, then where care leavers live with private providers and have to claim universal credit, due to the benefit cap, Hackney's Leaving Care team tops up these payments. Once Care Leavers are no longer the responsibility of the Leaving Care Team -at 21 the shortfalls are no longer covered leading to real challenges sourcing appropriate accommodation.

### **Pressures on Social Housing and Care Leavers**

The lack of adequate affordable accommodation in Hackney has seen the demand for social housing rapidly increasing. The number of households seeking social housing in Hackney is almost 13,500, while the proportion of these families considered to be in high priority has also increased; from 18% in April 2014 to 35% in July 2020. There are now over 4,700 households identified as in urgent or very urgent need waiting for social housing. While the demand has increased significantly, the number of social properties becoming available to be let has reduced due to a number of factors such as the impact of right to buy and fewer households moving out of a social tenancy. The number of social tenancies becoming available to be let has reduced by almost 50% over the last 5 years: in 2018/19 only 640 lettings became available, and this decline has continued through 2019/20

This means that the vast majority of households on the Housing Register will never obtain a social letting, and those in high priority due to significant health needs, or due to severe overcrowding will wait years before a letting becomes available.

Whilst the letting policy is currently being reviewed, waits for Social Housing will still be many years. In this context of significant demand compared to available lettings it is not possible to allocate the majority of care leavers with social housing. The Benefits and Housing Needs Service does ring-fence a quota of 18 social lettings specifically for care leavers. This quota of 18 lets was set when the number of social lettings were much higher at over 1200 per year, but despite the 50% reduction in lettings, the service has resisted pressure to reduce the Care Leaver quota as we recognise the needs of this client group.

### **Benefits and Welfare reform - recent changes for Care Leavers**

Care leavers are now entitled to the higher 1 bedroom self contained Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate in the calculation of the Housing Costs element of their Universal Credit, as opposed to the shared room rate that applies to most singles under 35.

BRMA	Shared	1 bedroom
Central London	£154.19	£295.49
Inner East London	£136.50	£295.49
Inner North London	£147.29	£295.49

Up until recently this LHA rate only applied until the Care Leavers turned 22, and once they turned 22 they were moved onto the lower shared rate. For most care leavers this sudden reduction in Housing Benefit or Universal Credit would put them in the position where rent arrears would accrue quickly, putting them at risk of homelessness. The reduction in LHA rates would cause many individuals to struggle emotionally and financially shortly after they had become independent. The Government has now recognised this problem and from 31 May 2021 Care Leavers now retain the higher 1 bedroom rate until they are 25. This opens more options in the Private Rented Sector for those in the 22-25 age group, who are in employment.

Unfortunately Care Leavers are still not exempt from the total benefits cap - meaning for those who are not working self contained accommodation options in London are extremely limited. In some cases the increase in rates for care leavers aged 22-25 has caused issues, as Private Landlords have increased rents to these new LHA rates leaving the tenancy unsustainable.

### **Universal Credit**

Universal Credit is a payment to help with living costs, administered by the DWP. It's paid monthly - and includes both living and housing costs in one single payment. Payments are usually made to the care leaver, with the care leaver expected to pay their rent. The claim process is digital by default - with individuals having an online account and journal where they report changes

Universal Credit is calculated using a monthly assessment period, running from when they claim. Any income received during the assessment period, will be used to calculate the next month's Universal Credit entitlement. This means that for those individuals on a fluctuating income - including zero hours contract, or who do adhoc overtime, universal credit will change every month. Individuals who can not manage their single monthly payment, can apply for an Alternative Payment Arrangement, including paying housing costs direct to the landlord. While all decisions to allow a managed payment are considered on a case by case basis - Care Leavers are a group that the DWP recognise as being vulnerable, and therefore viewed as having a probable need for alternative payments. Children's Services and Benefits and Housing Needs work with landlords and care leavers to put managed payment

arrangements in place - where appropriate. However given the constantly changing entitlement to Universal Credit, and the significant range of deductions which can be recovered from UC it can be difficult to keep track of how much a Care leaver is receiving in UC to live on

### **Help for Care Leavers with Council Tax**

The London Borough of Hackney understands the financial challenges which can be faced by Care Leavers who are living independently for the first time.

In order to reduce poverty and increase financial resilience, the London Borough of Hackney awards a care leavers reduction on the Council Tax Liability of any care leaver aged under 25, who lives in Hackney, and was formerly in the care of Hackney Council.

The reduction applies after any entitlement to Council Tax Reduction, and any other discounts and reliefs that they may be entitled to, such as a single person discount. The effect of the reduction is to reduce to nil the Council Tax which care leavers in Hackney have to pay.

### **Housing Solutions**

As outlined in the Councils Homeless Strategy [homelessness-strategy.pdf](#) and the Rough Sleeping Strategy [rough-sleeping-strategy-2020-22.pdf](#), the Benefits and Housing Needs Service and partners are constantly looking at imaginative solutions to the lack of accommodation options for residents at risk of homelessness.

One housing scheme which is about to go live is a Peer Landlord Scheme in Clapton Common. This building, owned by the Council but empty for a large number of years, has been refurbished and leased to Thames Reach homeless charity to support single homeless people into work and sustainable accommodation, primarily those aged under 35.

The building has been extensively refurbished to provide 12 units of accommodation with shared kitchen and bathrooms as well as office and support facilities. Support will be in place by a housing manager based in an office onsite. Out of hours support will be available through Thames Reach's on-call system.

The accommodation is for single young people aged 35 and under. People living in the accommodation will receive a minimum of 3 hours of support a week from Thames Reach staff, this will be focused on supporting them into employment and unsupported housing within the private rented sector. The scheme is designed for individuals who are largely able to live independently, pay their accommodation charges and look after the property, but need a little support. The property is not designed for individuals with high support needs such as drug and alcohol misuse, offending histories or chaotic mental health. The aim is that residents would stay at 111 Clapton Common for 6 to 12 months at the property, while they gain the skills to live independently.

In the design of this scheme - one group that has been identified as potentially suitable for some of the units at 111 Clapton Common are care leavers aged 21 -25 who are not working and have low support needs. Thamesreach will work with them to help them into



employment and independence, and suitable candidates for when the property comes on line in the next 2-3 weeks are being identified. Referrals will be sourced via the Young Persons panel from the Leaving Care Team.

A small number of careleavers have been referred into the scheme, with two placements made. Refusals are evident and in some cases careleavers needs have been found to be too high or conversely they have refused the placement as they don't wish to reside in shared accommodation and would prefer self contained accommodation.

Later this year the council is also beginning the development of a new **Housing Strategy**. The new strategy will have a focus on care leavers as one its key priorities. Naturally the Housing Strategy will develop and set out a full range of options for care leavers. These proposals are holistic and include financial and alternative housing supply incentives - they are not limited to just "brick and mortar" approaches. Examples are likely to include:

- A new housing transition pathway for care leavers
- Use of the Hackney Housing Company
- A new protocol for a full range of housing options including modular, pod and PRS for example
- Involvement of care leavers and service users in the development of the new strategy

### **Support for the Children and Families Service**

The Benefits and Housing Needs Service have supported the Children and Families Service with contacts and links to develop/strengthen their work during the transition period for youth and care leavers to help support young people who are struggling to transition at 21. Links with a wide range of organizations include the following.

- **London Youth Gateway** - <http://www.londonyouthgateway.org.uk> London Youth Gateway offers support to young people from every London borough who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. They are a partnership of the best youth homelessness services in London, so no matter what the youngster's situation or needs they can refer them to get the specialist help they need.
- **New Horizon Youth Centre**- <https://nhyouthcentre.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work> They are a support network for 16–24 year-olds with nowhere else to go. As well as a day centre and 'one stop shop' offering activities and services to improve the wellbeing and circumstances of young people in need,they offer dedicated help with Accommodation, Employment, Education and Training, Personal Development, Health and Wellbeing and Prison and Outreach
- **Shelter hackney** - [https://england.shelter.org.uk/get\\_help/local\\_services/london/hackney](https://england.shelter.org.uk/get_help/local_services/london/hackney) Shelter have a hub in Hackney at 4 Tyssen Street London, and provide housing advice and assistance including legal support for young people
- **AKT** - <https://www.akt.org.uk/what-we-do%20>Akt supports lgbtq+ young people aged 16-25 in the uk who are facing or experiencing homelessness. They support

young people into safe homes and employment, education or training, in a welcoming and open environment that celebrates LGBTQ+ identities. Akt helps young people stay safe in a crisis, find emergency accommodation, access specialist support, develop skills, identify and achieve life goals

- **Depaul** - <https://uk.depaulcharity.org/> Depaul work to break the cycle of homelessness for young people, starting with providing a bed for the night. The Nightstop network of volunteer hosts provides a safe place to stay for people in crisis. They run supported accommodation services in London, including specialist services for young parents, unaccompanied asylum seeking children and those with severe mental health problems. Alongside the accommodation services, they offer specialist support allowing people to move on to live independently.
- **St Basils**  
<https://stbasils.org.uk/about-us/st-basils-charter-designing-out-homelessness/>  
St Basils works with young people to enable them to find and keep a home, grow their confidence, develop their skills, increase opportunities and prevent homelessness. St Basils has a full range of prevention, accommodation, support and engagement services as well as services which aim to ensure young people develop the skills and have the support needed to move on successfully.



London Borough of Hackney Leaving Care Service

# Local offer for care leavers



## Care Leavers information booklet

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# 1. Our policy

This leaflet tells you, as a young person who has been Looked After by Hackney, about the support available to you. This may change annually so please ensure you get an up to date copy of this leaflet from your social work unit.

Once a young person becomes 18 years of age they are no longer legally Looked After. Although many young people leave care at 18, some young people may leave care before that.

The definition of a care leaver is a young person aged 16 or over who has been looked after by the local authority for a relevant period of time since their 14th birthday and with a period of care taking place on or after their 16th birthday.

Other young people who were Looked After immediately before a Special Guardianship Order was granted qualify for advice and assistance from us between the ages of 16 and 21.

For more information ask someone from your social work unit.





## Remember

**Keep this leaflet somewhere safe so you can look at it when you need to.**

If you are unsure about anything in this leaflet or want some more information, please speak to your social work unit.

In Hackney we want to ensure the support that we provide for you when you leave care:

- Recognises you as an individual with individual needs.
- Supports you in taking responsibility for yourself as a young adult. We will offer you a 'second chance' if things do not work out first time round. Most people make mistakes during their move to independence whether they have been in care or not.
- Helps you access and maximise all the support available to you through a range of services, including accessing benefits, practical and financial support.
- Ensures all young people who have left our care are treated equitably.

The amount of financial and other support you will get as a care leaver will be dependent on your age and individual circumstances.

## Getting advice from your social worker

In Hackney, the role of a personal advisor is fulfilled by the Looked After Children Service social workers and from the post 16 learning advisors in the Virtual School. This support continues through to the Leaving Care Service up until your 21st birthday and 25th birthday if you want support to continue.

Your social worker will be in touch with you at least 6 times a year, but more if this is needed. You can always contact your social worker in between these contacts if you need advice and support.

Once you are 21 years of age you will only have a social worker if you want ongoing support with an area of assessed need for as long as required up until your 25th birthday. This means that your case could close, but if you need support later on you can ask for support again, up until your 25th birthday.

## Your Pathway Plan

It is expected that as you are preparing to leave care, and after leaving care, you will be involved in agreeing and reviewing your Pathway Plan. Your Pathway Plan is important as it will look at the things that are important to you in moving to independence, such as being ready to leave care, where you live, money management, looking after yourself, health, employment, education and training issues. Your Pathway Plan is also your record of the support that we have agreed to provide to you.

## 2. What financial support can I expect to receive?

### Subsistence (16 and 17 year olds)

If you are living semi-independently you are not entitled to claim benefits, so we will provide you with a subsistence payment to cover your day to day living costs. If you are struggling to budget your money, this may be issued in a part cash and food voucher payment to ensure you have enough money for food.

This applies to young people not living with foster carers or in a residential placement and some young people who have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). The current rate from 1 April 2017 is £57.90 (equivalent to the current rate for income support). Young people who are in paid training will receive the equivalent or higher allowance from their training provider.

### Initial benefits claim

Once you turn 18, you need to claim Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance, Employment Support Allowance or Universal Credit. The Leaving Care Service will provide you with up to 4 weeks subsistence payments to assist you while you are waiting for your initial benefits claim to be processed. Your social worker will be able to provide you with further information about this. You will also need to claim Housing Benefit to cover your rent.







## Fares

If you are in education or training you will be given financial assistance with travel costs during term-time only to cover up to zone 1-6 or the equivalent based on an assessment of need. You will need to have a current education contract signed by the Virtual School and apply for a student Oyster Card if eligible. If you have to attend university or college during the holidays, any additional support for fares will be based on an assessment of need and outlined in your Pathway Plan.

Additionally we will assist with some fares for family contact, leisure and cultural needs. This will also be based on an assessment of need and outlined in your Pathway Plan.

## Clothing allowance

If you are aged 16 or 17 and in semi-independence you will be given a clothing allowance payable in 2 instalments at the beginning of summer and winter. The current allowance is £300 per year.

## Birthday payments

Money for gifts and a contribution towards the cost of celebrations will be paid to you each year until your 21st birthday. You will only receive this allowance if you remain in contact with us. If you are in foster care, your carer will buy you a birthday present for your 17th and 18th birthdays.

- £75 for your 17th birthday (semi-independence)
- £100 for your 18th (semi-independence)
- £100 for 19th and 20th birthdays
- £150 for your 21st birthday

## Holidays (16 & 17 year olds)

We will support you to have a holiday by paying a contribution towards your holiday costs. The amount we pay will be dependent on an assessment by your social worker and will not exceed £350 in any year.





## Social and leisure activities

You will be encouraged and assisted to take part in social and leisure activities. If you are aged 16 or 17 you will be eligible to apply for a local leisure card. If you live outside Hackney, your social worker will assist in obtaining one from the resident authority. Depending on an assessment of need, we may pay for a hobby or fee for a club, if the leisure card is not available, provided you can demonstrate commitment to keeping it up.

## Cost of key documents

It is important that all young people have a photographic form of identification (e.g. passport or driving licence) and their birth certificate when they leave care.

You will usually need formal identification of some kind, often a passport or driving licence, as well as your National Insurance Number, to start work with an employer, to claim benefits, to set up a bank account, to prove you are who you say you are and to get into a pub, club, etc.

When you leave care to become independent, you should already have a birth certificate as well as a renewed passport or a provisional driving licence. If you did not have a formal type of photographic identification when you left care, we will pay for the cost of the purchase of 1 passport and 1 birth certificate up to the age of 21. Based on an assessment, payment for a driving licence will be considered if it is necessary for your employment.

If you are an unaccompanied young person and there are immigration issues to be resolved, your social worker will help you get the right documentation required to prove you are who you say you are.

If you have lived here for more than 7 years but are not British or a European National, we will pay for you to be naturalised providing this is applied for in good time prior to your 18th birthday. You will need to discuss this with your social worker. In some cases, if you are a European National, we will assist you with purchasing a residence card.

### Remember

You must keep all your documents safe as you will be responsible for paying for any replacements.



### Vacation accommodation

If you are a student in full time residential education or in higher education, we will ensure that you have suitable accommodation, if you need it, during a vacation. For young people in higher education, the financial support we provide covers the academic year but we can provide advice and support with sourcing accommodation and contribute to any additional rent costs.

### Support in pregnancy

If you are pregnant and aged 16 or 17 years old we will pay a one-off maternity grant 11 weeks before the birth of the baby. The current amount is £150 per baby.

Your social worker or midwife will support you to claim a grant of £500 from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) if you are eligible for one. This is to buy essential items you need for when your baby is born.

Your social worker may also be able to offer support to access funding from other organisations for you and your baby.

## Council tax exemption scheme

Any care leaver, who has previously been in Hackney's care, aged 18-25, who lives in the borough and is liable to pay Council Tax, will be able to apply for a council tax exemption. Hackney Care Leavers should first apply for a 'discretionary reduction', which will leave an outstanding council tax amount, which the Council will then reduce to nil (which means the care leaver will not owe the Council any council tax money).

## Financial support for transition between benefits and employment

If you are worried about the gap in receiving money when you are moving from benefits to employment, let your social worker know and they will help you contact the Drive Forward Foundation, who work closely with Hackney Council to support care leavers. They may be able to offer financial support until you receive your first salary.

## Setting up Home Allowance

When you leave care and are assessed as being ready to live independently, you will be eligible for a Setting Up Home Allowance. If you need it, you could receive up to £2,000. The allowance is accessed when you are assessed as needing it. This allowance is to provide you with sufficient furniture or equipment when moving into independent permanent housing and will be written into your Pathway Plan. Payments will be made directly to the supplier or provider.

The Setting Up Home Allowance will only be used to buy essential items for permanent accommodation.

In some cases you may also be able to use the money as a deposit to rent private accommodation. You will need to discuss this with your social worker.

Please consider the following when spending your allowance:

- Buying second-hand or used goods (but not second-hand electrical items). Furniture and soft furnishings can be cheaper and of better quality than many new items when bought second-hand.
- Looking at buying items on special offer or waiting for sales to get bigger discounts.
- Planning ahead, for example, by buying some items such as towels, bedding, crockery etc. while you are still in care. You could use your short-term savings for this.
- Using some of your savings, and any other grants available to you, to help towards some of these costs.



### **Remember**

- When most young people leave home to live independently they cannot always afford everything they need straight away and cannot always afford everything new.
- Your savings are there for you to use in your transition to independence and into later adulthood.

### 3. What support will I get with accommodation?

We are committed to making sure that once you leave our care we help you find suitable accommodation that meets your needs. We know not all young people will be ready to live unsupported in their own tenancy straight away. Your social worker will have worked with you to agree plans for when you are no longer in care. This will include plans for your accommodation and will be written into your Pathway Plan.

#### Support for 18 year olds

Most young people will leave care at 18 years of age, but we have a statutory duty to support you until the age of 21 and 25 if you want support. Your last LAC Review prior to your 18th birthday should ensure that there is a clear plan, your Review Pathway Plan, covering where you will live and the support you will need to meet your needs.



As a care leaver you will be expected to claim housing benefit to cover the Local Housing Allowance element of your rent, with the Local Authority covering the shortfall and any support costs for commissioned semi-independent accommodation.

If you later move into private rented accommodation as you are assessed as being ready for a tenancy, your landlord or agency, should agree for your Housing Benefit to be paid directly to them. It is essential that you maintain a Housing Benefit claim to not incur arrears and risk eviction.

### **‘Staying Put’**

We know that if you have been in a settled foster home, the best plan may be for you to remain living there until you have finished education or achieved other goals that will help you move smoothly to adult independence.

All fostered young people have the right to remain with their foster carers until the age of 21.

If you and your foster carers express a wish to enter into a Staying Put arrangement, and we think it is appropriate, we will provide advice, assistance and support to draw up a Living Together Agreement.

Your social worker will support you to access all the benefits you are eligible for while in your Staying Put arrangement, including claiming Housing Benefit.







## Supported lodgings

If it is not possible for you to stay with your carer, but it is felt you are not ready to move into semi-independent accommodation, your social worker may consider supported lodgings for you.

Supported lodgings are similar to 'Staying Put' with your carers but it means you move somewhere new to live. You will still be living in a family home and having the additional support that comes with being part of a family.

You will need to pay a portion of money from your personal allowance, Job Seekers Allowance or wages as a contribution towards your 'rent' and pay all of your Housing Benefit to your carer.

## Renting private accommodation

If you want to rent a private property, it is likely your landlord will require a deposit and rent in advance before they will agree to a tenancy.

If you are over 18 and assessed as being ready for a tenancy, we will support you to access rent deposit schemes, or if appropriate, you could speak to your social worker about accessing your Setting Up Home Allowance to pay for this.

## Other options

You may feel that 'Staying Put' with your carers, or moving to semi-independent accommodation, supported lodgings or your own tenancy unsupported, will not be right for you post 18 and up to your 21st birthday. Being involved with reviewing your Pathway Plan will give you the opportunity to talk with your social worker about this. They will be able to explain the options you have and provide support in finding somewhere to live that will meet your needs.

## 4. What support will I get with education, training or employment?

We want you to be able to continue your education or training or find work when you leave care.

If you are starting education or training courses and need support, you will be eligible for the support detailed below and as provided by the Virtual School.

### Travel expenses for 18+ care leavers

If you are in education and/or training the Council will pay for an Oyster Card (up to zone 6), if this is not covered by your training provider.

### Education Bursary for 16 to 19 year olds

If you are still in education or training, the Virtual school or your college will be able to advise whether you are eligible for a 16–19 Bursary. Careers Advisors (the new name for Connexions workers) will have more information about this. Your social worker or Virtual School worker can help you complete the application form.

### 18 to 21 year olds wanting to go to college

You will have the following support available to you:

- Your social worker will keep in touch with you and review your Pathway Plan to ensure you are getting the support you need.
  - Assistance with some expenses for education, training and employment if needed.
  - Income Support or Housing Benefit should be available if you have been in care and remain separated from your family and are in:
    - Full time further/non-advanced education (This is up to A-level standard or equivalent)
- OR**
- In direct training for 12 hours a week or more

Income Support or Housing Benefit should continue to be paid until the end of the academic year that you turn 21.

In exceptional circumstances and based on an assessment of need, we may be able to make a contribution towards course workbooks, field trips, special equipment or materials, clothing for work experience or job interviews.



## **21 to 24 year olds wanting to go into education or training**

We have a responsibility to assess your circumstances and offer support to you if this is needed, once you have left care until you are 25, in respect of education or training for the duration of the course.

If you are over 21 and want to go back into education or training, you will be given advice and support to consider your options through the Leaving Care Service and the Virtual School. This will include:

- Suitability of the course.
- Using any savings you have to support you during this time.
- Combining work and study.
- Applying for financial support from charities and trusts.
- Considering if you are eligible for funding from your employer.

If we do provide you with support after 21, we will also provide you with a social worker who will update your Pathway Plan with you and keep in touch.

## Support for young people wanting to go to university

### Eligibility

- You must have completed BTEC level 3 or A levels and be enrolled on a course of higher education, which includes first degree and higher education qualifications that are over 12 hours per week of study, including some distance learning courses. The course must last for at least 2 academic years.
- You must commence the course of higher education prior to your 25th birthday and have confirmation of your student loan and immigration status for the duration, if you are originally an asylum seeker.
- Your social worker will formally authorise any higher education course you have chosen.

### If you are starting university you are eligible for the support detailed below:

- A social worker to review and update your Pathway Plan and keep in touch with you.
- We will pay you an education grant of £1000 a term. This is inclusive of a £2000 bursary which covers the duration of the whole course.
- The financial support is generally available for a maximum of 3 years. If your first designated course is 4 years in duration (e.g. teacher training), additional financial support will be agreed in your Pathway Plan for year 4 to a maximum of £3,000.
- In some cases you will be given a grant to purchase a laptop in your first year of study to the maximum value of £400, including software, based on an assessment of need.

If you decide at the end of the first year you are on the wrong course, we will provide an additional year's funding for you to change to another designated course. You will only receive 4 years funding in total, on confirmation of your student loan.

Payment of the bursary will be assessed as part of your Pathway Plan, including agreement from your social worker that the course of higher education is a reasonable career pathway that will lead to employment.

If you are unsuccessful in a year of your education, financial support will be re-assessed in your Pathway Plan. A maximum of one year's additional financial support may be provided.

### Attendance

If there is any dispute about attendance, your social worker will ask you to provide a letter of attendance from your Higher Education Institution (e.g. University). If you are not attending your course in accordance with your Pathway Plan, we may withhold payment of any bursary and other financial support provided by Hackney, following discussion with the Head of Corporate Parenting. Where you have been paid but decide not to attend, this is grounds for us to request for monies to be repaid.

### Additional funding

There are sources of additional funding that you should make use of for financial support, including seeking part-time employment, student loans and grants and hardship grants. Some universities offer a Care Leavers Bursary or financial support through the Access to Learning fund. Your social worker can discuss these with you.

## Support after university

We can continue to offer you advice and support, if you need it, up until you are 25, for employment, education or training.

However, when you have completed your university course, if you do not have paid work, you will be expected to claim benefits, unless you are considering going on to a post graduate course.

If you want to go on to complete a post graduate course, we will offer you support and assistance to help identify financial support for you to continue your education and will advise you how to access this. We are not able to pay your fees or living expenses.

## Support for parents with child care costs

If you want to access training or education you should find out what child care support is on offer from your employer, training provider, college or university.

### Remember

All 3 year olds are entitled to free nursery hours from Early Years Services. In some areas they also offer free provision for 2 year olds.



## Hackney 100

Hackney 100 is a paid work placement programme for young people aged 16–19 who live or study in Hackney. Placements are available in high-profile local companies across a number of sectors, including tech, design, media, fashion, hospitality, catering, engineering and finance.

To find out more speak to your social work unit or the Virtual School, or go to <https://hackneyworks.hackney.gov.uk/hackney100>

## Hackney's Apprenticeship Programme

An apprenticeship is a full time job which combines training and study - you'll learn as you earn. You can study for a number of different qualifications across Levels 2, 3 or 4. Apprenticeship training takes place for a minimum of a year, but can last for up to four years depending on the qualification you take. You usually spend around 20% of your time studying, which is only one day a week, with the rest of the time spent working to get a heap of experience to help start your future career.

As a Hackney care leaver, to be eligible for our apprenticeships you need to be aged 16-24, and not hold a qualification at Level 4 or above (this does not apply to our higher level apprenticeships).

To find out more speak to your social work unit or the Virtual School, or go to <https://hackneyworks.hackney.gov.uk/apprenticeships>

## 5. What help will I get with health matters?

You will continue to have health assessments annually until your 18th birthday. These will be carried out by the LAC health nurse.

If you have specific health needs, your social worker will discuss with you how these can be met as part of your Pathway Plan and offer you advice and support on how to access health services.

From the age of 14 you can ask for a copy of your health assessment from the LAC Health Team. You can either request this from your LAC health nurse at the time of your health assessment or contact the team: Tel **07989 852921** or email **whh-tr.HC-LACHealthTeam@nhs.net**

After your final health assessment before you turn 18 you will be sent a health summary which will include your immunisation record, a copy of your last health assessment, how to access a GP, dentist or optician and where to go for health advice and information.

Your social worker will support you to ensure you are registered with a GP and dentist when you leave care.



### Dental care

You may be eligible for some financial support towards dental checks/treatment if you are:

- Aged 16 to 18 years in full time education.
- Pregnant or have had a baby in the last 12 months.
- Having treatment as an in-patient or out-patient at an NHS hospital.
- Receiving Income Support, Income Based Employment and Support, or Job Seekers Allowance.
- On a low income and have a Health Credit Certificate (known as HC2 or HC3 certificate).

## Eye care

You may also be eligible for free eye tests and vouchers towards glasses/contact lenses if you are:

- Aged 16 to 18 and in full time education.
- Receiving Income Support, Income Based Employment and Support, or Job Seekers Allowance.
- On a low income and have a Health Credit Certificate (known as HC2 or HC3 certificate).

## Prescriptions

We can give you advice and support about paying for prescriptions but we are not able to pay for the costs of prescriptions for you to get medication.

You are eligible for free prescriptions if you are:

- Aged 16 to 18 and in full time education.
- Receiving Income Support, Income Based Employment and Support, or Job Seekers Allowance.
- Pregnant or have had a baby in the last 12 months (you will need an exemption certificate from your GP).
- Receiving treatment in hospital.

## Support for people on a low income

If you are on a low income you can apply for a Health Credit Certificate known as HC2 or HC3. This will give you reduced cost, or free dental and eye checks/treatment as well as prescription charges. This is dependent on your income and needs at the time you apply for support. A certificate can last from 6 months to 5 years depending on your circumstances.

To find out more, ask your GP, dentist or optician, or ask your social worker to help you apply.



## 6. Savings

### My savings

When you leave care you should have a short-term savings account, with savings you and your carer have made while you were in care. Some of this may have been used to buy things before you moved to semi-independence.

It is important when you have left care to try and continue to save in case of emergencies or for special treats.

If you do not have a bank account, your social worker can advise and support you to get one set up. A bank account is not only important to have for savings, but also to pay your wages or benefits into and potentially any financial support you receive from us.

If you were in care for more than 12 months you should also have a Junior ISA or a Child Trust Fund, which was set up with £200 initially. When you become 18 years of age these accounts will become Adult ISAs or Adult Trust Funds and you will be able to access this money. Your social worker will be able to give you information about the money in your account and advise on how to access this money.

### Remember

Your savings are there to support you in your move to independence and adulthood. This may include buying items for your own place, driving lessons and supplementing the financial support available to you if you continue in education or training.

It is important that you think before you spend your savings, as once the money has been spent, it may be a long time before you are able to add to them again.



### Savings over £16,000

Some young people may have a lot of savings. This includes money in bank accounts, ISAs or Trust Funds but can also include inheritance or compensation given by the courts.

If you have savings of £16,000 or more you will not be eligible for Housing Benefit, Income Support or Income Related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), or Job Seekers Allowance (JSA).

You can put up to £15,000 of these savings into a tax free savings account such as an ISA or Trust Fund.

If you have a lot of savings, it is important to get appropriate financial advice. Your social worker will be able to advise you about ensuring you get appropriate advice for your savings.



## 7. Hackney Gets Heard

Hackney Get Heard is the Council for Looked After Children in Hackney. It is a group of young people aged 14–25 who are in care or have experienced care, who aim to represent the voice of young people in the care system, in order to raise concerns or ideas about how to improve services. The group meet regularly, participate in consultations, and research and deliver events to young people in care to gather their views and raise their voice. The group also attends Pan London Children in Care Council meetings and contributes to ongoing dialogue around corporate parenting both locally and nationally.

In the past this group has produced new guidelines for Hackney staff, describing the level of service young people can expect from Hackney's Children and Young People Service in the Hackney Promise, and making it more accessible to young children so they can understand their rights more easily.

The group have monthly meetings on the first Thursday of every month, 5.00 – 7.00 pm at Hackney Town Hall (just come to reception). All young people in care or who are care leavers are invited to attend. As a young person who has experienced care, you are welcome to come along and get involved. There are opportunities for training, work, and to make positive change that will help other young people.



To find out more, please go to:

<https://www.younghackney.org/get-involved/hackney-get-heard/>

## 8. What if I do not get the support I need?

Sometimes we may not be able to provide you with the support you feel you need, or we may not agree to provide you with a particular piece of funding or service you have requested.

There may be a number of reasons for this so it is important you understand the reasons for you not getting the support you feel you need.

### **Your child practitioner or social worker should:**

- Record any decision not to provide you with a service or funding and the reasons why.
- Tell you about the reasons for this decision (and give you details of the complaints and appeals process if you would like this).

If you are unhappy about a decision, you need to firstly try to talk to your social worker before making a complaint as they may be able to help you understand more about why this decision has been made or why the support is not available.

If you decide you want to make a complaint, you may want to have an advocate to support you in making the complaint. If you want advice on how to get an advocate involved to support you, speak to your social worker.



The CFS complaints team can be contacted on:

Tel: **020 8356 5800**

Email: **children.complaints@hackney.gov.uk**

Or write to:

**Safeguarding & Learning**

**3rd Floor**

**Hackney Service Centre**

**1 Hillman Street**

**Hackney**

**London E8 1DY**

Children and Families Service will be reviewing the financial support available to care leavers every year. Please let us know your views on the policy and any suggestions you may have. We will consider these when reviewing the policy.

If you want to tell us your views on the policy you can speak to your social worker who will pass on the information.

## 9. Useful information and contacts

### Hackney Children and Families Service

General Enquiries: **020 8356 3000**

(9am - 5pm, Monday to Friday - except Bank Holidays)

**Hackney Service Centre**

**1 Hillman Street**

**Hackney**

**London, E8 1DY**

### National Care Advisory Service (NCAS)

Web: **[www.leavingcare.org](http://www.leavingcare.org)**

The latest news and information on all issues relating to transitions from care and care leavers are available on the NCAS website.

### Benefits information

Web: **[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)**

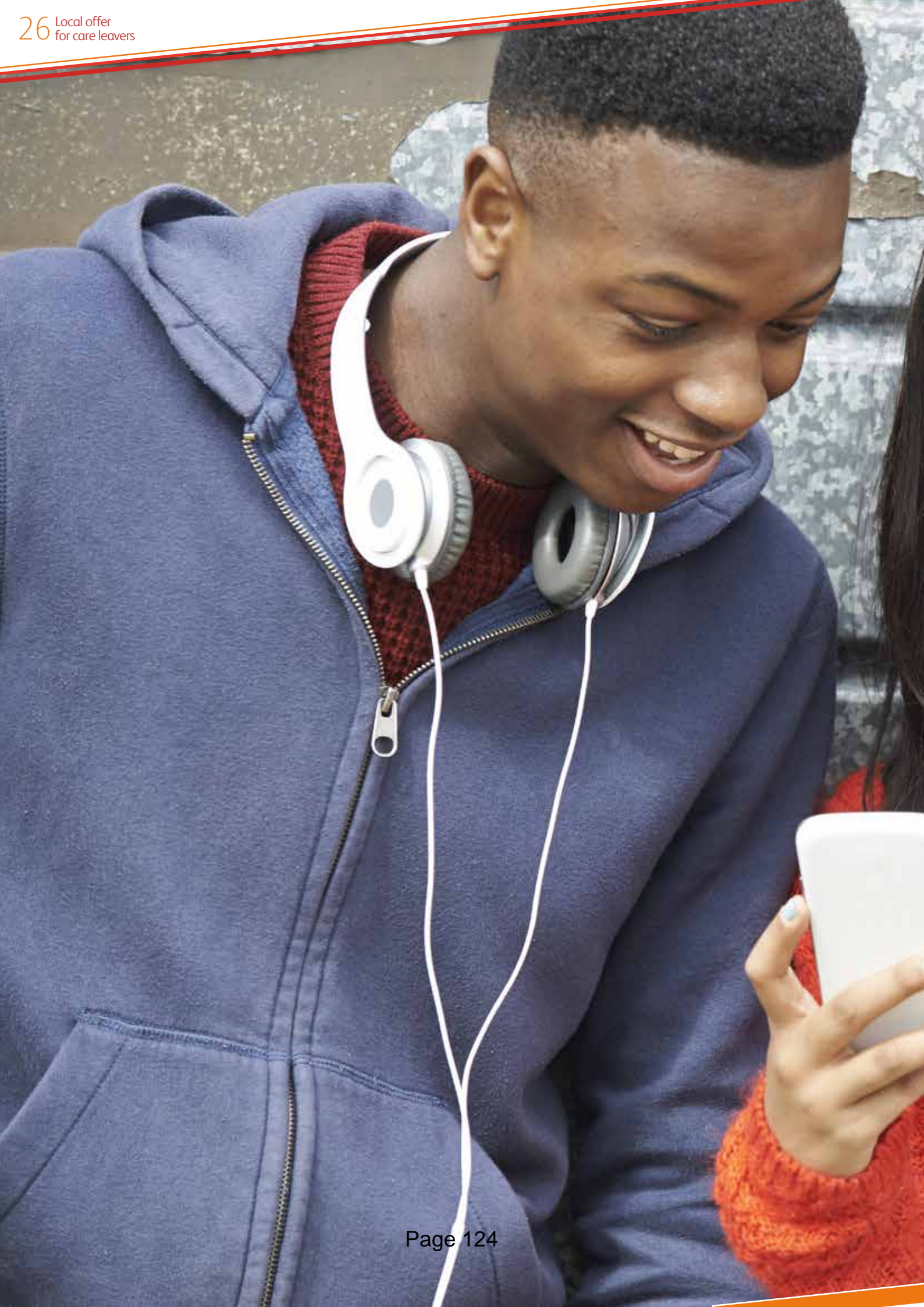
The latest news and information on benefits will be available on this national website. You can search for individual benefits and use the 'benefits calculator' interactive tool that can help you find out what benefits you may be entitled to.

### Turn2us

Web: **[www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)**

Freephone: **0808 802 2000** (9am to 8pm Monday to Friday)

Helps people access the money available to them through welfare benefits, grants and other help.







## Submission from Become, National Care Leavers Charity (Unable to attend in person)

Positive aspects of housing support that young people like to see more of:

- Rent support and guarantor schemes to help care leavers access private renting;
- Designated housing officers within leaving care teams or really strong connections with housing to support care leavers in finding and accessing appropriate housing;
- Housing support to identify private landlords accepting benefits
- 'Training flats' to help young people at 18 test living independently with the option of returning to supported accommodation;
- A huge area is planning before a young person turns 18. It is quite shocking the number of care leavers who become homeless at 18 as they 'age out' of their current accommodation. Essential support for those in care/care leavers is better planning ahead of age 18 to identify accommodation, ensure it is appropriately furnished, and that the young person themselves feels ready to move in - with the skills they need for independent living- so they are not suddenly becoming homeless at 18.
- Support for care leavers from the Local Authority who live out of borough and wish to remain there (usually due to having built support networks in the area, or being in education in the area, or having job opportunities there) - such as linking up with housing from other local authorities to support care leavers in accessing accommodation.
- Clear guidance and information for those in care and foster carers around Staying Put- the practical and financial implications.

This good practice guidance is helpful in considering joint protocols between housing and leaving care- [Joint housing protocols for care leavers: good practice advice - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

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# Towards a London-wide Local Care Offer

## Summary

Through the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Government introduced the requirement for local authorities to publish a 'local offer for care leavers' which outlines the services available within the local authority area to support care leavers as they start to live independently. However, with 33 local authorities in London, each with a different offer of support, it can often be challenging to understand and access the help that is available to care leavers.

The way in which 'local offers' are published and displayed to care leavers varies widely from borough to borough, with some spelling out in detail the financial support available to care leavers in easily accessible language, and others failing to display the document on the website at all.

Furthermore, the level of support given to care leavers also varies between local authorities in London, including priority access to social housing, free travel, council tax exemptions, emergency financial support, and subsidised access to leisure.

This lack of a consistent offer adds to the confusion which many care leavers feel around what support is available to them as they start to live independently for the first time.

The Mayor of London, through signing up to the 'Care Leavers Covenant' has attempted to improve the London-wide offer for care leavers. He has also waived the GLA precept charge for boroughs that exempt care leavers from paying council tax.

The Children's Society, Become, and the London Children in Care Network believe more can be done to improve the consistency of support available to care leavers across London, in which local and devolved government in London should come together to agree to a pan-London minimum standard offer for care leavers.

**Partnership  
for Young  
London**

**The  
Children's  
Society**

**BECOME.**  
THE CHARITY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE  
AND YOUNG CARE LEAVERS

**The Children's Society** is a national charity committed to improving the lives of young people in this country. We work to transform the hopes and happiness of young people who are facing abuse, exploitation, and neglect. We support them through their most serious life challenges, and campaign tirelessly for the big social changes that will make life better for those who need hope most. We've been doing this for 140 years and we won't stop until we've built a society where hope is alive in every child.

**The London Children in Care Network** is part of the Partnership for Young London and is a group designed for and comprised by care experienced young people from across London. The aim is for care experienced young people to be upskilled and provided with opportunities to ensure pathways to progression, as well as being empowered to influence policy.

**Become** is the charity for children in care and young care leavers. Our mission is to help children in care and young care leavers to believe in themselves and to heal, grow, and unleash their potential. We work alongside them to make the care system the best it can be.

## Introduction

The Children's Society have a proud history of campaigning to improve the support available to care leavers as they make the transition to adulthood. Our 'Fairer Start for Care Leavers' campaign has seen the introduction of council tax exemptions in 130 upper tier authorities. This means that when these young people start to live independently, they aren't faced with large bills and have the time to get a job, start managing their money, and build a future filled with hope. Working alongside partners, we also successfully campaigned for care leavers to be exempted from the Shared Accommodation Rate up until the age of 25, helping them to maintain their tenancies during the first years of independent life.

We also support care leavers directly through many of our services; for example, in London, our Bright Light programme – delivered in partnership with Catch 22 – supports care leavers aged 16-26 into apprenticeships, employment, education and training, whilst helping them to build confidence, overcome barriers and realise their potential.

Across London, we estimate that there are 15,270<sup>1</sup> care leavers aged 18-25. Like all young adults in London, they will find themselves moving around the city to be closer to opportunities, love, friendships, or to live somewhere more suited to their preferences. Yet as they balance moving across borough boundaries with transitioning to adulthood, numerous challenges arise. Once they move out of the authority they grew up in, they will almost immediately face a drop-off in support available to them, ranging from no longer being a priority on the housing register, to receiving no help with their council tax bill.

Care leavers have every right to move across the city and live a normal and healthy life, without facing significant barriers.

This briefing explores the different levels of support on offer in all 33 London Boroughs, areas of best practice for care leavers, and makes recommendations to enable better co-ordination to deliver a common 'core offer' for care leavers across the city.

## Methodology

The briefing was produced through a desk-based comparison of all 33 local offer documents across London as published today. It examines the services explicitly detailed in the local offers across: the accessibility of the offer; the levels of financial support on offer; help with accommodation; the provisions for the development of education and skills; and health and well-being services. Therefore, in practice whilst local authorities may offer services not

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<sup>1</sup> The Children's Society's own estimates, a full explanation of our methodology can be requested.

detailed in this briefing, if it isn't included in their local offer it doesn't form part of the comparison.

## London Local Care Offers

Local authorities have a corporate parenting responsibility to support young people leaving care up until the age of 25. This support includes practical, social, and emotional support that any parent would give their child, from assistance finding accommodation, to helping them secure stable employment.

Councils have a number of statutory responsibilities for children who were in their care, until they are 21, or 25 if they are still in education or training, have a disability, or if the care leaver requests continued support. For example, care leavers aged 16-18 are entitled to financial support to meet their education, training, and employment needs, with those aged 18-21 entitled to a £1,200 bursary if they stay in full-time education, or a £2000 bursary if they go to university.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 extended support for care leavers, by clarifying in law the role of local authorities as corporate parents, giving care leavers access to their personal advisers until the age of 25, and legislating for the publication of local offers<sup>2</sup> to ensure that every care leaver knows what help and support is available to them locally.

In the local offer, the authority should include all services offered by the council which support care leavers in, or preparing for, independent living. This includes services that the authority is legally obligated to provide to care leavers such as 'staying put arrangements', and discretionary services the council provides, such as travel subsidies. Often, however, there is little distinction made in local offers between the support councils are statutorily obligated to provide and the discretionary services provided to support care leavers.

With 33 local authorities in London, each local offer will provide a different level of support, which can be challenging for care leavers to understand and access the help that is available to them. This is particularly an issue if care leavers are placed in accommodation, or choose to move for work or study, outside of the area in which they were originally in care.

Following campaigning by The Children's Society, 29 of London's 33 local authorities now have some form of policy in place to exempt care leavers from the burden of paying council tax. The Mayor of London has also supported the campaign, by agreeing to waive the Greater London Authority (GLA) precept when a borough has put in place a scheme for care leavers to be exempt from council tax.

Furthermore, the Mayor has attempted to improve the London-wide offer for care leavers, firstly by signing up to the 'Care Leaver Covenant' and committing in his 2021 manifesto to giving care leavers half price travel on TfL services. This is something we wholeheartedly support and look forward to working with the Mayor to implement it. The GLA has also established the London Local Authority Care Leavers Network – bringing together London's local government to explore how support for care experienced young people can be better coordinated and improved.

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<sup>2</sup> Whilst Local Authorities and Combined Authorities have corporate parenting responsibilities, and therefore an obligation to publish a local offer for care leavers, the Greater London Authority has no such responsibilities, which complicates attempts to create a city-wide offer.

Councils across London have a deep history and culture of working in collaboration to make life better for children and young people across the city. We believe this can be used to create a more integrated offer for care leavers across London, so that wherever care leavers were looked after, they know they will be given a minimum standard of support.

## Displaying Local Offers

There is currently no central hub which details all of the different local offers in London. Each of the 33 local authorities across London have different ways of publishing and explaining their 'local offer' to care leavers.

Nearly all local authorities in London display their local offer on their website, though there is no standard format across the different councils. For example, 26 of the 33 local authorities in London display a PDF of their local offer on a clearly accessible section of their website, 4 have a dedicated website detailing their local offer, with 3 not clearly signposting to their offer on their website.

The vast majority of young people who contact Become's Care Advice Line have never heard of their local offer, and don't know where or how to access it. Very few have been informed about the local offer document by professionals in their lives. You can't access something if you don't know about it, and this lack of awareness of rights and entitlements creates and intensifies a number of challenges for care leavers.

This lack of a central hub, coupled with differing practices for the publication of 'local offers' across London may be confusing to care leavers, especially if they have to move between boroughs as they start living independently. Local authorities must do more to ensure all care leavers (and the people who support them) are aware of their local offer, where to find it, and how to push for changes which strengthen the offer.

There are some councils which should be commended for displaying their local offer in an innovative and accessible way. Hackney, for example, details the support care leavers are entitled to via a comic strip and Merton spells out their local offer through 32 simple pledges they make to care leavers.

Croydon is also one of the few councils who provides their offer in multiple languages. This is especially important in London; in 2020 there were 1,770<sup>3</sup> unaccompanied asylum-seeking children looked after by local authorities across Greater London, many of whose first language may not be English. Become publishes their factsheets in Arabic, Kurdish, Pashto, Tigrinya, Vietnamese and Albanian to ensure young people understand their rights and entitlements.

Finally, within each local offer, we have identified a range of different practices outlining the specific level of financial support care leavers are entitled to. Whilst some councils set out in detail the level of financial support care leavers should expect – such as Haringey – others fail to clearly outline what care leavers can access, or how they can make claims for different entitlements.

Local authorities will always want to present their offer in different ways, in some cases designing documents in partnership with care leavers in their area. However, as part of the development of a wider pan-London offer, the GLA should establish and maintain a care leavers hub on its website, compiling all of the local offer documents alongside any other

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<sup>3</sup> Department for Education, 2021. *Children looked after in England including adoptions*. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions/2020>

entitlements across the city. This would create a “one stop shop” for care leavers to find out about their entitlements, regardless of their local authority.

### Examples of best practice

Local Authority	Details
Croydon	Provide their local offer in multiple languages on an easy to access webpage.
Hackney	Has a comic strip detailing the support care leavers are entitled to from the council in their local offer.
Lambeth, Haringey	Spells out financial support clearly.

## Financial Support

Our research<sup>4</sup> has found that care experienced young people are a particularly vulnerable group when it comes to managing their finances, especially as they often begin to manage their budget fully for the first time when they move into independent accommodation.

Across London, care leavers will experience different levels of financial support depending on their ‘parent authority’. An overview of some of the main areas of support on offer are summarised below:

### Council tax exemptions

Young people leaving the care system are at a high risk of falling into council tax debt. Our Wolf at the Door<sup>5</sup> report into council tax debt showed that the pace of escalation of debt by local authorities could be frightening for care leavers.

Through our campaign ‘A fairer start for care leavers’, The Children’s Society has been asking councils to use their powers under section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to exempt care leavers from the burden of paying council tax until the age of 25. In doing so, local authorities can prevent a group of young people who are financially vulnerable from falling into debt and meet their responsibilities as corporate parents. 29 of London’s 33 local authorities have some form of policy in place to exempt care leavers from the burden of paying council tax.

The Mayor of London has also supported this campaign by agreeing to waive the GLA precept when a borough has put in place a discretionary scheme for care leavers to be exempt from council tax.

However, London’s local authorities have decided to exempt care leavers in different ways. This means that care leavers placed in accommodation in another borough, or who move across the city, often aren’t able to benefit from council tax exemptions.

Some emerging issues have been reported to The Children’s Society in the ways in which London Boroughs are implementing council tax exemptions. For example, some local authorities are providing exemption to all care leavers living in their jurisdiction and some are

<sup>4</sup> The Children’s Society, 2017. *Claiming after care. Care leavers and the benefits system.*

<sup>5</sup> The Children’s Society, 2015. *The Wolf at the Door. How Council Debt Collection is harming children.*

not, meaning that a young care leaver who moves away might suddenly face the prospect of paying council tax when they were previously exempt from doing so.

Another issue we have identified is that some local authorities have adopted a means tested exemption for care leavers. Whilst good intentioned, a means-test still means that a care leaver must apply for the exemption and prove their eligibility for it. Our previous research into care leavers receiving and challenging benefit sanctions has shown that only 16.6% of care leavers challenge their sanctions compared to 24% of the general population<sup>6</sup>.

Become have also found that even when some local authorities do offer council tax exemptions for care leavers, this isn't always applied automatically and requires the young person to be aware of this entitlement and contact their local authority to ensure it is applied.

In our view, all policies to exempt care leavers from council tax would benefit from being simplified, with care leavers being fully exempt from paying council tax, up until the age of 25 years. This exemption should apply to all care leavers whether they were in the care of the authority they live now or not. Furthermore, any exemption should be automatically applied to prevent care leavers being unfairly penalised for not being aware of their right to an exemption or how to action it.

## Emergency Support and Benefits

As stated above, care experienced young people are uniquely vulnerable to financial pressures. Without the financial stability provided to the majority of young people by their parents, care leavers are much more likely to rely on support from the social security system. This will mean that most will submit a benefit claim around their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Most councils signal that they provide guidance towards making claims in their local offer.

However, there are often long waits between applying for social security and receiving it. Therefore, some councils in London provide discretionary loans or grants to care leavers waiting for their first benefits payment. This practice varies widely from council to council. Greenwich, for example, will pay care leavers £50 a week for up to eight weeks whilst they wait for their benefits payment. Others provide loans, the balance of which is either paid off by the care leaver or deducted from their future financial entitlements.

In times of financial emergency, many councils in London will provide similar loans or grants to care leavers in order to lessen their economic burden. However, 10 councils in London fail to detail the support they offer for care leavers in such situations, and a further 14 offer only vague promises of discretionary support in exceptional circumstances, signposting a care leavers Personal Advisor as the place to go to ask for support.

Having examined Local Welfare Assistance Scheme Policies for all London Councils, some of the 10 councils who fail to detail emergency support available to care leavers, make clear in their policies that care leavers are a priority group for financial support. This lack of cross referencing can lead to care leavers facing financial hardship being unaware about the services available to them, having instead to rely on their Personal Advisor knowing about it. Councils should be more explicit in stating the level of emergency financial support they offer for care leavers, cross referencing with their Local Welfare Assistance Scheme, if applicable.

Furthermore, the offering of loans to assist in times of financial crisis or whilst care leavers wait for welfare payments, has also been identified as a practice in some local authorities in London. Whilst these loans can grant short term relief to difficult financial situations, they may

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<sup>6</sup> The Children's Society, 2017. *Claiming after care*.

make budgeting more difficult for care leavers in the future and lead to unnecessary stress and anxiety.

We believe that to reduce the risk of care leavers taking on further debt, care leavers should receive grants instead from their local council when they face financial difficulties.

Any financial information should also be clearly detailed in an accessible way in the local offer, rather than being represented in an additional financial policy document, which can often be confusing to the reader.

### Examples of best practice

Local Authority	Detail
Barnet	Will provide 4-week subsistence loan to assist with benefits wait.
Greenwich	Provide £50 a week until benefits come in for up to 8 weeks.
Hammersmith and Fulham	Provide advance on Universal Credit up to 6 weeks whilst waiting for benefits.

### Help setting up bank accounts, identification, and support with savings

Often, for young people leaving care, the first time they receive advice about managing their finances are once they have already fallen into debt and financial difficulty. This is compounded by the fact that they will experience a variety of different financial advice depending on their council.

Another barrier care leavers have reported to us is access to important identifying documents, which are vital for opening bank accounts, moving to independent accommodation, and gaining steady employment. Most councils in London, other than Barnet, Sutton, and Waltham Forest, state in their local offer that they provide discretionary financial support for identification and other important documents.

Most of the 33 boroughs – with the exception of Bromley, the City of London, and Sutton - indicated in their local care offer that they will assist with setting up bank accounts, with some offering referrals to local credit unions.

Forming positive financial habits as early as possible in life is crucial. This is even more necessary for young people leaving care, who lack the same support network as children living with their families. Therefore, good guidance around savings and investments, so that care leavers can take steps to save for a financially secure future, can be a really important service delivered by councils.

19 councils make clear in their local offer that care leavers will be given access to savings set up in their care, alongside advice and support in how to use their savings for the future. Councils are obligated to open a Junior ISA or Child Trust Fund for care leavers if they were in their care for more than 12 months. Yet this may not be made clear in their local offer. Become have reported that care leavers often experience difficulties accessing the full amount of savings they're entitled to following their time spent in care, especially if they've experienced a number of placement moves.

All local offers should detail the support made available to care leavers to help them access the full amount of savings they're entitled to when they turn 18.

## Care Leavers with unresolved immigration or asylum status & No Recourse to Public Funds

It is crucial that a young person’s immigration or asylum status is resolved before they turn 18, when certain rights and entitlements, including access to legal aid for separated children and specific pathways to citizenship for those under 18, end. <sup>7</sup>

Once these children transition into adulthood and become care leavers, their situation is made far more complex by their unresolved status, as they may lose out on the support that British and settled care leavers receive. If they leave care without status and are undocumented, they will be subject to ‘no recourse to public funds’. This means they lack entitlement to the majority of financial support on offer for care leavers.

Some councils have attempted to lessen the burden on care leavers with unresolved status, but this forms a patchwork of support at best. A growing minority of councils provide financial assistance and support for citizenship applications, which are costly and complicated – this includes Barnet, the City of London, Havering, Hillingdon, and Lambeth.

Greater Manchester has recently renewed it’s pledge to support looked after children and care leavers with insecure or unresolved status. Its commitments entail<sup>8</sup>:

- Identify all our looked after children and care leavers with insecure immigration status
- Connect them with legal advice so they can be supported to make the most appropriate immigration applications and challenge immigration refusals
- Support those who are eligible to apply for British citizenship
- Continue to provide access to leaving care services

But on the whole, little support is available to care leavers whose immigration status is still unresolved after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. On analysis of the local offers, only Croydon details sustained and specific financial provision available for those care leavers with No Recourse to Public Funds. Care leavers can access a prepaid card which is provided with weekly subsistence payments of £45, fully subsidised rent and utility bills in accommodation sourced by the council, and travel payments for getting to college. Haringey also offers £57.90 per week for up to 4 weeks for those who are NRPF.

### Examples of best practice

Local Authority	Details
Croydon	Provide prepaid card and subsistence payments of £45 per week, subsidised rent, and travel payments for getting to college for those on NRPF.
Haringey	Provide £57.90 per week for up to four weeks for those who are NRPF status.
Hillingdon, Lambeth, Hackney, City of London, Barnet,	All provide some form of financial assistance for immigration applications. Lambeth, Hackney and Barnet pay for naturalisation on 18 <sup>th</sup> birthday, City of London provide £400

<sup>7</sup> Legal aid is now available to all separated children for their immigration (non-asylum) matters, including citizenship cases. See <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2019/9780111188903>; [https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2019/1396/pdfs/ukdsi20191396\\_en.pdf](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2019/1396/pdfs/ukdsi20191396_en.pdf).

<sup>8</sup>[https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/news/article/8729/council\\_renews\\_its\\_commitment\\_to\\_help\\_childr\\_en\\_and\\_young\\_people\\_affected\\_by\\_brexit\\_immigration\\_changes](https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/news/article/8729/council_renews_its_commitment_to_help_childr_en_and_young_people_affected_by_brexit_immigration_changes)



	towards citizenship applications and Hillingdon pays 50% of naturalisation fees.
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## Birthdays, festivals, and other significant points in life

The loneliness of being a care leaver can often be compounded at points of significance in the young person's life.

Many councils in London already provide allowances or cash gifts to young people in their care for milestone birthdays and to celebrate religious festivals, such as Christmas, Eid or Hanukkah. Some councils continue to offer these allowances or gifts to care leavers up to the age of 25, though often at a reduced rate.

Of the 33 London Councils, 19 provide cash gifts or allowances to young people at least up until the age of 21 for birthdays and other important milestones.

### Examples of best practice

Local Authority	Details
City of London	Provide £50 yearly for birthdays, £100 for wedding gifts, and £200 new baby gift.
Hackney	Provide between £75-£150 up until the age of 21 for birthdays.
Camden	Provide between £75-£100 up until the age of 21 for birthdays.

## Accommodation

Depending on their local authority in London, care leavers will have widely different experiences of moving into independent accommodation for the first time.

Issues around housing and homelessness represent 16% of initial enquiries to Become's Care Advice Line, which rises to 18% for contacts from Greater London. This is the largest issue the service supports care-experienced young people with.

Firstly, the Setting up Home Allowance, which assists care leavers with buying essential items when moving into permanent accommodation differs between local authorities in London. Government guidance recommends that this should be up to around £2000, however, the value of the leaving care grant varies from £1000 in Redbridge to £2500 in Bromley, £2200 in Tower Hamlets, and £3000 in the City of London.

Practice in administering the Allowance also varies considerably across London. Become have found that the allowance is often used for purposes outside of those suggested in statutory guidance, such as accommodation deposits. Restrictions on how and where it can be spent, alongside the processes for accessing it, also prevent care leavers from acquiring the furnishings or equipment they need. This can force them into their own pockets, creating further financial insecurity. Therefore, local offers should also detail how their Setting Up Home Allowance is delivered, working alongside care leavers to ensure this aligns with their needs and wishes.

The Children's Society believes that care leavers should be given priority need for social housing. Whilst all councils in London list care leavers as possessing some form of priority

status on their Housing Allocation Scheme, this often isn't cross-referenced with their local offer. Currently, only 13 councils in London state in their local offer that care leavers are priority groups for social housing in their area. This means that care leavers may not be aware of their priority status on the housing register in many local authorities leading to confusion when they begin to live independently.

In addition, care leavers contacting Become have reported difficulties in communication between housing services and leaving care teams, with additional barriers such as independent living skills assessments creating even longer waiting times, which leads to instability. Alongside the local offer, local authorities should ensure they have a clear and accessible joint housing protocol for care leavers which follows the Government's good practice advice<sup>9</sup>.

The growing number of young people who live 'out of area' in care creates additional barriers for those accessing housing as a care leaver. Across London, 53% of looked after children in 2020 were placed outside their home authority, of whom 28% were placed more than 20 miles from their home<sup>10</sup>. The area where they now live may not afford them the same priority status for social housing despite their vulnerability, which means young people face a difficult choice: either apply for housing where they currently live based on a weaker 'local connection' claim, or apply in their home local authority where they stand a better chance but sacrifice the relationships, support networks, and opportunities in the area they may now call home.

Due to the short supply of social housing, care leavers are increasingly finding themselves placed in the private rented sector, or in temporary accommodation. Some councils in London may assist with paying for deposits, agency fees, and even the first month of rent in some circumstances. This varies depending on the council, with some only providing support if the care leaver isn't eligible for the discretionary housing payment or social housing.

Some care leavers may also benefit from living in supported accommodation for a period after they first leaving care. For example, Barking and Dagenham Council offer 'Learn 2 Live' Suites for young people that have become settled in education or employment to give them greater support until they are able to manage independent accommodation.

The House Project is a national programme which gives care leavers the skills, experience, and support to create their own home. It acts as an alternative path for care leavers, in which adults and young people in and leaving care work together to refurbish properties that then become their homes, helping to build a long-term community of support. Currently there is a pilot project being run in Islington, with eighteen young people having moved into their own properties.

Once again, it is clear that care leavers face a patchwork of support when they take their first steps towards independent living. A London-wide offer would ensure a consistent housing policy was available to care leavers, enabling them to plan their futures with better ease.

### Examples of best practice.

Local Authority	Details
City of London	Provide up to £3000 as a setting up home grant, allow care leavers to remain in semi-

<sup>9</sup> Department of Education, 2020. *Joint Housing Protocols for Care Leavers Good Practice*. Available [online](#).

<sup>10</sup> Department of Education, 2020. *Children looked after in England including adoptions*. Available [online](#). [Accessed 30 May 2021]

	independent living arrangements until social tenancy is available, and provide Winter Heating money for the first year.
Bexley, Brent, Bromley, Camden, Croydon, Ealing, Greenwich, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest	State that care leavers are prioritised on their housing register and detail the steps they must take to apply.
Southwark	Offers 12 month probationary tenancy to care leavers, and will pay first weeks rent if in housing association and four weeks rent + deposit if privately renting
Barking and Dagenham	Children and Young People who are settled in employment or education get a 1-2 bedroom apartment with license agreement.
Hammersmith and Fulham	Will pay deposit and 1 months rent. Will also provide payment for emergency accommodation for up to 6 weeks.

## Education, Employment, and Training

Care leavers often find it difficult to navigate living independently with having a job, training, or remaining in the education system post-18. Often a lack of qualifications and support to find a job conspire to negatively impact on care leavers' self-esteem. Nearly 39% of care leavers aged 19-21 were known not to be in education, employment, or training, compared to around 13% of all 19- to 21-year-olds<sup>11</sup>.

Furthermore, the costs of remaining in education or seeking a job or apprenticeship may be high for care leavers; this includes costs of travelling to and from work or education, clothing for interviews, money for specialist tools and equipment, and course fees. Care leavers also require extra support in sustaining employment, whether through expert advice and skills development or access to subsidised travel, or other job-related expenses.

Care leavers seeking education, employment, or training, face a variety of policy offers depending on their 'home' authority in London. 16 local authorities state in their local offer that they offer some form of travel subsidy if care leavers remain in education or training. For example, Hackney supplies an 18+ zone 1-6 travelcard if the care leaver is in education and training. Kensington and Chelsea will support with transport costs to training or job interviews and also supplies £15 a week for lunch money if they are in work.

18 local councils in London state that they will give some support for job related expenses, ranging from providing clothing for job interviews, support to by specialist equipment or uniform, to paying course fees. Southwark Council provides all care leavers in higher education with a laptop worth up to £400, up to £100 for books and field trips, and up to £200 per year towards course fees and awarding body costs.

Become's dedicated Advice and Support Officer for Further and Higher Education regularly supports care leavers with their educational journeys. Enquiries around education represent 11% of all contact with their Care Advice Line, with advice and support needs including finances, accommodation, support for postgraduate study, and making applications to college or university.

<sup>11</sup> Department of Education, 2020. *Children looked after in England including adoptions*. Available [online](#). [Accessed 30 May 2021]

It is a requirement that all local authorities provide care leavers accessing higher education with a bursary of £2000, normally split evenly across the duration of their course. However, Become have found that the timing and delivery of this bursary often prevents it from being used as effectively as it could. Local offers should be clear on when and how this bursary is delivered, along with any other entitlements for care leavers in higher education or other training routes. Some Local Authorities provide gifts upon graduation, such as the City of London, Croydon and Harrow. Others provide financial assistance for accommodation during vacation, including Camden, Ealing, and Hillingdon.

In his recent manifesto, the Mayor of London promised to introduce half price travel on TfL services for all care leavers. This will make a huge difference to all care leavers, not just those in employment, education, or training.

Apprenticeships are often seen as a good employment option for young people, although care leavers may be put off by the low levels of pay and entry requirements, especially the requirement to have up to five GCSEs at grade A\* to C. Therefore, it is positive to see that some London Councils offer traineeships or apprenticeships to care leavers. For example, Waltham Forest have a number of apprenticeships with the council specifically for care leavers. Other councils also provide the offer of 1-1 tuition and 'Virtual Schools' to help care leavers improve their skills.

A London-wide offer for care leavers, working with the Mayor and all local councils, could establish a dedicated programme to support care leavers to access meaningful education, training, and employment opportunities across London. This could include priority for any apprenticeships local authorities may have on offer, 1-1 tuition, and help with writing CVs and applying for jobs.

### Examples of best practice

Local Authority	Details
Brent	Up to 10 apprenticeships available to care leavers a year. Traineeship programme offered twice a year for all care leavers who don't have qualifications for apprenticeship scheme.
Hackney	Provide zone 1-6 travelcard if in education, employment, or training.
Hillingdon and Hounslow	Offer to pay for driving lessons and theory test if in education, employment, or training
Lambeth	Pay FE course fees subject to assessment
Southwark	Provide up to £400 for a laptop, and pay for job related expenses for clothing, travel, and lunch money. Also provide £300 per year for travel around London.

## Our Work – Bright Light

Bright Light is a pilot programme delivered by Catch22 and The Children's Society to support care leavers into education, apprenticeships, employment, and training. Through 1:1 support from coaches, alongside specially created job fairs and group sessions, participants can build their confidence, overcome barriers, and realise their potential.

At the time of his referral, Karl was studying for A Levels in Business Studies, Sociology, and Media Studies, but this was disrupted by the pandemic. Karl moved to a new home four times during 2020, with the Bright Light team having to adapt to new ways of working.

Karl was eager to work with his Bright Light Career Coach, being supported with CV reviews and adjustments, help writing cover letters, and assistance registering with online jobsites. Eventually, Karl applied for a Business Administration apprenticeship with the London Borough of Enfield. The application was in-depth, with practical elements he had never come across before. Additionally, he required work clothing and encountered travel expenses.

Working with his Bright Light Career Coach for further support, they worked on mock interviews and Karl received financial support for both appropriate interview attire and travel expenses. Karl was successful in securing his role, and the Career Coach continues to have monthly check-ins with him. Both Karl and his employer are thrilled with the placement.

## Health and Well-Being

Leaving care can present young people with new challenges to their physical and mental health. Often the services care leavers were previously entitled to as children are no longer available once they turn 18, with young people facing a drop-off in support. Looked after children and care leavers are also between four and five times more likely to self-harm in adulthood than the general population<sup>12</sup>, yet there is often very little support as young people leave care, or need to transition from CAMHS to adult mental health and well-being services. Newham Council states that they will support care leavers with the transition from CAMHS to adult mental health services, but this practice isn't replicated across all London Councils, meaning that care leavers in some London boroughs will find it more difficult to access mental health services in the future.

For care leavers, building healthy habits and lifestyles often can be difficult, especially if they are facing financial difficulties, living in unsuitable accommodation, or have a limited support network. 14 councils across London state they offer some form of subsidised leisure for care leavers, allowing them to exercise without worrying about the financial cost. Some councils achieve this subsidy through a bursary which care leavers can apply for. For example, Greenwich Council allows care leavers to apply through the Health and Wellbeing panel for up to £150 per year for gym membership. Other councils may provide care leavers with discounts or free access directly through partnership with council run leisure centres, such as Newham or Lewisham.

Some councils also provide some additional support to improve care leavers health, with Barking and Dagenham offering yearly assistance with new glasses and dental costs, Ealing paying the cost of prescriptions, and Lewisham covering the cost of transport to go to health appointments. Whilst care leavers may be entitled to free prescriptions due to receiving

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<sup>12</sup> Department of Health, 2012. *Preventing suicide in England: A cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives*. Department of Health, London, pp.22.

benefits, in practice it can be difficult for them to know if they are eligible and apply for the discount.

### Examples of best practice

Local Authority	Details
Barnet, Bexley, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Haringey, Hillingdon, Merton, Newham, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth	Provide some level of subsidy for local leisure centres and exercise classes to care leavers.
Barking and Dagenham	Provide support for costs towards glasses and dentist.
Ealing	Pays prescription costs.
Lewisham	Pays transport costs to health appointments.
City of London	Funding is considered for mental health services.

## Further Policy Innovations

Across London, there are examples of local authorities going beyond their statutory obligations to care leavers to deliver innovative solutions to the problems they face when they begin to live independently.

Digital exclusion is a problem which care experienced young people face acutely. Despite requiring access to the internet for education and employment opportunities, a report by the Partnership for Young London and The Pan London Children in Care Council<sup>13</sup> found that almost half of young care leavers faced difficulties connecting to the internet daily. This digital divide has been exacerbated by the COVID pandemic, with young people missing out on socialising with their peers, work, and education. Therefore, it was positive to see Islington Council commit to providing all care leavers with free Wi-Fi in their first year of living independently – it is also the first local authority in the country to do so.

As explored in the Education, Employment, and Training section, care leavers often struggle with some of the extra costs associated with seeking education or employment opportunities, especially with regards to paying for specialist tools or equipment or travelling to work. Some jobs may require individuals to be able to drive which is another significant cost facing care leavers as they enter the world of work. To mitigate some of these costs, both Hillingdon and Hounslow Councils offer some of payment for driving lessons and tests for care leavers, as long as they are in education or employment.

Another issue which has been reported to us has been the lack of spaces available to care leavers to drop in to for support. In Romford, The Cocoon, one of the few dedicated support hubs for children in care and care leavers in London, was opened in 2017. The centre provides a safe space for children and young people living in care or leaving care, where they can meet with key workers and progress with personal development.

<sup>13</sup> Partnership for Young London and Pan London Children in Care Council, 2020. *The Digital Divide: Internet Access for Care Leavers*. <https://www.partnershipforyounglondon.org.uk/post/the-digital-divide-internet-access-for-care-leavers>

## A model to emulate? The Greater Manchester Care-Leavers Pledge

The ten local authorities which make up the Greater Manchester Combined Authority established a Greater Manchester-wide Care Leavers Trust in early 2019 to deliver improvements in support for care leavers across the city region.

One of the trust's first policy initiatives was to agree a council tax exemption for all care leavers, until the age of 25, across Greater Manchester irrespective of the care leavers' 'parent authority'. The council tax is designed to be just one part of a suite of support GMCA and local councils will offer to care leavers, with the trust committed to developing and implementing a Greater Manchester Care Leavers common core offer, setting out a consistent minimum offer of support across the conurbation.

The offer comprises the **five** following elements:

- That no care leavers will be classified as being intentionally homeless.
- Care leavers will be able to access a clear, consistent education, employment, or training offer.
- There will be access to a mentor for every care leaver that wants one.
- Care leavers will be supported as a priority group within the health economy which includes free prescriptions for care leavers up to the age of 25.
- Free transport for care leavers across GM until the age of 21.

We believe that local authorities in London, and the Greater London Authority, can follow the example of Greater Manchester, and should seek to develop a common local offer for care leavers across the city. Whilst we recognise that there are different governance arrangements in Greater Manchester, with political will and cross-partnership working, we believe a similar set of arrangements could be put in place across London for the benefit of care experienced young people.

## Recommendations for a pan-London Offer

As explored throughout this briefing, care leavers experience a variety of different responses and opportunities depending on their 'parent' authority. This lack of a consistent offer of support for care leavers across London adds to the confusion that many feel as they begin living independently.

Therefore, The Children's Society believes that all London Councils and the Greater London Authority should come together to agree to a pan-London 'common core' offer for care leavers. This would mean that care leavers who have been in the care of any London authority will have a consistent minimum package of support available to them as they transition to adulthood.

We recognise that the development of a pan-London offer is no easy task and will require multiple agencies working together over time to agree to a common core offer. However, the experience of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority shows that with the political will, it is both possible and can make a huge difference to the lives of care leavers.

This pan-London care leaver offer should include some of the below policies:

- A London care leavers digital hub which sets out entitlements and opportunities for care leavers in London in one place.

- A pan-London council tax exemption, meaning that care leavers who have been in the care of any London authority will be exempt from paying council tax wherever they live in the capital, up until the age of 25.
- Local authorities in London should ensure that all looked after children have their immigration status secured before they leave care. For care leavers where this hasn't been the case, councils should support them to secure their status as a priority. Where there are costs associated, for example in applying for citizenship, the local authority should meet these costs.
- A commitment that local authorities across London reserve a set number of their in-house apprenticeships for care leavers, ensuring that they are given guidance and support from the application process through the end of their placement.
- Free or subsidised prescriptions for all care leavers in London aged 18-25.

A council-by-council comparison of each local care offer is also available as a separate download.

Please contact Joe Farnworth-Mayers, Local Public Affairs Officer at [joefarnworth.mayers@childrenssociety.org.uk](mailto:joefarnworth.mayers@childrenssociety.org.uk) if you have any questions.



Date: 29th March 2019

Subject: Greater Manchester Care Leaver's Trust

Report of: Rishi Shori, Portfolio Lead for Children's Services and Geoff Little,  
Portfolio Lead Chief Executive, Children Services

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## **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

As part of the Department for Education (DfE) innovation grant funding and wider set of reforms for Greater Manchester (GM) Children's Services there was a commitment and resources allocated to establish a Greater Manchester Care Leavers Trust.

This report is to update the GMCA on the progress in establishing a GM Care Leavers Trust and delivering improvements for the GM Authority Care Leavers. The report seeks the agreement and commitment to deliver a Greater Manchester Care Leavers common core offer (Guarantee) and recommends that the Combined Authority approves the release of the associated innovation funding provided by the DfE. This funding will enable the project to be successfully delivered in partnership and across the 10 Local Authorities; promoting and delivering best practice for GM Care Leavers.

In addition during 2018 the DfE launched its care leaver covenant, as an ambition for businesses, charities and every government department in England to sign up to commit to provide work based opportunities to young people leaving the care system. Local Authorities are being supported by the DfE to launch the Care Leaver Covenant in each Local Authority area. It is proposed that the DfE Care Leavers Covenant will be launched simultaneously with the aforementioned common core offer across GM by the Greater Manchester Mayor

The GM Children's Board and the GM Reform Board have endorsed the proposed Common Core Offer and support the approach that is being developed for implementation.

<u>BOLTON</u>	<u>MANCHESTER</u>	<u>ROCHDALE</u>	<u>STOCKPORT</u>	<u>TRAFFORD</u>
<u>BURY</u>	<u>OLDHAM</u>	<u>SALFORD</u>	<u>TAMESIDE</u>	<u>WIGAN</u>

The Common Core Offer is set within the wider ambitions of the Combined Authority and GM local authorities and will support the delivery of the Care Leavers Covenant. This report will demonstrate the synergy of the Care Leavers work streams and the seven priorities of the GM Children's Plan that has been agreed by the GMCA and is due to be launched in April 2019.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended the Greater Manchester Combined Authority:

1. Approve the principles of the GM Care Leavers Covenant and content of the GM Common Core Offer for Care Leavers across Greater Manchester
2. Agree the Terms of Reference for the GM Care Leavers' Trust Board
3. Endorse the development of the 5 work streams for all GM Care Leavers and support the project funding proposals.
4. Agree to the release of £517k of the DfE Innovation funding allocated to the delivery of a GM Care Leaver Trust to enable successful implementation and in accordance with the financial plan; future commitments are summarised as follows;
  - Project Management support – Circa £200K
  - Development of a GM mentoring scheme – Circa £50K
  - Accreditation and Training for Personal Assistants (statutory role to provide advice and support) – Circa £150K
  - Launch of the GM Covenant and Common Core Offer – Circa £10k
  - Marketing and Promotion – Circa £10k
  - Award a grant to Manchester City Council of £97k to cover costs incurred to date that has led to a development of a project/delivery plan, baseline data to enable the GMCA progress to the 'delivery phase' of the GM Care Leavers Trust.

## **CONTACT OFFICERS:**

Paul Marshall – Strategic Director of Children and Education Services; Manchester City Council

Please note the following issues are considered within the corresponding paragraph:

- Risk Management – see paragraph 7
- Legal Considerations – see paragraph N/A
- Financial Consequences – Capital – see paragraph 4

Number of attachments included in the report: 1

**BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

This report has been informed and supported by;

- National Guidance ‘ Keep on Caring’ published by the DfE in 2016
- Leaving Care Act 2000
- Greater Manchester - Working Together to Develop and Deliver a Consistently High Quality Core Offer for Care Leaver (Project Initiation Document) 18/1/19.

<b>TRACKING/PROCESS</b>		
Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution		No
<b>EXEMPTION FROM CALL IN</b>		
Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?		No
TfGMC	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	
N/A	N/A	

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The National Care Leavers Covenant will be delivered via the GM Common Core Offer (Guarantee) as set out in section 2 of this report. The common Core Offer outlines the GM ambition for those young people who are Care Leavers who have been in care to GM authorities wherever they live; where possible and the agreed priorities of the GM Care Leavers Trust Board.

The work has been structured around 5 work streams for all GM Care Leavers to:

- Be better prepared and supported to live independently
- Have improved access to education, employment and training
- Experience stability in their lives and feel safe and secure
- Receive improved access to health support
- Achieve financial stability

Informed by the views of young people, the Common Core Offer seeks to define clear and deliverable outcomes that will form the basis of service delivery plans which will deliver the Greater Manchester Corporate Parenting Approach and support the ten local authorities to fulfill their Corporate Parenting responsibilities to the highest possible standard.

The responsibility for delivering the Care Leavers Covenant and Common Core Offer, will sit with the newly formed Greater Manchester (GM) Care Leavers Trust Board (**proposed Terms of Reference can be found in appendix 1**).

The GM Care Leavers Trust Board, which will be chaired by the Lead Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People, has been established to:

- Oversee, support and drive the delivery of the Greater Manchester Care Leavers Covenant and Guarantee
- Receive a core data set / scorecard to provide support and challenge to monitor progress and achievement of a consistently high standard of intervention and outcomes across the region
- Oversee a planned programme of peer challenge arrangements that involve young reviewers
- Identify and maximise opportunities across GM that will enhance our respective local offer and improve the experiences and outcomes for our care leavers.

### 1 Context:

**1.1.** Care Leavers are more likely to experience higher levels of disadvantage and have poorer outcomes than their peers, including: 4 times more likely to have mental health issues; significantly more likely to have physical health problems; represent a disproportionate number of young people known to the criminal justice system, less likely to be in education, employment, or training.

**1.2.** Whilst a common data set for Care Leavers in Greater Manchester does not currently exist, a benchmarking exercise has identified the Greater Manchester

Authorities perform well against national and regional comparators. However, there is variation across the conurbation with some authorities performing better than others. This presents a unique opportunity to learn from and support each other.

**1.3.** In addition there is variation in the approach and delivery of support for Care Leavers; all of which are equally valid. All the approaches have strengths, but all authorities want to do more and, where possible, find new resources or improve the use of existing resources in meeting the needs of Care Leavers.

**1.4.** The Common Core Offer for Care Leavers has been identified as a priority for DfE funding alongside the development of the **GM Children's Plan** which will be launched in April 2019 and outlines the Greater Manchester context, ambition and the following seven priority areas;

- **School Readiness** – The best start in life and the right support to be ready to learn are crucial factors for long term successful outcomes for children and are already a key priority in the Greater Manchester Strategy.
- **Quality Education and Outcomes** – Increasing the quality of education and educational achievement, especially in secondary schools is crucial for the next generation of the workforce to match their skills and academic achievement with the jobs of the future.
- **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities** – All children and young people deserve the right to achieve their potential and a specific focus on those with SEND will help us support them to have the right start in life
- **Looked After Children and Care Leavers** – Each authority as a corporate parent and the Combined Authority with a corporate parenting approach has a special responsibility to these children and young people to enable them to have the support and opportunities that should be available to all.
- **Ready for Life** – Transition to adulthood can be both exciting and challenging and our job is to equip young people with the support they need to make that transition effectively and seamlessly, becoming the next generation of parents, workers and leaders.
- **Healthy children and young people** – The best health possible adds so much to the quality of life and the ability to live it to the fullest. We want all children and young people to have the best health they can regardless of where they live or any conditions they were born with.
- **Safe children and young people** – Safety is a complex issue and supporting children and young people to keep themselves safe, plus intervening to support and if necessary, protect them when they are less than safe, is a crucial responsibility for us all. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and we need to know what our role is if we are to make GM as safe as possible for our children and young people.

**1.5.** The Care Leavers work-streams have a synergy with the GM Children's Plan.

**1.6.** In addition the GM Core Offer will commit us to the following:

- Free bus travel for 18-21 year old care leavers
- Appropriate accommodation and support
- An education, employment or training offer that meets needs
- An offer of support wherever care leavers live in Greater Manchester
- A supportive health offer according to need

This approach will set the conurbation apart from other national regions; working together to provide a consistently high quality core offer for our Care Leavers.

## **2. Common Core Offer (Guarantee) for Care Leavers**

**2.1.** The GM Care Leavers Trust will focus on the delivery of the Common Core Offer or Guarantee that will fulfill the covenant commitment. It aims to establish a better infrastructure for collaboration that aligns to wider GM policy ambitions on public service reform. This infrastructure will be 'strengths based' and achieve our ambition for the 'best practice to be the minimum standard' across Greater Manchester.

**2.2.** The objective of the work is to enable each of the 10 Greater Manchester local authorities and partners to identify 'best practice', of which there is much, and successfully develop and adopt a common core offer for Care Leavers across the conurbation. This would include cross border collaboration and multi-agency working, which is focused on improving the outcomes for our care leavers, reduces risk for young people and reduces demand on the local system.

**2.3.** The GM Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members in the Greater Manchester Authorities are committed to launching the National Care Leavers Covenant together. This is a national initiative promoted by the DfE which seeks to engage the private, public and voluntary sector to make a commitment to support people leaving care.

**2.4.** The Greater Manchester Guarantee will underpin the covenant for Care Leavers which will deliver the Common Core Offer. It is proposed this guarantee will go much further than the National Care Leaver Covenant and is made up of the following five elements, which were shaped and agreed with young people during a Mayoral Round Table event during October 2018 and supported at the Reform Board on 1 February 2019;

1. Care Leavers 18 – 21 years will be able to travel for free on buses across Greater Manchester. It is intended this offer will build upon the Mayor of Greater Manchester pledge to support all young people 16-18 years old with an Opportunity Pass for bus

travel. It should be noted this proposal is estimated to be dependent on Circa £1m funding being made available and not yet identified.

2. No care Leavers will be assessed/determined intentionally homeless
3. Care Leavers will be able to access a clear, consistent education, employment, and training offer.
4. There will be access to a mentor for every Care Leaver who wants one
5. Care Leavers will be supported as a priority group within the health economy. This offer will be informed by the findings of the GH Health and Social Care Partnership review of Children looked after, Care Leavers and Adopted Children health needs which is due to report in May 2019.

**2.5.**The GM Care Leavers Trust project/delivery plan has been considered and scrutinised by the GM Children's Board on 18th January 2019. On 15th February 2019 the GM Children's Board endorsed the project/delivery plan and supported an indicative Terms of Reference for the GM Care Leavers Trust Board. The revised version is attached for consideration and approval..

**2.6.**This work will support and enhance the 10 Local Authorities delivery of their Corporate Parenting duties and responsibilities; offering specific opportunities around employment and skills, housing and health support, plus cross border collaboration, multi-agency working and sharing of best practice in order for the basic standard to be the best standard; improving outcomes, reducing risk for young people and supporting the transition to adulthood.

### **3. Summary of Implementation and Proposals**

**3.1.** The Care Leavers Trust Board will work to ensure delivery of the Common Core Offer in

respect of enhanced work, support and mentoring opportunities, appropriate housing and health support and the delivery of the transport commitment.

**3.2.** The 'delivery group' which will report into the Trust Board will have representation from all 10 local authorities and key stakeholders/partners will meet bi-monthly; structured around 5 issue specific projects that will be encouraged to engage young people, be innovative and multi-disciplinary.

**3.3.** Each local authority will commit to being actively engaged in the GM Care Leavers partnership workstreams and will provide a worker to co-lead on one of the five workstreams.

**3.4.** The workstreams will identify and seek to establish the best practice as the basic practice for all our Care Leavers across Greater Manchester.

**3.5.** The workstream members will support the spread of best practice across all local authorities so that Care Leavers will easily identify the opportunities

**3.6.** A programme of peer reviews led by ‘young reviewers’ will ensure practice and developments are improved, shared and informed by young people themselves. Regular performance/assurance reporting to GM Children’s Board and Care Leavers Trust Board will ensure progress is maintained and sustained.

#### **4.1 Financial Considerations**

In order to ensure effective and successful delivery of the GM Care Leaver Trust/project it is necessary to provide additional support to each of the aforementioned work streams and ‘pump prime’ initiatives, these areas are listed below along with the indicative costs;

- **Project Management support** – This will be developed as a tender from the Combined Authorities to build extra capacity for the successful implementation of the Common Core Offer (Guarantee) - **Circa £200K**
- **Development of a GM mentoring scheme** – There are currently mentoring schemes operating in Greater Manchester at an average annual cost of £70k/annum for a single local authority. This funding will be used to support through training and promotion, the development of further schemes to ensure there is a mentor for every young person in Greater Manchester - **Circa £50K**
- **Accreditation and Training for Personal Assistants (PA)** – The ambition is to develop a consistently well qualified PA workforce. The PA is a statutory role to provide advice and support to care leavers. However, to date there does not exist an recognised training programme/qualification. It is therefore intended the GM Care Leaver Trust will ‘pioneer’ this area of work through the grant funding and to establish a nationally recognized qualification for PA. Indicative costs are c£3k per person. Therefore, the funding requested for this will only be pump priming and will need to be supplemented by Local Authorities so that over time a fully qualified workforce can be established - **Circa £150K**
- **Launch of the GM Covenant and Common Core Offer** – The launch will be supported by the Mayor for GM - **Circa £10k**
- **Marketing and Promotion** – The Care Leavers work is currently high profile with the launch of the National Covenant. To maintain this high profile and promote new opportunities for organisations to support the work there will need to be a dedicated marketing and promotion budget - **Circa £10k**

Following a commissioning/procurement exercise final costs would be identified. Therefore in order to progress our shared vision to have a consistently good offer for all our care leavers across Greater Manchester, it is necessary for the enabling resources listed above to be released so that the GM Care Leavers Trust Board can progress with purpose, pace and traction. Without this progress will be inhibited.



It should be noted that Manchester City Council has to date funded the commissioning of Peopletoo to progress the development of a project plan, baseline data and draft Terms of Reference thus far, in the expectation that a grant will be awarded and sourced from the innovation fund once we progress to this the 'delivery phase' of the GM Care Leavers Trust. The cost of this work is £97k.

## **5. Next Steps**

If the investment is supported by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, a tendering specification for the work will be undertaken and the workstreams duly supported through to successful delivery of the Greater Manchester Care Leavers Covenant/Guarantee.

## **6. Conclusions**

In response to the commitment of DfE to fund the development of a GM Leaving Care Trust, GM Local Authorities and partners from the GMCA system have developed a response which draws on the best practice in supporting Care Leavers both nationally and regionally. It has done this by building on the experiences and strengths of each local authority, with the capacity of the GMCA. Agreeing investment at this stage will enable local authorities to avoid delays in implementation and put in place the appropriate capacity to proceed.

## **Appendix 1**

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE GREATER MANCHESTER CARE LEAVER'S TRUST BOARD**

#### **1. Background**

Growing up and being a successful adult is not easy for most people; for care leavers they face the added challenge of having to cope with the demands of living on their own at a young age, manage finances, maintain a home and manage their lives independently, often without the support from families that most of us take for granted. These challenges cannot be understated. This is why the public sector, as their Corporate Parent are expected to act as a 'reasonable parent' with support from the private sector who have a moral responsibility to do as much as they can to provide care leavers with the support and opportunities they need to be successful.

The establishment of the Greater Manchester Care Leaver Trust Board offers a unique opportunity to positively change the lives of the c2000 Care Leavers living in our 10 local authority areas, for whom we have the greatest duty and responsibility. Greater Manchester is committed to a GM Care Leavers' Covenant underpinned by a Common Core Offer which will be our Guarantee to those young people of support for their future lives.

The GM Care Leaver Trust Board will ensure delivery of our collective Corporate Parenting Approach and manage the delivery of the GM Care Leavers' Covenant and the Common Core Offer (guarantee) which will result in specific and measurable offers and opportunities. This work will support and enable the Corporate Parenting responsibility of the 10 local authorities, offering specific opportunities around employment and skills, housing and health support, plus cross border collaboration, multi-agency working and sharing of best practice in order for the basic standard to be the best standard; improving outcomes, reducing risk for young people and supporting the transition to adulthood of this special group of young people..

We will work with and alongside other initiatives across GM to establish a better infrastructure for collaboration, aligning with the GM policy ambitions and reform.

#### **2. Purpose**

The GM Care Leavers' Trust Board will have a focus on the following 4 areas:

1. Oversee support and drive the delivery of the Greater Manchester Care Leavers' Covenant and Guarantee via a clear delivery plan and co-ordination of agreed sub groups.

2. Receive a core data set / scorecard to provide support and challenge to monitor progress and achievement of a consistently high standard of intervention and outcomes across the region
3. Oversee a planned programme of peer challenge arrangements that involve young reviewers
4. Identify and maximise opportunities across GM to increase our offer and improve the experiences and outcomes for our care leavers

### **3. Duties**

It is the duty and responsibility of Board Members to actively contribute to the development of the GM Guarantee, with specific offers for care leavers wherever they live in GM. They will have regard to the interests of GM's care leavers, and other stakeholders including;

- Agreeing and further developing the Guarantee for care leavers according to the needs identified and the commitment made in the Care Leavers Covenant
- Ensuring compliance with relevant legislations and regulations
- Monitoring key performance indicators and progress of the 'project plan/priorities
- Ensuring the control, coordination and monitoring within the board of risk and internal controls
- Actively identifying business synergies and opportunities to improve the experiences and outcomes of Greater Manchester's care leavers and facilitating inter-service cooperation and collaboration
- Identifying and executing new business opportunities outside the current core activities

### **4. Reporting Arrangements**

The work of the board will be delivered via the GM Care Leavers Partnership which has been structured around the following 5 work-streams for all GM Care Leavers to:

- Be better prepared and supported to live independently
- Have improved access to education, employment and training
- Experience stability in their lives and feel safe and secure
- Receive improved access to health support
- Achieve financial stability

The Programme Manager who will coordinate the work of the partnership shall report formally to the GM Care Leavers Trust Board in respect of progress against key priorities, milestones performance and budget spend to track the progress and impact

### **5. Quoracy**

The Board will not operate a strict quoracy approach. However, the aim is for four members to be involved in making recommendations via the GM Childrens Board to the Combined Authority which must include the Chair or Deputy of the board, one of the Director of Children's Services representing the 10 local authorities, and two partnership or business leads. In addition the views of young people will always be sought and taken into account.

## **6. Membership, Chair and Support**

The Board shall be supported by the GMCA governance function. and membership will be as follows:

Lead Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People (Chair)  
Lead Director of Children's Services for the Portfolio  
Programme Manager (PM) for GM Care Leaver Partnership  
Representation from North West Business Leaders Team  
GMCA Assistant Director – Skills  
GM Strategic Housing Board representative  
GM Health & Social Care Partnership representative  
Transport for GM representative  
Jobcentre Plus representative  
Higher Education Institute representative  
Youth Focus NW representative

Other stakeholders / agencies may be invited to attend all or part of any meeting as appropriate to advise or take part in discussions.

## **7. Accountability**

The Board will report to the GM Children's Board and GM Reform Board in respect of progress made and outcomes delivered including the making of any recommendations requiring formal decisions to the GMCA.

## **8. Frequency of Meetings**

The Board shall meet at least six times per year; meetings will be planned for a 12 month period, confirming venue, time and date. Notice of each meeting including an agenda of items to be discussed, support documents / papers shall be forwarded to each Board member by the GMCA Governance function and any other person required to attend, no later than 3 days in advance of the meeting.

## **9. Record of Meetings**

The GMCA Governance function shall produce a note of the proceedings and matters agreed of all meetings of the Board, including recording all the names of those present and

in attendance. A record of the Board meetings shall be circulated promptly to all members of the Board and to the following meeting of the Board for agreement.

#### **10. Other Matters**

The Board shall arrange for periodic reviews of its own performance and review its constitution and terms of reference annually to ensure it is operating at maximum effectiveness.

To be agreed at the first Board meeting and reviewed annually.



# Care leavers accommodation and support framework



Believe in  
children  
 Barnardos

St  
Basils  
*Works with young people*

For ease of use this is an interactive document. At the top of each page you can click on each of the coloured tabs to quickly navigate to the beginning of each section within this document.



## Acknowledgement

The framework was developed in 2015 by Barnardo's and St Basil's and was updated in 2019, at the request of the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department for Education. Many different organisations have provided support in developing the framework, through sharing their work and giving advice about the way the document could be improved. We are very grateful to the individual staff and also to young people who have taken the time to share their expertise.

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## Executive summary

Young people leaving care need somewhere safe and suitable to live to help them make a positive transition into adulthood. Good housing and tailored support around emotional well-being and life skills underpins success in other areas of life.

The framework has been developed for local authority commissioners, leaving care and housing managers, and for providers of housing and support for young people in England. It promotes working together to deliver services and support for young people leaving care and is designed to be used flexibly to suit local circumstances and needs, providing a model that local authorities can adapt to meet their shared aspirations as set out in their 'local offer' for care leavers.

Managers of leaving care and housing options services as well as commissioners can use this framework to support their work, informing local housing strategies and the supply of appropriate accommodation for care leavers.

By drawing together expertise from local authorities, voluntary sector organisations and young people across England the framework sets out the ways in which improvements can be made and the rationale for these. There are five stages to the framework which reflect the journey of a young person as they leave care:

### 1. Preparing for the reality of housing options

Young people still in care are given the opportunity to consider their housing options, including information about the housing market in their area. They are supported to gain the skills for increasing independence, including managing a household, finance and budgeting.

### 2. Planning young people's accommodation and support options with them

When young people are ready to leave care, they are supported to choose the accommodation that will best suit them, given the constraints on local provision. They are given as much notice as possible for their move out of care, including young people living in different settings such as residential care, in custody and young people with particular needs, for example on-going mental or physical health issues.

### 3. Reducing housing crisis

Some young people will experience problems with their housing and need emergency or short-term alternatives. They need to be accommodated in safe and appropriate housing options and receive support to help them resolve the cause of the crisis.

### 4. Accessing housing and support as needed

Young people in different situations will need different types of housing and support, ranging from a 'Staying Put' arrangement with foster carers, a 'Staying Close' arrangement near to their former residential children's home, 24/7 supported housing through to supported lodgings or their own independent flat with floating support. As their needs and circumstances change, young people should be supported to find accommodation that best suits them.

## 5. Accessing and successfully managing longer-term move-on and support options

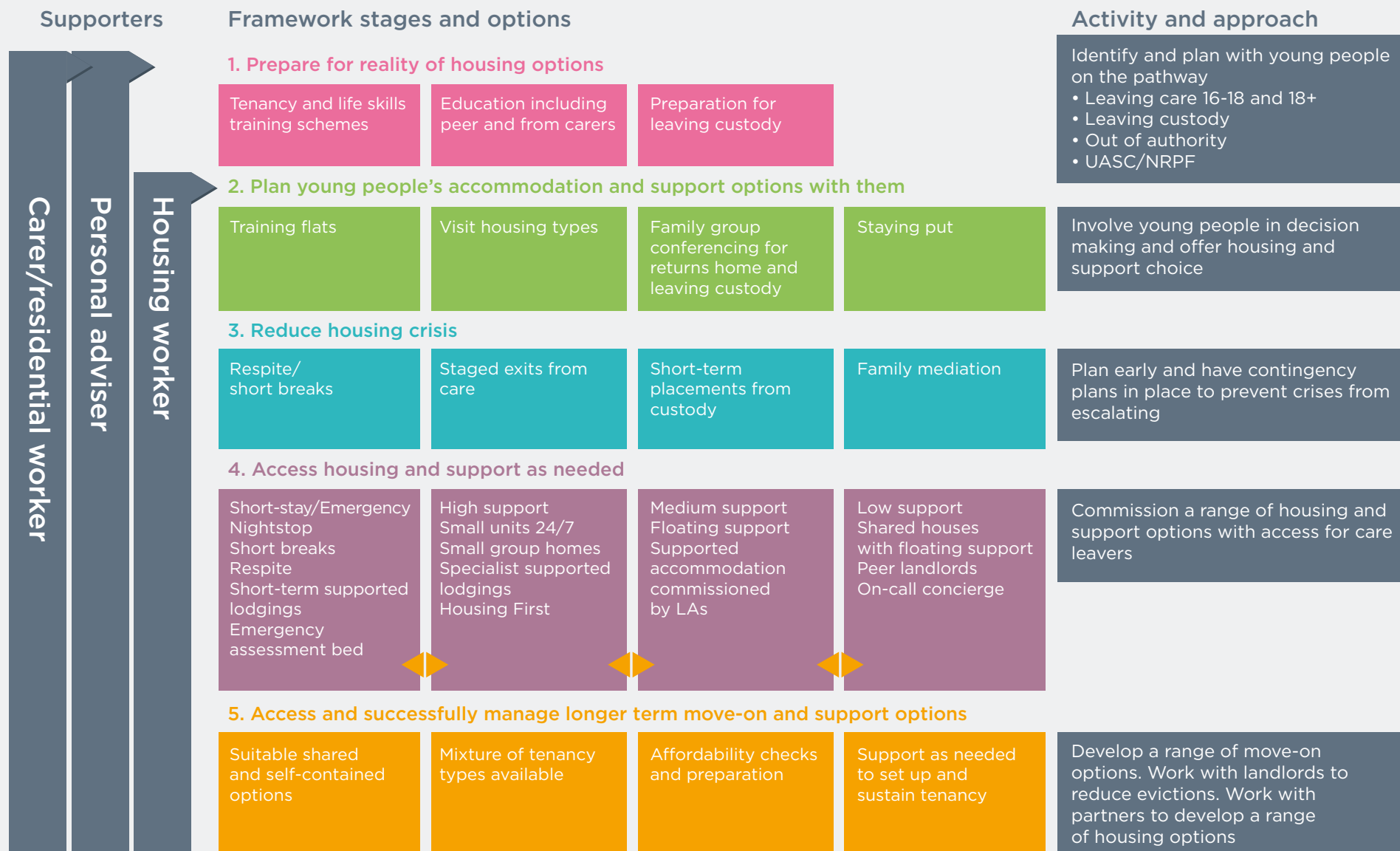
As they become ready, young people will need support to access longer-term housing, such as their own tenancy, a shared flat or long-term supported housing. They will need help to understand their options and know where to go if they need extra support in the future.

The framework is based on some key principles which also underpin the corporate parenting duties.

Young people leaving care are:

- given as much information, choice and control as possible
- able to make mistakes and never 'fall out' of the framework
- helped to succeed
- offered flexible support that adapts to meet their needs
- offered supportive and unconditional relationships
- the shared responsibility of their corporate parent

# Care leavers accommodation and support framework



## Underlying principles - young people are:

- able to make mistakes and never 'fall out' of the pathway
- helped to succeed
- offered flexible support that adapts to meet their needs
- offered supportive and unconditional relationships
- the shared responsibility of their corporate parent

## Introduction

The Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework is a model which aims to help organisations that support young people in making their individual journeys to leave care in England. It has been developed collaboratively with a wide range of partners and care leavers who together have pooled their knowledge and ideas about what works well in helping care leavers transition to adulthood.

The framework is written for:

- local authority commissioners
- leaving care managers
- housing managers
- providers of housing and support for young people

It aims to assist local authorities improve outcomes for young people by supporting and strengthening the 'local offer' to care leavers<sup>1</sup>. The model also encourages increased joint working around accommodation and support for care leavers, and will assist in developing and delivering local joint protocols between Children's Services and Housing Authorities.

Having somewhere safe and secure to live is central to young people having a positive exit from care. Young people highly value having choice about where they will live and being involved in decisions that will affect them. Young people's involvement in these decisions is a valuable learning experience as they make the transition to adulthood and more independence and, as well as reducing their anxiety about the future and how they will cope, it also makes them more likely to invest in sustaining their housing choice. A secure housing base is also critical to young people progressing in other areas of life, such as education, training or employment, improved mental health, relationships and building of social networks. However, there is no blueprint for success in terms of what needs to happen and when. Each young person's experience of being looked after is different, and their experience of leaving care will also be different.

The transition to adulthood for all young people, including care leavers, is about progression. For care leavers, this may be a series of small or larger steps, both within care and also leaving care and beyond. Some young people may get their own independent accommodation at 18 – which is recognised as a very young age to live alone – so if this is the case, they will continue to need significant support as they develop their skills, learn from experience and react to their changing life circumstances. Realistically, most young people at 18 – not only care leavers – will find it difficult to manage their own tenancy successfully even with some support, and any experience of 'failure' can damage them practically and emotionally so early on their journey to independence. As care leavers, young people need support from their corporate parents throughout and beyond this transition. In recognition of this, the Government has introduced duties giving former relevant care leavers entitlement to support from a personal adviser until they are 25.<sup>2</sup>

Alongside housing options, the emotional well-being of young people leaving care is a critical consideration for corporate parents. Too often young people's move from care to living more independently is rushed, not planned with enough consultation time, and assumes a care leaver can

1. See Annex 1 and also see the Government's 2018 'local offer' guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-offer-guidance>  
Also see the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum's 'Care Leaver Local Offer Report', published in November 2019: <https://www.catch-22.org.uk/news/national-leaving-care-benchmarking-forum-release-toolkit-for-local-authorities/>. This provides practical information and advice on developing a Local Offer for care leavers.
2. See Annex 1 - The Legal Framework  
Also see here for the Government guidance on this: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/extending-personal-adviser-support-to-age-25>

manage in a tenancy alone with a little bit of floating support. But with new responsibilities, little real experience of managing a tight budget, as well as being alone, most young people are likely to find this can impact on their emotional well-being and mental health. Engaging with help and making choices can then be even harder.

## What brings young people into care?

Currently 46% of children who are ‘newly looked after’ are between the age of 10 and 17, with 18% entering care at age 16 or older.<sup>3</sup> Many become looked after for the same reasons as younger children, but older teenagers are more likely to enter care through the following routes:

- as a homeless 16 or 17 year old
- as an unaccompanied asylum seeker
- because they were accommodated on remand

Young people leaving care have a wide variety of needs and wishes which will have been influenced by their childhood experiences of living with their family and also living in care.

In using this framework, it is helpful to keep in mind the diversity of experience that lies behind “leaving care”. For example, young people who have been in care since they were small children will be more familiar with having a social worker, Pathway Plans and personal advisers whereas, for those entering at 16 or 17 because they were homeless, all this may seem irrelevant and interfering. The range of young people’s pre-care and in-care experiences will mean that there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to supporting care leavers.

The contexts for young people’s care experience is also shaped by the type and location of the placements they live in. 37% of young people live outside the area of the local authority which is responsible for looking after them. 15% live more than 20 miles away, with some living considerable distances.<sup>4</sup>

The accommodation framework aims to show a range of options for housing and support that care leavers may need as they move into adulthood. This reflects legal duties and Government statutory guidance relating to care leavers but goes beyond statutory requirements through highlighting what works well and is possible for corporate parents to achieve.

## Who developed the accommodation framework?

The Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework was produced in 2015 by Barnardo’s and St Basils. This version is an update of the original document. It can be read alongside the St Basils Positive Pathway Framework<sup>5</sup>, which is a more generic document on young people and housing pathways, which has informed some of the content and the model itself.

3. Taken from the most recent Government statistics, see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-looked-after-children>

4. Department for Education first statistical release 2018

5. See <https://stbasils.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/PositivePathway.pdf>

6. Positive Pathway Evaluation 2017 <https://stbasils.org.uk/files/2017-05-21/PositivePathwayEvaluation2017.pdf>

7. Homeless Link – Young & Homeless report 2018 See Here: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/our-research/young-and-homeless-research>

An independent rapid evaluation of the Positive Pathway in 2017 found that 47% of local authorities were using all or some aspects of the model to assist in their service improvements.<sup>6</sup> A survey by Homeless Link (2018) found that 66% of the local authorities that responded were developing a Positive Pathway approach for young people or had one in place already.<sup>7</sup> The care leaver framework builds on the Positive Pathway but also reflects the specific legislation and rights affecting care leavers in England as well as providing examples that are relevant to their housing experiences. Barnardo's and St Basils worked with a group of local authorities, leaving care providers, youth housing providers and central government representatives to develop a framework for care leavers which recognised their statutory entitlements as well as the additional challenges that they face on entering adulthood. Young people in and leaving care were also asked what support they wanted to see in the framework. All of these views and ideas were collated together and developed into this framework by Barnardo's and St Basils.

## How should the accommodation framework be used?

The framework is not prescriptive but gives a model for how young people can be supported as they leave care. The framework itself is very simple and represented in the diagram on page 7. The rest of this report gives background information, examples, checklists and top tips to help in using the framework. Your own unique set of local services and partnerships - what's working well, your plans and your ideas - can be mapped on to this model. It is yours to use as flexibly as you want to.

For example, you could use the framework:

- to review the accommodation elements of your 'local offer' to care leavers
- to inform the updating of the joint protocol between Children's Services and Housing Authorities
- to carry out a needs analysis of care leavers in your area
- to review your existing services through a commissioning audit
- to identify your service strengths and gaps
- as a template for service re-design

The framework identifies five stages that young people may experience as they leave care. The stages are not always sequential and young people may move several times between different stages. They have been identified, however, to help you think through the range of areas in which young people will need support as they leave care.

The stages are:

1. Preparing for reality of housing options
2. Planning young people's accommodation and support options with them
3. Reducing housing crisis
4. Accessing housing and support as needed
5. Accessing and successfully managing longer-term move-on and support options

## How can children and young people be engaged in using the framework locally?

As you develop the framework locally, a key to real improvement is the involvement of children and young people. Using your Children in Care Council and other participation groups will help to find out what care leavers want locally and what (often small) things make positive differences for them. This in turn will help to better shape your 'local offer' for care leavers.<sup>8</sup>

8. Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires that local authorities "must publish information about (a) services which the local authority offers for care leavers as a result of its functions under the Children Act 1989; (b) other services which the local authority offers that may assist care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living".



You can also draw on the wealth of information available in young people's Pathway Plans. Drawing together the themes and issues within these plans can help you analyse the strengths and gaps in your current service provision. This approach will also make sure you hear the voices of all of the former relevant care leavers you are responsible for – not just those who are willing to join in with groups. It is also important to consider how to ensure 'qualifying' care leavers are able to inform this process.<sup>9</sup> In addition, feedback from local providers and support services will be important too, giving different perspectives on what works well and areas for improvement.

### What will make the framework work well?

The framework is based on some underlying principles to give young people the best start possible as they leave care. Although the framework gives practical ideas for delivering good services for young people, the attitude of their corporate parent is key to making it work well.

These principles are that young people leaving care are:

- given as much information, choice and control as possible
- able to make mistakes and never 'fall out' of the framework
- helped to succeed
- offered flexible support that adapts to meet their needs
- offered supportive and unconditional relationships
- the shared responsibility of their corporate parent.

The framework also relies on different parts of a local authority working effectively together and aspiring to be the best possible corporate parent to young people who are leaving and have left care. Experience from all those already using an accommodation framework demonstrates that effective joint working between Housing Authorities, Children's Services, Housing Related Support commissioners as well as with health commissioners and providers, education, training and employment agencies, criminal justice partners, the voluntary sector and the private sector, is an essential driver of a successful approach. This is "corporate parenting" in action.

9. See Volume 3, Chapter 2 of the Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations: Planning transition to adulthood for care leavers [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/397649/CA1989\\_Transitions\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/397649/CA1989_Transitions_guidance.pdf)

## Supporters Framework stages and options

## Activity and approach

Carer/residential worker

Personal adviser

### 1. Prepare for reality of housing options

Tenancy and life skills training schemes

Education including peer and from carers

Preparation for leaving custody

Identify and plan with young people on the pathway

- Leaving care 16-18 and 18+
- Leaving custody
- Out of authority
- UASC/NRPF

**‘[Living independently was] lonely, most young people really want to move to independent living but it’s not the same as you think it will be. It’s you and this house, if you don’t have any savings or not enough money to buy a TV or something to entertain yourself, sometimes it can be really, really lonely.’ (Young person, Barnardo’s)**

Young people in care need relevant and accurate information about what will happen when they leave care, where they might live and the pros and cons of various options. Foster carers, residential workers, social workers and personal advisers have a vital role to play in preparing young people for the reality of living more independently and making them aware of their housing options when they leave care. The preparation and intended next steps should be written into the young person’s Pathway Plan.

Looking back, many care leavers have reflected that their expectations about living independently were unrealistic. Most advocate strongly that local authorities should give young people much better information, advice and practical preparation as well as contingency plans in case things go wrong. An important principle of this framework is its flexibility, so that young people can move back into more supportive options if they find they are not ready for greater independence.

Because young people who are looked after live in a variety of different arrangements, it is important to make sure they get bespoke information and tailored advice, based on their individual circumstances alongside more general information about housing options. For example, where a young person is going to have a Staying Put arrangement with their long-term foster carer, or is likely to go to university, there is no real benefit in giving them very detailed information on supported accommodation and tenancies whilst they are still in care. Should things change, then the level of advice and information can change.

Depending on a young person’s circumstances, preparation for living more independently can start well before they leave care. Many local authorities have a life skills programme in place but how consistently these are used varies considerably. Below are two examples which are reported to be working well.

### The Money House

The Money House (TMH) is a homelessness prevention programme for 16 – 25 year olds which helps young people in, or about to move into housing, manage their money and remain independent. Participants gain practical financial and digital skills to pay their rent, bills and living costs whilst making informed choices about their future.

### Topics taught during the course range from:

- Tenancy agreements – Rights & Responsibilities
- Cost of moving in
- Avoiding eviction
- Paying household bills
- Choosing utility providers
- Banking – Accounts & Savings.
- Borrowing safely.
- Budgeting – Weekly & Monthly
- Spending habits – Good & Bad
- Shopping – Offers, consumer rights
- Benefits – Entitlements & Universal Credit
- What's next – Planning for the future?

Young people who complete the 5 day course are awarded with a Level 1 Money Management accreditation from ABC as well as an Entry Into Work Employability Module.

Sessions take place in a fully kitted out flat, not a classroom. Trainers help young people become more confident about money and living on their own by providing real-life skills in a unique setting that brings financial education to life and helps prevent homelessness.

TMH is part of the move on Pathway in four boroughs and has houses in Greenwich, Newham and Westminster.

### Housing:

- 3 times less likely to have problem arrears.
- 64% drop in evictions for those 'at risk'
- 68% drop in arrears for semi-independent tenancies, 43% for fully-independent.

### Financial Capability:

- 45% reduction in bank charges & missing bills.
- 22% increase in borrowing safely
- 54% increase paying off debt regularly
- 27% increase in confidence managing money – higher than national average.

### Financial exclusion of those not banking / saving / budgeting:

- 22% increase in borrowing safely
- 54% increase paying off debt regularly
- 27% increase in confidence managing money – higher than national average

Evaluation includes NESTA Level 3 Standard of Evidence using comparison groups, independent assessment by ERS, a two year study of 839 individuals, intervention & control data from housing providers.

<https://mybnk.org/our-work/financial-education/the-money-house/>

## Example ASDAN

ASDAN is a curriculum development and awarding organisation. In 2016 ASDAN developed the 'Living Independently Short Course' with assistance and expert input from Bristol City and North Somerset leaving care services and feedback from local authorities which are members of the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum.<sup>10</sup> This is a 60 hour course for looked after children and has 9 modules which cover:

- Earning and spending money
- Keeping track of your money
- Making financial choices
- A place of your own
- Health and wellbeing
- Cooking on a budget
- Practical cooking skills
- Career management
- Preparing for the world of work<sup>11</sup>

ASDAN was originally developed to support the Government's 'Keep on Caring: Supporting young people from care to independence' strategy. It's reported that the course has been well received in the authorities which are using the materials with young people.

## Joint working

As their parents, our children learn from us about the 'real world' – having a job, finding somewhere to live, managing money. But the housing market has changed so much in the last few decades that what was once common practice is often no longer an option. Are your foster and residential carers and personal advisers up to date about the realities of housing options for young people today?

There will be issues particular to your local area but here is some general information about the housing market:

- social housing waiting lists can be very long and no longer offer a tenancy for life
- care leavers aren't always given priority for social housing in all areas – allocations policies vary from area to area
- from age 22, single care leavers with no children living in self-contained private rented accommodation will find that if they are still claiming Housing Benefit, it is likely that it will reduce to the level of the Shared Accommodation Rate<sup>12</sup>
- private rented properties can vary hugely in quality

There are lots of different ways in which you can keep other 'corporate parents' – carers, personal advisers and social workers – informed.

Many local authorities have specialist advice on housing options for young people leaving care. The structure for how this is delivered varies. For example:

10. This national forum, run by Catch-22, is a network of over 100 local authorities promoting the development of quality leaving care services with member authorities and partner organisations through a process of benchmarking and shared learning on a national scale, to enrich outcomes for care leavers. See here for more information: <https://www.catch-22.org.uk/national-leaving-care-benchmarking-forum/>

11. <https://www.asdan.org.uk/courses/programmes/living-independently-short-course>

12. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-housing-allowance-lha-rates-applicable-from-april-2015-march-2016>

**In Stoke-on-Trent**, two housing officers work within the leaving care service, allowing good sharing of up to date knowledge about the local housing market and housing options. One housing officer supports with the initial transition from care and is involved in the planning process in the six months leading up to the young people's 18th birthday. The other housing officer is available to support with any issues post 18 where the young people may be experiencing difficulties with their accommodation and to respond to any crises or changes in circumstances.

**In Hull**, the Leaving Care service works closely with the Young People's Housing Options Service, which is part of the Targeted Youth Support provision. Any care leaver who needs advice on housing or more in-depth specialist help can request a Housing Options appointment to discuss their housing needs. To prevent any housing crisis, including homelessness, care leavers can access the service on a daily emergency basis Monday-Friday.

The Targeted Youth Support and Leaving Care partnership offers advice and support to help young people develop a tailored housing plan to meet their individual needs and wants. The service jointly offers access to a range of supported and semi-independent accommodation options through to individual tenancies and aims to provide young people with the opportunity to move between varying levels of support to reflect changes in their circumstances and needs. The partnership also delivers an accredited Independent Living Skills programme to help young people develop the necessary skills to make a successful transition to independent living.

In addition, the Housing Authority ensures care leavers can access social housing if needed through additional priority in their allocations scheme as part of an agreed Move On protocol with the Leaving Care and Targeted Youth Support Service.

**The London Borough of Wandsworth** have a Housing Manager post within their 18+ leaving care service. The remit of the work is extensive, highlighting how much a position like this can contribute to improving outcomes for care leavers. Areas of responsibility include:

- For young people who are offered a Housing Association Property, the post holder is responsible for ensuring that the property is up to required standards to let to care leavers;
- Responsible for drafting and updating accommodation policy for care leavers;
- Works with the Placements and CLA teams to ensure that there is adequate planning for accommodation transitions with young people aged 16 and their social workers;
- Working with the Placements Team on planned and emergency moves for older teenagers aged 16 and 17;
- Liaising with commissioned accommodation providers and overseeing their reports on progress against agreed performance indicators;
- leading on developing and relaunching the 8 week 'Life Skills' workshops for care leavers, ensuring relevant practical and emotional aspects of living alone are covered and inviting in other agencies and services to deliver sessions'
- Leading on nominations of care leavers to housing associations when they are ready to manage in a social housing tenancy
- Acting as an advisor to Personal Advisors when there are issues between Young People and Housing providers, ensuring that the right information is provided to young people
- Is responsible for overseeing the Chessington Project and the RVs who run this.
- Is responsible for ensuring that University Accommodation arrangements meet the Local Offer and that fees are reasonable
- Is responsible for developing links with accommodation providers to expand the accommodation offers that can be made to Young People.

- Meeting regularly with Housing Associations to deal with strategic and operational thematic issues
- Acts as the link between Future First and HPU
- Maps areas of need and priority cases to ensure that young people are advocated for with Housing services.
- Sits on Care Panel to support accommodation planning for CLA aged 16+.

If there is no specialist housing provision for young people leaving care, a Local Housing Authority's Housing Options Service is usually keen to help other professionals to understand the local and national issues relating to housing choices. You could also ask a Housing Options Officer to speak at regular foster or residential carer training sessions.

## Leaving care – checklist

Whatever their current situation, all young people will need to be prepared for what life will be like when they leave care. Have you considered how best to prepare young people across the wide range of placements below?

- In local authority foster care
- In agency foster care (which could be out of authority)
- In local authority residential care
- In agency residential care (which could be out of authority)
- Those planning to Stay Put
- Those who may be Staying Close<sup>13</sup>
- In “other arrangements” such as supported lodgings or supported accommodation projects

Young people all have their own unique circumstances – and one size does not fit all. Discussions will vary according to each individual young person because every local authority will have young people leaving care with very different experiences and individual circumstances and their own future aspirations. For example, you will be working with young people who:

- Are in long-term, settled care placements
- Have experienced a series of short-term placements
- Are unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- Are planning to go to university, join the Armed Forces or take up training or FE away from the local area
- Are in custody
- Are physically disabled or have learning difficulties
- Have only very recently become looked after
- Are young parents
- Are experiencing significant mental health difficulties
- Are in hospital for a long-term period of medical care

13. In July 2016, the Government announced the development of a “Staying Close programme” for care leavers leaving residential care. Pilots are running over the period 2018 to 2019 and in the period 2019 to 2020 across eight areas. Some other local authorities have developed provision akin to ‘Staying Close’ outside the Government programme.

In considering these questions, it may be useful to do an audit of your team's skills and knowledge in providing up-to-date and accurate information to young people about their housing options and discuss with Independent Reviewing Officers the range of options available and sorts of issues they might want to consider covering in Pathway Plan reviews.

### Joint working – checklist

Different parts of the local authority will have different information and experience about the needs of care leavers locally. Bringing this together and having a joint approach helps to manage the transition to leaving care better, in terms of accommodation and support. Use this checklist and your 'local offer' for care leavers to see how well you are working together in this stage of the framework.

- Commissioning for leaving care support and housing is based on an evidenced needs analysis.
- All relevant parts of the local authority, other public sector agencies, voluntary agencies, Housing Associations and other local providers of relevant services feed into the needs analysis. As well as Leaving Care Services, this could include Housing Options Services, Public Health, Youth Offending Services, Probation and local providers.
- Leaving care commissioners and managers understand and are consulted about changes to the local housing allocations scheme.
- Leaving care commissioners and managers understand the supply and affordability of housing locally, including social housing and supply, affordability and access to the private rented sector (PRS).
- Housing and housing related support commissioners understand the range of needs of care leavers, any projected changes in needs and also any changes in the size of the leaving care population. Focused sessions, involving a range of agencies, will be helpful to ensure the development of suitable options and support for particular groups of care leavers, for example, young parents and young people leaving custody.
- Joint commissioning of supported accommodation and floating support is carried out wherever possible, to ensure widest range of quality options are available for care leavers, in diverse community settings, providing best value for all funders and commissioners.
- Access and referral policies for supported accommodation and floating support acknowledge the needs of care leavers.

## Top tips

- Think about how you can harness the experiences of other young people to advise and guide care leavers. Often young people learn best from each other, particularly when they are being warned about challenges ahead. Peer training or mentoring, or even a short film they make to show other young people, can be very effective.
- Close working between Housing Options, Looked After Children and leaving care teams can help develop staff knowledge and their ability to offer good, realistic advice to care leavers. Having a member of staff from a Housing Options service located within a leaving care service has proved to be highly effective in a number of authorities.
- Foster and residential carers, social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) need realistic information about what housing options are available locally so that they can pass this information on to young people.
- A good understanding of the Looked After Children and leaving care data at a strategic level can improve long-term planning.
- Commission and consistently deliver accredited training courses on pre-tenancy awareness or life skills. This will allow young people to gain additional qualifications or credits towards study courses. Care leavers also need to know where they can go for more tenancy advice later on, whether that is directly from their leaving care service - which they can access support from until their 25th birthday - or they may need signposting to mainstream housing options and advice services.
- Ensure all looked after young people are being offered preparation and any accredited training, regardless of their placement type and location - for example, those young people in out of authority placements or in custody.
- When planning with young people for their individual accommodation options, try to give them choice but be realistic about what is possible and available in the local area.
- When preparing young people for the realities of their housing options, work closely alongside foster carers and residential workers. They are likely to know young people very well, dependent on how long the placement has been, and are often the best person to talk to care leavers about the future - but they need up to date information to be able to do so.





**'I've been very protected, for a very long time, and now moving out, it makes it even more scary because I've been so protected.'** (Young person, Barnardo's)

Better planning and preparation will support better outcomes for young people, as well as giving them personal assurance about their next steps into adult life. Personal advisers and carers can help young people to understand or even try out different housing options for a short period of time. With a better understanding of the reality of living more independently, young people are empowered to make a well-informed choice.

**Pathway Plans** set out when a young person will formally leave care and the intended next steps. The Children Act 1989 stipulates that all eligible, relevant and former relevant children should have a Pathway Plan, which should be a live document that is reviewed regularly<sup>14</sup> Pathway Plans should be completed within 28 days of a care leaver changing their accommodation. Social workers and personal advisers will have the information to be able to plan those moves well in advance.

As stated in statutory guidance,<sup>15</sup> **contingency plans** – or a 'back up' plan – are a good idea for young people generally. For some young people, a more detailed contingency plan is needed, for example young people placed in a foster care or residential care setting in another area of the country, those coming out of custody as a care leaver or those seeking asylum and awaiting decisions from the Home Office. Some young people placed outside the local authority area may choose to stay where they were living as a looked after child and not return to their 'home' authority. It is really important for these young people that there is detailed planning about their accommodation needs as it may not be automatic or straightforward that they will have priority for social housing or that a local authority would recognise they meet the 'residency criteria' to be offered social housing.

Some local authorities find that having a regular '**panel**' meeting between Housing and Children's Services departments can effectively generate a shared agreement about the accommodation plan for some or all looked after young people who are preparing to leave care. This is in addition to individual Pathway Planning meetings. For example, panel meetings can consider the range of available accommodation options to avoid a care leaver being set up to fail in a tenancy which they are not yet ready for. Young people can be involved in any discussion, including panel meetings, if they want to be.

14. Department for Education, Children Act 1989: Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers, January 2015, Chapter 3

15. Department for Education, Children Act 1989: Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers, January 2015, paragraphs 7.74-7.79

**Staying Put, which enables young people to continue to live with their foster carers beyond their 18th birthday**, gives young people more time to think about where they want to live when they do leave care.<sup>16</sup> The numbers and percentages of care leavers opting to ‘Stay Put’ with foster carers continues to rise year on year. 26% of care leavers aged 19 - 21 were reported to be in Staying Put arrangements in 2018, a slight rise from 2017. And 55% of all young people who ceased being looked after on their 18th birthday continued to stay with foster carers for at least 3 months. Staying Put can bring greater stability for care leavers, particularly those who don’t yet feel ready to ‘move out’ or who have a very good relationship with their carer.

For young people living in residential care, **Staying Close** is being piloted in 8 areas of England (see page 15, footnote 13 on Staying Close). The carer(s) or residential worker(s) who will probably know the young person best of all, should be involved in helping them plan for their next step. However, having a Staying Put or Staying Close arrangement can lead to a change in relationships with a former foster carer or the residential home, so it is important to have a contingency plan in place in case it does not work out. Whatever the plans, the detail needs to be written into their Pathway Plan.

Some care leavers may plan to return to their birth parents: in 2017-18, 12% of 19 – 21-year-old care leavers were living with their parents.<sup>17</sup> Young people can have unrealistic expectations of what returning to their family will be like, and often relationships can start to struggle. Where a return home is the plan, there needs to be substantial pre-move planning and on-going support to help both the young person and their parents or extended family to adjust. This can be a particular issue for care leavers returning home having been in custody.

**Family Group Conferencing (FGC)** can be a useful way to help the young person and their family make the best choices and to settle. FGC is a process led by family members to plan and make decisions for a child or young person with their involvement. It is a voluntary process and, with an independent facilitator, can work through options that might not have been initially obvious, including the need for on-going support.

## Focus on...

**Young people leaving custody** are particularly at risk of living in unsuitable accommodation or becoming homeless, and have often experienced poor accommodation or placements before their experience in custody. They may have additional challenges in accessing housing and the support to meet their needs, perhaps due to disruptive behaviour. Many supported accommodation projects do not accept young people if they have committed particular offences such as sexual offences or arson.

Planning for young people on short custodial sentences can be challenging, and young people often don’t know where they are going to live until the last minute before they leave custody. This can be very worrying for young people as well as leading to additional problems after they are released.

16. See the Government’s Staying Put guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-put-arrangements-for-care-leavers-aged-18-years-and-above>

17. Taken from the Department for Education First Statistical Release 2018: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018>

There have been some recent improvements in supporting care leavers whilst in custody and their planning for resettlement. Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has increased its focus on identifying and supporting young people in custody who are care leavers. The work is led by an HMPPS National Care Leaver Champion and each prison in England and Wales now has a Care Leaver Lead and regional leads in community settings as well. Alongside this is a new HMPPS 'Strategy for Care Experienced People'.<sup>18</sup>

To help ease the transition out of custody, it is very important that leaving care services work with the Youth Offending Service, Probation staff and case managers to:

- Plan young people's accommodation options as soon as possible on entering custody; and
- Keep the young person informed about progress and their options.

Leaving care personal advisers or social workers will need to:

- Keep in touch with the young person throughout the time they are in custody, even if they are placed a long way from home
- Look for housing options for the young person as their release date approaches
- Keep the young person and the Youth Offending Service /Probation staff or case manager informed of progress
- Have in place a contingency plan if the first option does not work
- Put in place a package of support to assist the young person to settle back into their community.

Commissioners of leaving care and housing services need to take into account how easily young people leaving custody will be able to access existing services, and what additional services or support may need to be put in place specifically for them. This might involve a joint protocol between Housing, Children's Services and Youth Offending Services so that suitable accommodation is provided locally. It may also require agencies offering post- custody placements to travel to meet the young person in custody, or arrange to do pre-tenancy interviews via Skype (as happens in HMP & YOI Parc<sup>19</sup>).

For working with young people in custody who need accommodation on release, see also the St Basils 'Youth Justice Accommodation Pathway' <https://stbasils.org.uk/thepositivepathway>

Making well planned moves is in the best interests of young people leaving care. Crisis or emergency moves are much less likely to support good outcomes and may set young people back in other areas of their lives such as education, training or employment. There are different ways in which personal advisers or foster or residential carers can help care leavers make an informed choice about their move from care. Here are some examples:

18. See here for more information on care leavers in prison and the Probation Service <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/care-leavers-in-prison-and-probation>

19. See: <https://yjresourcehub.uk/our-community/resources-for-hmpps/item/440-skype-project-parc-young-offender-institution-findings-from-the-pilot-may-2015-to-april-2016.html>

## Training flats

Many care leavers say that they want to leave care so that they can get their 'own place'. The reality of living alone as the first move after leaving care can be very different from what young people expect. Care leavers often describe feeling lonely, unsure how to manage household problems or worried about finances and bills. Many local authorities are using training flats to help care leavers experience what it is really like to live on their own, without the risk of them losing their own first tenancy. A few weeks in a flat, but with some support, trying to manage money and experiencing living alone, can really assist young people in understanding more about living more independently.

## Visiting different housing types

It can be hard for care leavers to know where they want to live if they don't have any experience of different housing types. Language is very powerful: for example, the term "hostel" often has negative connotations, suggesting night- shelters or large buildings in poor condition with little support. However, a locally commissioned supported accommodation scheme, which may locally be called a "hostel", could in reality be a small, high quality supported accommodation scheme and a good first move for a young person. Another example is "supported lodgings" which is likely to be an unfamiliar term, but in fact has many similarities with foster care though more suitable for older young people, as the focus is on more independence than foster care. Advice from other young people can be really helpful about the pros and cons of the various options available to them.

Some local authorities are offering care leavers the chance to visit or even stay in different options for a night or two to experience first-hand before they make their decision about where they want to live next. Giving young people the tools to make an informed decision can make a substantial difference to their commitment to their housing choice.

## Leaving care – checklist

Young people leave care from a range of settings. Does your 'local offer' for care leavers reflect and address the challenge of meeting your duty to plan housing options and consistently support all young people leaving care, regardless of where they live? Are you working with young people in all these different settings to plan their accommodation and support:

- Residential care
- Foster care
- Out of area fostering or residential care settings
- "Other arrangements"<sup>20</sup>
- Residential special schools
- Custody or secure units
- A family setting, with parents and/or other family members

## Top tips

- Having a Housing Officer in the leaving care team can make a big difference through up-skilling personal advisers in housing knowledge as well as giving young people specialist housing advice and helping them to access various housing options. Many Housing Departments have placed officers in Leaving Care Teams as part of their contribution as a 'corporate parent' or made a 'virtual' arrangement.

20. For more information on how 'Other arrangements' is defined in Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations, Volume 2: Care planning, placement and case review, points 3.117 – 3.120

- Consider setting up a ‘panel’ to look at all the cases of young people leaving care. This is also an effective way to promote joint working. Panels usually include staff from Leaving Care and Housing Options, but could also usefully join up with voluntary sector providers of accommodation and support in the local area. Provide short-term beds for young people leaving custody. If a longer-term housing and support option is not yet ready for them, they can stay in a supported environment for a few days prior to the move.
- Involve foster and residential carers and other trusted adults to help young people think about their options and make an informed choice about where they want to live.
- Wherever possible, give care leavers the opportunity to visit or try out different types of accommodation before they make their choice, such as supported housing, supported lodgings, a shared flat, their own tenancy etc.

## EXAMPLE Blackpool Council

Having decided to adopt the Positive Pathway in Blackpool, the Housing Options Service, local housing providers, Children’s Services, Early Help and YOT worked together and drew up an action plan based on gaps in the pathway. The most obvious and critical gap was in the lack of planning for children leaving care, and the lack of suitable accommodation options.

All too often young people were reaching their 18th birthday with no plan or place to go and having to make homeless applications. The ‘Housing Clinic’ was set up – a monthly meeting of a transitions panel to begin planning around the 17th birthday of looked after young people. Team Managers from Children’s Services, Commissioning, Housing Options, and the key housing providers all attend.

A list is generated each month of all young people reaching their 17th birthday, with social workers and personal advisers invited to a slot on the clinic to start the discussion around future housing options. The clinic also manages transitions for young people leaving supported housing in exactly the same way, and can also pick up young people returning home from university, or leaving Staying Put arrangements. In the future it may also include young people leaving custody.

It has enabled the local authority to reduce the “cliff edge” at 18, and significantly reduce homeless applications and unplanned moves. All partners can see the real benefits that young people experience through this planned and joined up approach.

## Supporters Framework stages and options

## Activity and approach



**'I went from not paying anything, and I mean anything, literally just my clothes and my cigarettes, to having water rates and light rates, TV licence, council tax and having these different cards to pay for different things. Wow, it was a bombardment! The one question I kept asking myself was, 'how will I cope?' and the answer is, you don't.'** (Young person, Barnardo's)

Local authorities as corporate parents should purposefully design services and support to ensure young people leaving care do not become homeless or face any housing crisis. The experience of homelessness at a young age is not only stigmatising but can, without effective support and accommodation options, result in long-term poor outcomes.<sup>21</sup>

Many young people report their experience as traumatic, leading to dropping out of education, training or employment and resulting benefit dependency. Becoming homeless can result in significantly higher risks of developing mental health problems, getting involved in substance misuse, risks of sexual exploitation, involvement in crime and, in some areas, involvement in gangs. This can result in young people disengaging from services which could make them increasingly difficult to support appropriately.

For care leavers, homelessness can feel even more of a damaging experience as they often don't have family members able to help them and, despite the local authority being their 'corporate parent', many young people say they feel on their own. In some areas, without young people's emergency or short-stay accommodation, homeless care leavers describe staying in all-age hostels with older homeless people, who may be using substances or involved in crime, or living for long periods in inappropriate bed and breakfast (B&B) or hotel accommodation. This sort of accommodation is never suitable as an option. It is often not only inappropriate but is unsafe for young people and provides little or no support, so not helping them to deal with what has happened and to move on with their lives.<sup>22</sup>

When a care leaver is facing a potential breakdown in their living situation, it is important that action is taken quickly to prevent them becoming homeless. Homelessness can happen in any form of accommodation. For example, they may have returned home to family, be in a Staying Put arrangement, living with a partner, in a supported lodgings placement, or a supported accommodation scheme. Some young people may be in their own tenancy, but be building up rent arrears or be involved in anti-social behaviour locally, which is putting their tenancy at risk.

21. G.Bramley and S.Fitzpatrick et al. 'Hard Edges – Mapping Severe and Multiple Disadvantage in England' published by Lankelly Chase Foundation 2015

22. See Chapter 7 of The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations 2017 - Volume 3: planning transition to adulthood for care leavers (Department for Education)

Avoiding any risk of homelessness is one of the roles of the personal adviser and a housing related support worker play, as they will know how each young person is managing and should be visiting their accommodation regularly. Foster carers, independent visitors or other trusted adults in the young person's life should also take some responsibility in raising any concerns about how well a young person is managing or if their housing is looking at risk.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness. This is a significant change and means people at risk of homelessness get help much earlier. The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published the **Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities** in February 2018, which sets out how local authorities should exercise their homelessness functions under Part 7 of the Housing Act, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Within this is a chapter on care leavers.<sup>23</sup>

The way the amended legislation works means there should be more intervention and support to prevent homelessness, and a reduction in intentionally homeless decisions for care leavers. Joint working will further reduce this risk as well.

Personal housing plans (PHPs) must be drawn up for each applicant who is homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days. The PHP is based on an assessment of the applicants' housing circumstances, housing needs and support needs. The PHP sets out the 'reasonable steps' that the local authority will take to assist the applicant in retaining or securing accommodation, as well as the 'reasonable steps' that the applicant will take. The Code of Guidance states that where there is a duty to assess a care leaver's housing and other support needs and develop a PHP, arrangements should be in place to enable the personal adviser to be involved in the assessment process with the young person's consent. The personal housing plan should also be informed by the care leaver's Pathway Plan.<sup>24</sup> See Annex 1 for more information.

A range of homelessness prevention tools can be used to try and prevent the young person from losing their housing. They may need to move on from their accommodation in due course, but support and interventions which focus on preventing homelessness can be used to slow down a crisis, alleviate risks and enable a move to be made in a planned and sustainable way.

A major trigger for homelessness for all young people, including those in care and leaving care, is the breakdown of relationships. Losing contact with long-term foster carers or leaving residential care abruptly as a result of an incident is damaging for young people. Unresolved conflict and the emotional impact of fractured relationships can reinforce low self-esteem and an inner belief that no-one cares. For 16/17 year olds who are still looked after and living with foster carers or in residential care, a breakdown in relationship can sometimes result in an unplanned placement move into 'other arrangements'. With appropriate prevention activity – such as an offer of mediation – these unplanned placement moves may be avoided.

23. See: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-22-care-leavers>

24. Homelessness Code of Guidance (MHCLG) – Chapter <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities>

For a care leaver the breakdown of a relationship could be with a partner or friend they are living with, with their parents or wider family, or with their former foster carer or supported lodgings host. Young people who have returned to family or carers from custody may be at particular risk.

Examples of homelessness prevention tools include:

## Mediation

Whilst mediation services are usually targeted at young people who live with their parents, they can also be used with young people at risk of placement breakdown. Sometimes a different person, perhaps from a different agency, is viewed as more independent because they are removed from the dynamics of the placement. Mediation can be structured and delivered in planned sessions or be more immediate and informal.

Mediators usually help young people and their carers or families understand what the underlying tensions are about, what they want to achieve and support them in finding ways to resolve issues. There are several ways of measuring what a successful outcome from mediation might be, one of which may be moving from their current housing situation, but in a planned way.

At a point of real crisis, there is not much time to arrange more formal mediation nor is it likely to be an easy offer for young people and their carers to accept. But immediate mediation – someone with mediation and negotiation skills who can visit within a few hours – does not require a long ‘lead in’ period and deals with issues in the here and now.

## Family Group Conferencing

Family Group Conferencing may be another option that local authorities might consider. It may well take longer to set up, so could be a very helpful follow up option after a crisis situation has passed. It could be adapted for care leavers and their carers, and still achieve a successful outcome.

## EXAMPLE

St Basils provides a mediation option for young people in Birmingham, Solihull & Sandwell, as a homelessness prevention intervention. This is an option for young people and their parents/carers which can enable young people to remain at home if safe to do so or may mean the young person does not stay in the family or foster placement, but moves out in a more planned way, with the issues resolved and/or communication improved.

## Top tips

- As an alternative or in addition to a specialist mediation service, consider how your staff can develop the skills and confidence to mediate and negotiate to help prevent homelessness.
- Some Housing Options Services have invested in accredited training on mediation skills, because it is so valuable in preventing homelessness. You could consider the benefits of commissioning some training and sharing costs between several different organisations or services, because these are generic skills that several services may want to train their staff in (for example, Youth Offending Services, Troubled Families Programme staff, Family Support and Early Help staff, social workers and Housing Options Services).



## Respite/short breaks

If relationships are under strain, sometimes young people just need 'time out' to think about what is going on and to make a plan for the future. Offering a respite or short break service can help care leavers take their time over decisions and think about their next move. Respite services might just be a safe place to go for a few days or weeks, or it might offer a range of coaching or therapeutic support. Short breaks might be used in conjunction with mediation, to take the young person out of the crisis situation whilst working together to try and resolve the underlying issues.

## Short-term moves from custody

Young people leaving custody are at particular risk of homelessness, in part because their initial moves are often insufficiently planned. With release dates often unknown until the last minute, and with the distance between custody and home, young people are often moved somewhere they do not know, do not want or that is not sustainable. Some local authorities are providing short-term accommodation that young people can access direct from custody as part of their resettlement plan. This might be a ring-fenced room in a supported housing project or a specialist supported lodging. The service can be used for a few weeks whilst they look at longer-term options available locally, rebuild relationships with family prior to moving back home, or until their chosen placement becomes available.

## Joint working – checklist

To avoid housing crisis and prevent homelessness, the Leaving Care Service and local Housing Options Services need to work closely together. In some local authorities, there is a member of the Housing Options Service based within or linked to the Leaving Care Service.

A local authority could, as part of its corporate parenting responsibility and 'local offer' for care leavers, have an agreed set of prevention tools available and a shared understanding across Housing Authorities and Children's Services regarding who would do what in a situation of housing crisis for a young person aged 16 or over who is looked after or a care leaver. This should be outlined in any Housing Authority and Children's Services joint protocol regarding care leavers and accommodation.

How well are services and departments working together in your local authority? If you are in a two-tier authority, it is even more important that each of the District Housing Authorities comes together to work closely with Children's Services at the County Council level.

Use the checklist below as well as your 'local offer' for care leavers to assess how well different services and departments are working together. Are the following areas addressed?

- Homelessness prevention services are accessible to care leavers and take account of the range of housing situations they may be in
- Leaving care teams are aware of the homelessness prevention support available locally
- Housing and homelessness officers are familiar with the needs of care leavers in their area and can offer accurate and tailored advice
- Youth Offending Teams are involved in commissioning short-term accommodation options that are suitable for young people immediately on release from custody
- A joint protocol is in place which outlines how you will all work together to avoid homelessness and housing crisis amongst care leavers

## Top tips

- Contingency plans are helpful for all young people moving into new accommodation, but are particularly important for those assessed as being at more risk of losing their accommodation.
- Having a designated place or person where young people and their carers can go for early advice and support can help avoid crisis and reduce worry if things start to go wrong. This could be a Leaving Care Service or a local young people's 'one-stop-shop' or 'youth hub' with access to a range of services such as mediation.
- There is a duty to support care leavers who are living away at university or a residential FE college with accommodation over vacation periods, so that they do not face housing problems outside of term-time. This needs to be planned pro-actively, led by the young person and the personal adviser.
- Some Young Offender Institutions enable young people who are preparing to leave custody to use Skype to take part in assessment interviews with potential housing services. This can help ease the transition out of custody but also give the housing service assurances about how the young person will cope with living in a specific setting.

## Supporters Framework stages and options

## Activity and approach



**‘It [supported lodgings] has prepared me a lot better, you get a family around you that can help wonders, it really can, and it helps you develop a lot better.’ (Young person, Barnardo’s)**

Care leavers will need access to different types of accommodation and support at different times in their journey out of care. This may depend on diverse factors such as the age at which they leave care, their emotional health or resilience, life skills and experience, mental and physical health, disability, engagement with education, training or employment, any experience of substance use or offending, and a range of other factors.

Although this framework is presented as a structured model, there is no linear relationship between the types of accommodation and support that care leavers will need. Some care leavers will only need one type of accommodation and support, whereas others will have several moves before they progress to independence. They may move between different types of provision sequentially or more randomly, depending on how their needs change. For example, if a previously unidentified mental health need became apparent, a young person may jump from a low support to a high support setting quickly.

Whilst it is helpful to have a guideline for how long a young person might stay in a supported accommodation option (e.g. supported lodgings, a foyer or a ‘step down’ shared house with floating support), there does need to be some degree of flexibility built in to contracts to enable commissioners and providers to extend a young person’s stay if they are not ready to move on and run the risk of failure if they do move.

The personal adviser, and anyone who is supporting the young person day to day, will have a good idea of how a young person is getting on. By working together, staying in touch, and involving the young person directly in planning what the next move might be, a more positive outcome is likely. The accommodation decision – and contingency plan – should be agreed and written into a care leaver’s Pathway Plan.

It is helpful if personal advisers are familiar with the range of accommodation options available to care leavers locally, including how to refer young people into the various sorts of accommodation and support. This can be much simpler when there is a single integrated gateway to all supported accommodation options.

Effective provision of a range of accommodation options locally will meet requirements on local authorities for both sufficiency and suitability of accommodation. Local authorities report annually to the Department for Education on their ability to find 'suitable' accommodation for care leavers between the ages of 17 to 21. Ofsted also looks at the suitability of accommodation for care leavers. Defined in the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010,<sup>25</sup> suitable accommodation is accommodation:

- which, so far as reasonably practicable, is suitable for the child in light of their needs, including their health needs
- in respect of which the responsible authority has satisfied itself as to the character and suitability of the landlord or other provider
- complies with health and safety requirements related to rented accommodation
- in respect of which the responsible authority has, so far as reasonably practicable, taken into account the child's wishes and feelings, education, training or employment needs.

Although they need access to a range of provision, in reality care leavers will make up a relatively small proportion of the young people who need wider housing support. **It therefore makes sense that the housing options set out in this stage are jointly or co-commissioned by housing related support commissioners and Children's Services commissioners. This might mean drawing up specifications together, agreeing to pool some budgets, allocating specific beds in a scheme to care leavers, or having a shared protocol that sets out agreed access routes.**

Seeking advice all through the process from colleagues working within the local housing authority is essential as they have specialist knowledge, experience and contacts in housing – for example, understanding the realities of the local housing market; what is available and how to access the private rented sector; leasing of properties; tenancy types; what constitutes suitable accommodation in law.

In some local authorities, the element of the budget for housing related support which relates to young people 16-25 has been moved to Children's Services. In effect, this means that there is a single budget for all accommodation and support for young people who need additional housing support or are at risk of homelessness, including care leavers. It could be useful to undertake an options appraisal to understand the pros and cons of this approach. Wherever the budget sits, there are opportunities to consider the broader needs of all vulnerable young people, including care leavers, when commissioning accommodation and support. This could involve carrying out a needs assessment and commissioning solutions to meet young people's needs in a more comprehensive way, as an alternative to having separate funding and commissioning pots for young people according to their legal status.

### Supporting young people leaving care who have multiple or complex needs

Many young people leaving care have a much higher level of support needs than their peers. Some may have learning or physical disabilities, or mental or physical health needs. Other young people may be involved in offending or anti-social behaviour or have substance misuse issues. Their needs cannot usually be met in more traditional supported housing schemes and they need a more bespoke or specialist service.

## Learning from the Fair Chance Fund

The Fair Chance Fund was an innovative three-year programme, funded by the Government and designed to improve accommodation, education and employment outcomes for homeless young people aged 18 to 24.<sup>26</sup> The programme included some care leavers and was designed for young people who were likely to be at high risk of rough sleeping because local supported housing and general housing options were not available to them due to their high level of needs.

The importance of the Fair Chance Fund, in terms of learning is significant for all local authorities, especially commissioners of supported housing in terms of considerations for future commissioning for young people with multiple and complex needs. There are interim and final evaluations available on-line which give much more detail on this programme and the learning.<sup>27</sup>

The criteria for entry into the programme was for young people:

- Aged 18-24 (21 and over if care leavers)
- Homeless and non-priority
- Not in education, training or employment (NEET)
- A priority for Local Authority support but unable to be accommodated in a supported housing scheme as a result of:
  - o Previous difficulties in, or eviction from supported accommodation
  - o Security issues e.g. for young offenders
  - o Needs deemed too high/complex to manage within current schemes
  - o Lack of specialist supported accommodation
- May be in priority need and intentionally homeless

It was funded on a 100% payment by results basis, with projects being backed by social impact bonds following a competitive bidding process. Social investors funded project providers to set up and deliver services, recouping their investments as and when outcomes were achieved, and triggering payments against a set of specific metrics and tariffs.

A total of 1,910 young people were recruited by the seven projects during the Year 1 recruitment period.

Accommodation outcomes included:

- 1,657 young people, or 87% of all participants, entered accommodation, of whom;
- 93% achieved a 3-month sustained outcome
- 86% achieved a 6-month sustained outcome
- 73% achieved a 12-month outcome
- 62% achieved an 18-month sustained outcome (53% of all participants).

Employment, education and training outcomes included:

- 33% entered employment – 623 young people. Most commonly this was in entry level posts in the retail, hospitality, construction and manual trades.
- 55%, achieved an entry to education or a training outcome – 1,042 young people. Most commonly this was short, internally delivered life skills or pre-employability provision.
- 13% undertook some volunteering work – 252 young people.

26. Evaluation of the Fair Chance Fund- Final Report [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/793810/Fair\\_Chance\\_Fund\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/793810/Fair_Chance_Fund_final_report.pdf)

27. See here for the Fair Chance Fund evaluation: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fair-chance-fund-evaluation-final-report>

Young people engaging with the Fair Chance Fund were less interested in taking up education and training opportunities than originally anticipated, as more young people wanted to enter employment. Most projects re-profiled their education outcomes downwards to reflect lower than projected demand.

**The learning across the Programme** was in part related to how different provider organisations running the 7 projects experienced the challenge of a new way of working - a Social Impact Bond with 100% payment by results. There is learning around some of the positives and the challenges this presented some agencies. There is also learning about delivery models to support positive outcome for young people with multiple and complex needs, including:

- **Dedicated key workers providing holistic bespoke support:** through providing more intensive and personalised support, the ability to engage, develop trust, and act as advocates was important. Young people valued the sustained, responsive, emotional and practical support received, often in contrast to support received previously.
- **A housing-led approach:** the focus on accommodation as a key outcome enabled young people to progress into education and employment outcomes. Unsurprisingly, given the client group, some young people were not ready for living more independently and needed time in supported housing before moving on.
- **The three-year duration of the project:** because the young people had support for a minimum of 2 years, with no new young people joining the programme after Year 1, this allowed time for relationships and trust to be established and for the long-term support required for progression.
- **Flexibility of approach:** the programme and the funding model actively encouraged providers to determine their own models or 'theory of change' and if necessary adapt their ways of working - as long as these changes fitted with the funding arrangements and organisational ethos allowed. In order to achieve outcomes - and therefore payment - the providers added in new provision or staff with specialist accommodation, education or employment remits.

## Therapeutic and Psychologically Informed Approaches

Some supported housing providers have developed accommodation and support models which are "psychologically informed" and/or use a therapeutic framework to respond to young people who have experienced complex trauma in their early lives. The approach goes beyond provision of housing with a support plan, with greater ambition to transform young lives. Psychologically informed services ensure staff are well trained to understand the emotional, psychological and behavioural impact of negative childhood experiences and their contribution to homelessness. This understanding underlies how staff relate to service users, the way key work sessions are delivered and additional support is provided, and arrangements are in place for psychological input and reflective practice.

Creating and embedding a Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE) approach takes time, it is not a model that can be introduced overnight, simply through staff training or re-decorating the building. There are some useful resources available: good practice guidance (funded by the then DCLG) on psychologically informed services for homeless people was published in 2012; Homeless Link have published a toolkit to support organisations adopt the PIE framework; and a case study of the implementation of a PIE at St Basils is available from the Housing LIN.<sup>28</sup>

28. For DCLG guidance see here: <https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/340022/>. For the Homeless Link toolkit see here: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Creating%20a%20Psychologically%20Informed%20Environment%20-%202015.pdf> For the St Basils case study see here: <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/type/St-Basils-Psychologically-Informed-Environments-meeting-the-emotional-and-psychological-needs-of-young-homeless-people/>

## EXAMPLE

### **West London Alliance Commissioning Service: accommodation and support for 16+ looked after children and care leavers**

The West London Alliance Commissioning Service developed as a partnership between seven London boroughs in 2018, and now supports thirteen local authorities with an aspiration to bring together local authorities nationally to transform the markets for children's social care. The service, and its brokerage platform CarePlace, is trying improve the ways the social care market works for local authorities and the residents they support, in terms of consistent delivery of value for money and within this, quality of provision and service. They are doing this through a joined-up delivery approach, underpinned by scale of spend, competition between providers on the basis of cost and quality, as well as engagement across sellers and purchasers to find the best outcomes for young people.

This is in response to national trends in these markets; significant increases in demand for SEN and a 15% increase in the numbers of looked after children, as well as an increase in levels of complexity of needs and often a limited supply of quality provision. The current system sees local authorities bid against each other for placements. In London, where there are 33 Boroughs, the feedback from local authorities is that this not resulting in the commissioning of services which give value for money. The impact is spiralling costs, with 91% of local authorities exceeding children's services budgets in 2017/18, equating to overspends totalling £872m, forecasted to be £3.1bn by 2025.

The Commissioning Alliance is a combination of commissioning, contract management and brokerage capability utilising Dynamic Purching Vehicles (DPV), and a local authority developed and owned brokerage and data platform CarePlace to build an intelligent customer approach. The aspiration is big so there is plenty more to do, but the approach is working for local authorities and the Commissioning Alliance are now expanding to adult social care and temporary accommodation. In early 2020 the '16-25 Semi-Independent DPV' will be launched which incorporates supported accommodation, supported lodgings and housing-related support. The contract is dynamic with both providers and local authorities able to join at any time. The contract has been purposefully designed to maximise the number of providers on the DPV, to increase choice and ensure authorities get the right support for young people at the right cost. The options available include both spot purchasing and block contracting.

In addition to due diligence carried out through the procurement exercise, all providers on the DPV will be contract managed by a dedicated Contract Management Team. Given the lack of national regulation in this sector, the Commissioning Alliance have also established a standalone Accreditation Scheme. This Accreditation carries out checks at both the organisational level (i.e. policies, procedures, finance) but also 'fit and proper person' checks on Managers and all named Director/owners. Providers submit a range of supporting evidence, with those that pass visited by a dedicated Inspections Officer who carries out a site visit, interviews staff and undertakes a range of spot-checks to verify information submitted

The threshold for achieving the Accreditation will intentionally increase over time in order to actively shape the market, with the standard overseen by a panel of local authority commissioners, providers and young people.

## EXAMPLE - Blackpool Council

Blackpool Council have developed a housing option for young people leaving care, in partnership within Blackpool Coastal Housing (BCH), the organisation which manages all of the Council's social housing. This option prepares young people for independence with support from their Personal Adviser and a support worker from BCH. Young people are identified as being suitable for the model at the 'Housing Clinic' transitions panel when they are 17 and are introduced to a BCH support worker at this point. They work alongside the PA and accommodation provider to prepare them for independent living. At around 17½, independent accommodation will be identified for the young person and they will move in with support, initially from both Children's Services and BCH. At some point after their 18th birthday, they take over the tenancy and BCH continue to provide floating support. The 'cliff edge' at 18 is minimised and support is on-going. Young people progress in terms of their independence, but don't need to physically move in order to have their own tenancy.

This has resulted in a very significant decrease in tenancy failure, and allows the young person to develop a relationship with their "landlord", who is acting as a corporate parent, in a phased and supportive way.

## EXAMPLE- Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes Council has a mixture of spot purchase, framework and block contract provision for young people who are looked after and leaving care.

Joint commissioning between Children's and Adult Services mean there is no 'cliff edge' at 18 for care leavers in supported housing placements, and they can remain until they are ready to move on into more independent accommodation.

Once a contract is awarded, whether this is a block contract or through the framework or spot purchasing, there is a strong focus on quality and compliance, which is managed by a team of officers.

Young people who are looked after and care leavers were involved in the commissioning process for the block contract of housing and support, contributing to the content of the service specification and evaluating part of the tender. Young people will also be part of quality reviews and inspections in the future, with a new Youth Participation Officer post based within the Corporate Parenting Team to support young people operate as youth inspectors.

To improve capacity under the sufficiency duty, plans for the future include reducing spot-purchasing through the use of the 16+ accommodation framework with a focus on outcomes, including health and employment, education and training.



A package of support is individually tailored and is responsive to the young person's needs. Within the main provision, young people typically enter a core service then progress on into cluster accommodation as their independence, resilience and ability to manage a tenancy improves. However, some young people may move directly into the cluster accommodation if this is deemed more suitable. Some young people may require a move from a more independent cluster property back into the more supported 'core' service if their needs would be met more appropriate in that setting. Similarly, some young people will move from the core service into a higher needs placement if this is more suited to their needs.

The commissioners believe that there has been improved value for money, compared to previous spot purchasing arrangements, and the quality of service delivery is high.

The commissioning model that has developed is a reflection of strong partnership working between the County Council and all the 7 District Councils in Nottinghamshire. This has led to a high level of consistency across the District Councils, which is expressed in the Care Leavers Offer<sup>29</sup>, supporting care leavers to find suitable housing, and offer priority on Nottinghamshire housing waiting lists. Care leavers are also exempt from paying Council Tax in all the Districts and have access to free leisure facilities.

## Joint working

Many local authorities that use an accommodation pathway have put in place a single integrated gateway to all supported accommodation in the local area. A gateway enables:

- a more consistent approach to needs assessment and understanding of provision, resulting in better matching of needs with services
- more choice of accommodation options for young people, including care leavers
- better use of limited resources, ensuring those with the highest needs access the services they need
- improved safeguarding, with a shared knowledge of potential risk, agreed approaches to managing risk and knowledge of who is placed where
- improved ability to continue with crisis prevention work, where relevant and appropriate
- improved ability to plan moves with care leavers themselves
- an overview of planned and unplanned move-on
- prompt and appropriate filling of voids

Ultimately using a gateway approach, as opposed to young people self-referring, or individual referrals from leaving care services to different providers with no overall co-ordination, ensures that priority is given to those who most need supported accommodation.

There are a wide range of different housing and support types that may be appropriate for care leavers. These are arranged in the framework into emergency/short-stay, longer-stay and step-down provision.

29. See the Nottinghamshire Local Offer to Care Leavers <https://www.nottshelpyourself.org.uk/kb5/nottinghamshire/directory/site.page?id=gYfxAlgcFWA>

## Emergency/short-stay provision

**Nightstop** is an accredited scheme run by Depaul UK. It provides safe accommodation for young people for a few nights in the homes of approved local host families. Young people who experience a sudden housing crisis are given a room for the night and a meal, in a family setting. It is a more supportive and positive alternative to using other forms of emergency accommodation, such as an all age, mixed hostel or bed and breakfast (B&B). It can be a particularly good option in more rural areas, where suitable emergency provision in a young people's accommodation project could be a long way away. Longer – but not long term – stays with hosts can be possible through 'Nightstop Plus'.

**Short-term supported lodgings** provide safe accommodation for young people in the family home of approved local hosts. These are similar to Nightstop in many ways but not part of the accredited scheme. The option is likely to be part of a local supported lodgings scheme, where most hosts are recruited for longer stays, but a few are willing or want to provide shorter stay options. Depending on the scheme, young people may be able to stay for a few nights or up to several weeks. With their own room and access to cooking and washing facilities, young people are given a supportive environment and opportunities to build up their lifeskills.

**Ring-fenced beds** are provided in some larger supported accommodation schemes. These may be quite basic single rooms, offering emergency access for young people at immediate risk of homelessness. Support workers may assess the young person whilst alternative accommodation is sought.

**Assessment centres** tend to be commissioned as part of a broader young people's accommodation pathway, usually in large urban areas. They provide a first stage point to the pathway, where young people can stay for a short period whilst they are assessed and their next accommodation decided. Whilst planned, non-emergency moves for care leavers would not usually require the use of an assessment centre, for those in an emergency, this is a useful option.

Local Housing Authorities have to provide interim **temporary accommodation** (TA) for single people and families under Section 188 of the Housing Act 1996 if there is reason to believe they may be eligible, homeless, and have 'priority need' and have no other place to stay. Care leavers aged 18 – 20 have 'priority need' so must be provided with TA if they need this. Care leavers aged 21 and over may be in priority need if they are 'vulnerable' as a result of being looked after and in most cases should be provided with TA whilst a full assessment is carried out (see Annex 1).

The type of TA available varies between local authority areas. Accommodation may be a self-contained unit, in a block of housing which is all designated as TA, and may or may not include housing management and support.

Often temporary accommodation does not have on-site support or additional housing management. This is likely to be a difficult and scary experience for a young person and should be avoided as an option. Local authorities should ensure they do not place care leavers into forms of shared accommodation with older adults who might present a risk to them, for example, a supported housing scheme which is for any adult aged 18 or over.

Where a young person is also a parent with their child living with them, or pregnant, it is important to ensure that the sort of TA offered is appropriate for their individual needs and circumstances in terms of their role as a young parent, as well as being a care leaver. If they need to be as near as possible to former foster carers, for example, this should be highlighted when decisions are made on the temporary accommodation offered.

Local authorities should always avoid using bed and breakfast (B&B) type accommodation for care leavers. This type of accommodation is not suitable for young people in any circumstances. In any instances where bed and breakfast accommodation is used, local authorities should provide additional support to young people and move young people as quickly as possible into short or longer term accommodation which meets their needs. Local authorities should ensure they do not place care leavers into other forms of shared accommodation with older adults who might present a risk to them.

### Longer-stay provision

Supported accommodation is a generic term for accommodation where there is some sort of support provided on-site. There are many different models of supported accommodation, which are split here into (1) family-type support and (2) other types:

#### (1) Family-type supported accommodation

**Staying Put** arrangements are a statutory right for care leavers in foster care in England. They allow a young person to stay with their former foster carer from 18 to 21 if they and the carer want the arrangement to continue. The foster placement is usually converted into a tenancy-type arrangement, and the young person will carry on living in the household in the same way. Young people will be given support from their former foster carer to help develop life skills.

**Supported lodgings** are placements within a family or individual 'host' home in the local community. The host provides a room and cooking and washing facilities, as well as offering support and advice to the young person. Supported lodgings can be used as emergency placements but are usually a longer-term option. They can help care leavers to improve their life skills, such as managing money, cooking, shopping, cleaning, etc., and give them a family-based setting. Some supported lodgings are specifically for care leavers with high support needs, such as young parents, those coming out of custody, or those at risk of sexual exploitation.

### EXAMPLE: Young Devon's Supported Lodgings and Plan B Scheme

Young Devon provides supported lodgings for around 75 young people at any one time and is one of several housing options Young Devon is able to provide. It is commissioned for young people aged 16 – 24, although most are aged between 16 – 19. It is for young people who are either care leavers or have been homeless aged 16/17.

Supported lodgings works well for many young people. Considerable work is invested in finding a good match between the family or individual person hosting and the young person's needs. Hosts are spread across rural and urban areas of Devon, so issues like proximity to college, family and public transport are all features which can be taken into account.

Support workers take the time needed to get to know the young person, their likes and dislikes, aspirations and understand who they are. Only by taking this time can the Scheme be confident of a good match.

Every young person living in Supported Lodgings has a Support Worker who is there for them and helps them move forward. The Support Worker isn't just someone to talk to if things aren't going so well. They help young people develop the skills that they need to live successful independent lives. That can be finance and budgeting; they can help them re-engage with education or find other learning and training options for them; or they might help them access any health or well-being advice and support that they might be looking for.

**The 'Plan B' element** of Supported Lodgings gives more intensive support to some young people. It's grown out of the more generic supported lodgings and gives some young people wrap-around support to help them develop healthy relationships and fulfil their potential. Plan B is delivered as a 'psychologically informed' approach to the whole placement, with clinical support for the whole team involved in the placement to ensure that the young person's needs are fully understood by the support workers, host family and other agencies giving support. This 'team around the placement' approach has the ability to deliver positive outcomes when other options haven't been successful. Hosts are paid more and need to be able to offer around 20 hours of support a week.

## 2) Other types of supported accommodation

Most local authorities have some supported accommodation schemes, which are often commissioned by housing related support (formerly Supporting People) commissioners, and sometimes jointly with Children's Services. Supported accommodation may be run by a charity, a Registered Provider (a social landlord) or a private provider. Generally supported accommodation will cover young people aged 16–21 or 16–25. Some schemes within a local authority may be specifically commissioned for younger teenagers only.

Commissioners are responsible for ensuring there is shared clarity regarding the difference between provision of care placements for 16/17s (which are regulated through the Care Act 2000 and which must be registered with Ofsted) and supported accommodation (which is not regulated but may be used as 'other arrangements' for some 16/17 year olds).

For the purposes of this part of the document, we are describing a range of supported accommodation options, not registered care placement options. Local commissioning of supported accommodation should be monitored against national guidance and any additional locally determined standards.<sup>30</sup>

For some 16/17 year olds who are looked after or are 'relevant' care leavers, and some older care leavers supported accommodation may be commissioned via a framework agreement across several local authorities.

30. 29 The guidance on this from Ofsted and DfE can be found here:

Ofsted:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/726907/Introduction\\_to\\_childrens\\_homes\\_180718.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/726907/Introduction_to_childrens_homes_180718.pdf)

DfE: Volume 2, points 3.116 - 3.142

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/441643/Children\\_Act\\_Guidance\\_2015.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/441643/Children_Act_Guidance_2015.pdf)

Some local authorities make use of unregulated supported accommodation that is not commissioned and contract managed, usually through spot purchasing arrangements. Where such arrangements are used, and particularly for out of area placements, it is critical that local authorities are sufficiently assured of the quality of the accommodation and support provided. When placing young people in accommodation at distance from their family, PA and other support networks, a more comprehensive support package is likely to be needed. This type of placement can be as a result of a lack of planning and joint commissioning. It can present higher risks and is usually more expensive.<sup>31</sup>

Supported accommodation schemes can vary substantially in size. The accommodation can be bedrooms with shared facilities, bedsits or self-contained flats. Support may be available 24/7 on-site, in the daytime only or on-call support at night. Schemes can also include dispersed housing and may have step-down units attached to help young people prepare for a less intensively supported environment. Support workers (sometimes called Lead workers, Navigators or Progression Coaches) work individually with young people on their own support plan towards agreed goals, such as around education, training, employment, life skills, independent living skills, improving emotional well-being, confidence and physical health. Good provision will take a strengths-based personalised approach.

**Floating support** offers one to one support to help a young person identify and reach their goals. The support should be an approach tailored to the needs of the young person and flexible in terms of tapering up and down the number of hours a week a care leaver may need. A floating support worker should work closely with the young person's personal adviser. Floating support can include help with;

- o Finances, i.e accessing the right benefits
- o Obtaining work, i.e applying for jobs, writing a CV
- o Household skills, i.e shopping on a budget, meal planning and preparation
- o Health and hygiene, i.e registering with a GP
- o Social skills, i.e accessing support groups

**Staying Close.** This type of accommodation and support is in a pilot phase. In July 2016, the Government announced the development of a "Staying Close programme" for young people leaving residential care as an alternative to the Staying Put arrangements. The pilots aim to provide an enhanced support offer for those leaving residential care. The Staying Close option includes an accommodation offer close to the young person's former children's home alongside practical and emotional support from a member of staff from their former children's home whom they know and trust. Reports from the pilots show that 120 care leavers participated in the Staying Close pilots from January 2018 to July 2018.<sup>32</sup>

**Live, Work, Earn and Learn options.** Many commissioned supported accommodation projects for young people will include a proactive focus on education, training and employment. The growing challenge of affordability of housing for young people means that preparing for economic activity is an important part of any stay in supported accommodation. It is important to ensure you are commissioning accommodation and support options which proactively encourage and support young people to engage in education, training and employment, including Further Education, volunteering and apprenticeships. Some local supported accommodation schemes may call themselves foyers, some of which are accredited by the Foyer Federation, and others are commissioned to provide a similar sort of service. Other developing models include Young Workers co-operatives and Live and Work schemes where rents are at a level which enable young people to live and work and be benefit free. Creative commissioning can help overcome the financial challenges in such schemes.

31. See a Commonweal and Spring Housing report about use of unregulated 'exempt' accommodation and the issues with this here: <https://www.commonwealhousing.org.uk/unregulated-exempt-accommodation>

32. See Staying Close: Policy Brief (DfE and Spring Consensus) <https://www.innovationcsc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/StayingClose-policy-brief.pdf>

## EXAMPLE

St Basils runs the 'Live and Work' scheme in Sandwell in partnership with Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust. The scheme offers apprenticeships with the Trust and affordable rents with light touch support to young people who need it.

Private rent prices are continuously rising which ultimately leads to young people finding it extremely hard to become independent. The Live and Work scheme provides shared accommodation for young workers for £44 per week inclusive. This scheme is open to 16 and 24 year olds in the West Midlands who are employed – and is particularly ideal for apprentices and those on a low income.

The scheme is totally benefit free, which means that young people get the opportunity to live and work without having to rely on welfare benefits. The independent evaluation showed that for every £1 of capital cost to develop the scheme, there is a £14 return to the public purse over 10 years. The accommodation, home to 32 young people, comprised of 8 flats. Each flat has 4 bedrooms, with shared kitchen, dining and bathroom facilities. Its location is only 20 minutes away from Birmingham city centre with reliable transport links and good local amenities.

Since opening in 2015, the scheme has won numerous awards, including two for NHS partnership work and one for 'Excellence in Education', as well as the 2018 national Housing award for 'Outstanding approach to tackling Homelessness'  
To find out more <https://stbasils.org.uk/?s=Live+anD+Work>

**Small group homes** models tend to be commissioned for young people with physical or learning disabilities who will need on-going support from adult social services. Group homes might be commissioned jointly by Children's Services, Adult Social Care and Housing Related Support commissioners. Housing Benefit and elements of other benefits that the young person may be able to claim due to their disability should also be factored into the whole package. There are specialist providers who are able to provide young people with focused, small group living arrangements. This could be an option for very small numbers (maybe 2 or 3) of young people to live together, who have previously been living in specialist foster or residential care. A long lead-in time is needed in considering this option, in terms of the financial modelling, commissioning and matching of young people.

**Housing First** or 'housing led' solutions may be most appropriate for people with multiple and complex needs, and particularly those who have not managed within hostel or supported housing settings. Housing First provides an independent tenancy, through a social or private landlord, along with very intensive, bespoke wrap-around support. Whilst it tends to be a model that is used for older, long-term homeless people who have been rough sleeping, it is an option to consider for young people who are likely to struggle in larger schemes such as foyers or in family settings such as supported lodgings. Having your own front door can be a positive option for some young people who have higher needs, as long as there is commissioning of support through a dedicated, specialist floating support services, with some 24-hour call-out if needed. It is important to remember that, if the housing is in the private rented sector, and if the young person is claiming Universal Credit, then their exemption as a care leaver from the Shared Accommodation Rate will end on their 22nd birthday. The difference between the rent and the Housing Benefit payable will need to be bridged or the young person would need to move into shared accommodation or into social housing, which could be disruptive.

## 'Step-down' provision

**Shared or self-contained provision with floating support** gives young people some support whilst they are living in their own or shared accommodation. Floating support could be provided via housing related support or, if the young person is under 18, funded by Children's Services, as an additional support on top of the personal adviser from Children's Services. Floating support assists care leavers to settle into their accommodation and the local community, including accessing local services and dealing with bills and budgeting.

'Step-down' provision can be attached to more intensively supported accommodation schemes, and gives young people a next step towards independence whilst maintaining their link to the higher support scheme. Where this is the case, the young person may live in a shared house or their own small self-contained flat or bedsit near to the supported accommodation scheme, may have the same 'support worker' that they had previously, and still be part of the higher support scheme. Other 'step-down' provision can be commissioned separately, but with good day to day links with the local supported accommodation schemes.

Some young people leaving care will be ready for the more independent 'step-down' accommodation as their first move out of care, and do not need to go through the higher support accommodation first. Assessment and Pathway Planning are key to making decisions with young people about their readiness for such a move.

**On-call or concierge schemes** can provide very light-touch housing management support as needed. There are different local commissioning arrangements for this type of housing management model and some may provide support in the day and concierge support over the evenings.

## Top tips

- Accommodation that is available to both care leavers and other young people is often good as it allows young people to mix; this can be another benefit of joint commissioning of services. However, schemes which do not mix young people with older adults work much better for young people.
- The size of scheme has to be relative to housing management and support on offer.
- Young people often say that it is the quality of relationships with significant people in their lives that makes a difference, including housing related support workers and personal advisers. The balance of weighting between quality and costs in any tendering process is a matter for commissioners, but lower hourly rates can equate to a higher staff turnover or less skilled or experienced staff .
- Having effective joint working and ideally joint or co-commissioning is critical to delivering a seamless accommodation pathway. Children's Services and Housing Related Support commissioners need to work together with colleagues in Housing Options and the leaving care service when planning the provision they want to commission. This can help to create a 'menu' of options and also avoid the 'cliff edges' of the 18th birthday, when funding changes and young people have to make a placement move, and at age 22 when their Universal Credit housing cost reduces to the Shared Accommodation Rate.
- In planning to commission a range of supported accommodation options, it is really helpful to have a full understanding of both the needs of care leavers locally and the outcomes that commissioners want to achieve. This will make it easier to plan accommodation and support around local needs and ambitions. It is critical to factor in adequate time for needs analysis and the developing of joint commissioning plans. This is particularly the case for commissioning of services for some groups of young care leavers, for example those with disabilities and complex needs.
- Take into account young people's education and employment activity and ambitions when working with them to choose the best supported accommodation option for them.
- Local authorities that have developed effective accommodation and support pathways for young people tend to work closely together, agreeing relevant budgets across the local authority (and other public sector agencies) and either pooling the budgets or managing them seamlessly across directorates or service areas.
- Effective use of this framework could involve a group led by Children's Services and housing related support commissioners which meets regularly to review, monitor and agree changes to commissioning of accommodation and support options.
- Commissioners should encourage providers to partner strategically with the local authority and recognise the added value brought through innovation, additional programmes and flexibility of working.
- Young people often say that it is the quality of relationships with significant people in their lives that makes a difference, including housing related support workers and personal advisers. The balance of weighting between quality and costs in any tendering process is a matter for commissioners, but lower hourly rates can equate to a higher staff turnover or less skilled or experienced staff.



## EXAMPLE

**Nottinghamshire County Council** has two sets of arrangements in place for the commissioning of supported accommodation which young people experiencing homelessness, looked after children and care leavers aged 16 -21 can access as part of their transition to adulthood. The young people's element of the County Council's housing related support budget was pooled in 2015 with the 16+ placement budget to achieve the scale of the provision.

Underlining the planning for the new model was a recognition that new provision needed to be able to support all young people, including those with multiple and complex needs and young people with an offending background.

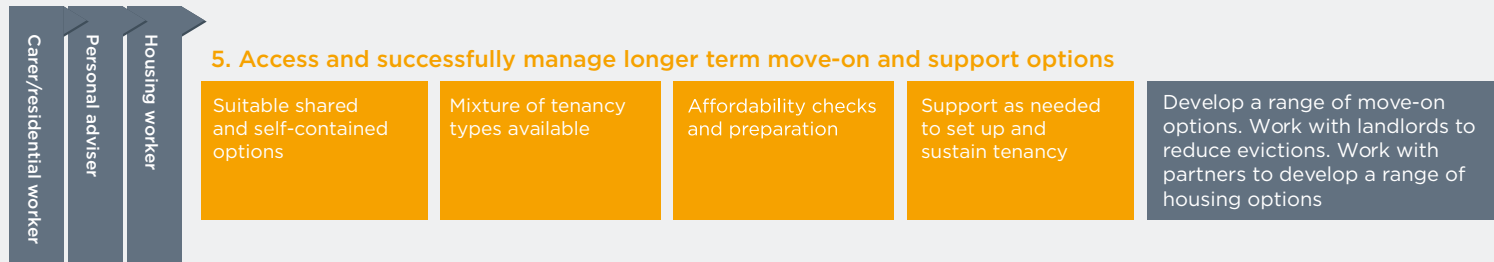
There are two types of placements available:

- The main 16+ provision has 227 units of accommodation for homeless 16/17 year olds, LAC and Care Leavers transitioning from residential or foster placements and vulnerable homeless young people aged over 18. These services provide choice around housing options for young people via the provision of 'core' and 'cluster' accommodation which is grouped into 6 areas of the county. The 'core' services are staffed 24 hours a day and have appropriate levels of staffing to support young people presenting with a range of needs. In addition to the core service, there are 'cluster' units of accommodation which may be self-contained or small shared houses where staff provide visiting support. The support provided is responsive to the young person's needs and may increase or decrease to meet the needs of the young person.
- Individual placement agreements commissioned via a Dynamic Purchasing System with approved providers that are able to provide support for young people who need a greater level of support than is readily available within the main 16+ provision. These placements are sourced as a step down from residential before moving into the main provision, or where it is clear the Looked After child would not be able to sustain their accommodation within the main provision. There are a range of accommodation options available which include solo placements with staff available 22 hours a day, and small settings with visiting support.

A package of support is individually tailored and is responsive to the young person's needs. Within the main provision, young people typically enter a core service then progress on into cluster accommodation as their independence, resilience and ability to manage a tenancy improves. However, some young people may move directly into the cluster accommodation if this is deemed more suitable. Some young people may require a move from a more independent cluster property back into the more supported 'core' service if their needs would be met more appropriate in that setting. Similarly, some young people will move from the core service into a higher needs placement if this is more suited to their needs.

The commissioners believe that there has been improved value for money, compared to previous spot purchasing arrangements, and the quality of service delivery is high. The commissioning model that has developed is a reflection of strong partnership working between the County Council and all the 7 District Councils in Nottinghamshire. This has led to a high level of consistency across the District Councils, which is expressed in the Care Leavers Offer<sup>33</sup>, supporting care leavers to find suitable housing, and offer priority on Nottinghamshire housing waiting lists. Care leavers are also exempt from paying Council Tax in all the Districts and have access to free leisure facilities.

33. See the Nottinghamshire Local Offer to Care Leavers <http://www.nottshelpyourself.org.uk/kb5/nottinghamshire/directory/site.page?id=gYfxAlgcFWA>



**“I found it easier to move myself on independently because of the skills that I had brushed up on. It was upstairs, I felt safer, I felt really safe and secure.” (Young person, Barnardo’s)**

The final stage of the framework sets out the support needed to help care leavers move towards greater independence. For some young people, this transition will happen earlier, whilst others may need specific support from a personal adviser or housing worker beyond 21 or even after 25.

A young person’s long-term housing ambitions should be discussed and documented in their Pathway Plan. This will need to be kept up to date as circumstances and wishes change, and remain realistic given the local housing situation. Personal advisers will also need to get advice from housing officers about the long-term housing options locally.

There are a number of factors which impact on the availability of housing for young people. The supply of accommodation that is affordable for people on low incomes varies, with significant local and regional differences in the housing market. There is reported to be low landlord confidence in young people as tenants, in part due to general concerns on affordability and also due to the changes in Universal Credit, whereby rent is paid direct to the claimant unless a specific exemption is granted on the basis of vulnerability, called an ‘Alternative Payment Arrangement’. Whilst care leavers are a named group that are likely to be vulnerable and granted an exemption, this is not automatic and is done on a case-by-case basis.<sup>34</sup>

Many local authorities have chosen to exempt care leavers up to the age of 25 from Council Tax as part of their corporate parenting role. Because affordability is such a critical issue in both social and private rented housing, exemption from Council Tax means care leavers have reduced risk of debt and the associated housing insecurity which can arise from this.

### Living in social housing

Availability of social housing is severely limited in many areas. In terms of one-bed social housing, a combination of factors is limiting access:

- A general shortage of one-bed properties. This is a national issue: many units of one-bed accommodation are in sheltered housing, are designated for older people, or are specifically restricted to lettings to, for example, under 30s or under 40s through local lettings policies.
- Demand for this size of accommodation is increasing from tenants subject to the under-occupation penalty (‘bedroom tax’). Local authorities and Registered Providers need to reduce the risk of arrears and homelessness amongst existing tenants, and prioritise these households in allocation schemes, which further reduces access for most young people.

34. See the latest Government guidance on this here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-and-rented-housing--2/alternative-payment-arrangements?preview=3295352>

A tenancy in social housing could be in any of the following:

- housing that the local authority still owns and manages
- housing managed through an ALMO – stock is still owned by the local authority but run by an Arm's Length Management Organisation
- housing which is part of a 'large-scale voluntary transfer' (LVST) – what was council-owned stock has been transferred to a housing association
- housing which is owned or managed by a housing association, which they have built, bought or leased.

## Allocations schemes

The Localism Act 2011 gave local authorities the power to determine at a local level some of the groups of people who will or will not qualify to be allocated social housing in their areas. Waiting lists can be rationalised based on local policy. For example, those who are working, or actively seeking work or making a 'contribution to the community' could be qualifying groups, whereas those with anti-social behaviour convictions or previous rent arrears could be excluded. Length of local residency is usually a factor as well, with some exceptions.

The Housing Act 1996 sets out which groups must have 'reasonable preference' in allocations schemes, which includes homeless households and people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds. Government allocations guidance indicates that welfare grounds would include providing a secure base from which a care leaver can build a stable life<sup>35</sup>. As corporate parents, housing authorities should work to ensure that where care leavers have access to social housing their route is through the 'welfare' preference group, rather than by becoming homeless or having to make a homelessness application for procedural reasons to gain priority for housing.

It is no longer the case that a social housing tenancy is for life. Housing associations can now issue 'flexible tenancies', which are usually for five years or sometimes three years. After that, a tenancy can be renewed but, again, may be for a fixed period of time.

## Living in the private rented sector

The amount of affordable housing available to people on benefits or low incomes varies across the country, but wherever they live young people are finding it increasingly difficult to find and access affordable accommodation. This is due in part to a combination of rising rents and house prices in most areas and welfare policy changes over time that have limited the amount of money available for housing costs. A freeze on Local Housing Allowance have made all but the cheapest properties out of reach for young people.

## Shared Accommodation Rate

The Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) limits the amount payable to most young people living in the private rented sector to the cost of a room in a shared house. From April 2012, the SAR was extended from the age of 25 up to 35, which means that more people are competing for accommodation in shared housing.

There are some exemptions to the SAR, including for care leavers up to age 22. There is also an exemption for those who have lived in a hostel for homeless people for 12 weeks or more, but this only applies once they reach the age of 25. Care leavers could also be considered within this exemption group if they have lived in supported accommodation after leaving care, but this would only commence when they reached the age of 25.

### Sharing as a housing option for care leavers

Some care leavers will want or need to live in a shared house with other young people, perhaps with some floating support. Given the demands on social housing, and the limited supply in many places, the reality is that many young people, including some care leavers, will need to share at some point. It is therefore important for personal advisers to discuss sharing with care leavers who are not likely to have their own social tenancy as an option.<sup>36</sup>

There are positive aspects of sharing which young people leaving care may not have thought through, including affordability and the more social aspects of sharing.

'Houses in Multiple Occupation' (HMOs) can be viewed as negative and unsuitable, depending on the quality of the actual accommodation, its management and support arrangements. But HMOs can be a good option as well for some young people. An HMO is any property which is occupied by 3 or more people from more than one household, who share kitchen, bathroom or toilet facilities. If the property has 5 tenants forming 2 or more households and is privately owned, it must be licensed by the local authority.<sup>37</sup> Some local authorities have developed local licensing schemes through which a wider category of HMOs require inspection and a license to operate in the area. HMO landlords must ensure that the properties they let meet certain standards for health and safety, and are properly managed, and local authorities have powers to enforce standards, including through criminal prosecutions.

For care leavers living in self-contained private rented housing who are claiming housing benefit or the housing costs element of Universal Credit, their entitlement level will drop to the Shared Accommodation Rate when they are 22 years old and it could be at this point that sharing is considered.

Most sharing is in private rented accommodation but there are examples of shared social housing, where the Shared Accommodation Rate does not apply. Sharing in social housing could be developed by housing associations or a local authority as an option for some care leavers. It can help to address affordability and address isolation as well. Some examples of sharing accommodation for the longer term are outlined below as examples. Crisis has developed a toolkit for this called 'Spare to Share - A guide to letting and supporting shared tenancies in social housing'.<sup>38</sup>

36. Both Ofsted and Department for Education guidance includes considerations for care leavers living in houses of multiple occupation (HMOs). Not all shared housing is required to be licenced as an HMO, but this does vary so it is important to check. The legal minimum requirement for registration is 5 people forming more than 1 household, sharing cooking and bathroom facilities. See: <https://www.gov.uk/private-renting/houses-in-multiple-occupation>

37. Note changes from October 2018. See <https://www.rics.org/uk/news-insight/latest-news/news-opinion/new-hmo-rules-come-into-effect-in-england-on-1-october-20>

38. See: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/resources-for-practitioners/housing-centre-guides/sharers-toolkit/>

## EXAMPLE Hull Shared Accommodation Project

The Shared Accommodation Project within Hull City Council is a partnership approach between Children's Services and the Housing Service to promote a wider choice and broaden the range of available accommodation options to young people who need accommodation because they are not able to stay at home or are leaving care.

The scheme forms part of an integrated pathway for young people to make more planned moves from home or care, avoiding the impact of homelessness. Providing safe, affordable and furnished accommodation in the city's social housing stock, the scheme offers city-wide locations to maximise the potential networks of support for young people in areas of their choice.

Each young person has a support worker and an agreed young person's plan. The scheme is part of a wider City Council young people's accommodation and homeless prevention hub, so young people benefit through access to wider co-located services and partners to make sure any support needs can be provided with a responsive multi-agency response where required.

Alongside the prevention of homelessness the scheme also aims, through maintaining rent level to the local equivalent of the Shared Room Rate, to enable young people to take up employment opportunities restricted by rent levels in other forms of supported accommodation.

Eligibility for the scheme is anyone threatened with homelessness and or in housing need aged 16-25 and currently provides 46 tenancies to young people from a range of backgrounds including young people leaving care, those threatened with homelessness and or other vulnerabilities including those at risk of offending. The scheme will extend further by 2020 to provide accommodation for 59 young tenants across 26 properties.

In each property, tenants each have a bedroom and share a lounge, kitchen and bathroom. Works are carried out prior to letting in accordance with the Crisis best practice guidance on sharing for young people. Properties meet the House of Multiple Occupation standards, although this is not a statutory requirement. In addition to this, in order to make properties more suitable for shared living, carpets are laid throughout and electric showers are installed. Additionally, all properties are fully furnished; with TV, TV licence and unlimited broadband. A weekly service charge of £9 - £15 per week (depending on property) allows the local authority to provide utilities.

The scheme to date has been positive, with reduced tenancy failure and a high level of engagement in education, training and employment, as well as improved levels of confidence and self-esteem.

## EXAMPLE

The London Borough of Wandsworth have a long-standing agreement with 4 local housing associations, Wandle, Family Mosaic, the Peabody Trust and Optivo. Between them they provide approximately 300 one bedroom flats at any one time for single care leavers in Wandsworth. Housing related support is provided through the local authority and young people are advised that they must engage with this. There is no time limit for support and it is flexible, and it is usual for young people to have support over several years. Once a young person is settled and no longer needs support, the tenancy continues but is no longer counted within the agreed number the housing association has committed to provide. An empty flat will then be earmarked as a replacement for the leaving care service and offered to the local authority. The average length of a tenancy varies, but for most it is a long term tenancy, unless they have children or need to move for another reason. Young people whom are not eligible for the housing association accommodation can be referred to the local authority housing through an annual quota of rehousing opportunities made available within the Housing Allocation scheme and the annual lettings plan.

## EXAMPLE

SnugBug Houseshare is run by Mosscafe St Vincent's Housing Association (MSV) in Manchester. It is open to any young person aged 18-35 who has a local connection, access to public funding if needed and is able to live independently. The model is shared social housing. The Scheme does not provide support to young people - if young people need support they need to bring it with them, e.g. floating support or a Personal Adviser. SnugBug Houseshare offers decent shared housing on six-month assured shorthold tenancies, with all young people needing to fill in an application form and then have an interview prior to being accepted. Applicants are then 'matched' to vacancies to ensure sustainability in the properties they are moving to depending on the current household composition. The scheme is now managed by Shared Habitat; an ethical property management company that does not charge any fees to tenants and manages the tenancies and properties using 'intensive housing management' as was previously offered in-house. The rent is slightly higher than the usual Local Housing Allowance rate because it covers things like a weekly health and safety check and the provision of furniture, white goods, carpets and all utility bills and council tax. This Scheme has 9 properties in a range of areas and houses 29 young people at any time.

## EXAMPLE

Commonweal Housing, in partnership with Thames Reach, have been running a 'peer landlord' model for shared housing in London since 2012. The aim of the model is to provide 'supportive' rather than 'supported' housing for those with lower general needs who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless: individuals who do not need the intensive support associated with some hostels or mainstream supported housing, but equally for whom market PRS housing may not be available or yet the right option.

Company and support is provided by other residents rather than just by paid support workers. The 'peer landlord' is one of the tenants who is there to see the house runs smoothly, and has been trained in basic housing management and maintenance, as well as financial awareness and other relevant skills. They also provide informal peer support to their housemates.

Commonweal provides two houses under this model in partnership with Thames Reach, which runs a further three 'Peer Landlord' properties independently. The original supportive shared housing Peer Landlord model has been replicated by others notably Peter Bedford Housing Association in north London and Depaul UK who now have 5 shared houses from Commonweal and have ambitions for more offering move-on from their Nightstop and other services. Interest in Peer Landlord especially for those leaving the care system has come from a number of local authorities and housing providers.

See here for more information: <https://www.commonwealhousing.org.uk/projects/peer-landlord>

Some options for providing support to care leavers as they become ready for more independence include:

**Landlord accreditation** - identifying private sector landlords who are prepared to work with a personal adviser to support care leavers as they take on their own tenancies. This might include assisting with budgeting, having some flexibility in the tenancy agreement, working with the local authority and young person to avoid eviction, and having lower rent deposit requirements. Accreditation could be a local authority-led scheme, or might be run by a housing support provider.

**Working with Housing Authorities** to ensure care leavers are able to access the private rented sector – most local Housing Authorities will have a PRS access scheme (sometimes called a Social Lettings Agency) which is either run in-house or they will commission a provider to run this. Rather than establish a separate ‘leaving care’ scheme, a Housing Authority could – in its corporate parenting role – ensure that care leavers are helped to access suitable, affordable and appropriate accommodation in the PRS via the general scheme. The scheme should offer landlords a range of incentives such as:

- bond and rent deposit schemes
- rent in advance
- rent paid direct to the landlord
- a named contact person and a 24-hour helpline
- floating support if needed
- giving landlords a choice of young people
- putting forward young people who have done some life skills or tenancy training
- providing assistance or advice with tenancy matters (e.g. HMO registering).

### EXAMPLE Doorway – Private Landlords Scheme

Doorway is a youth homelessness charity in Warwickshire that has been developing relationships with private landlords to secure accommodation. Doorway provide a range of both housing management and property management services to the landlords, and support to the tenants. In some cases, the properties are leased by Doorway.

Services offered to landlords include:

- Preparation of license and tenancy agreements
- Inventories
- Risk assessments
- Health and Safety inspections
- Assessment of potential tenants
- Rent collection service
- Monitoring of rent accounts

The scheme has increased the confidence and willingness of private landlords to let to homeless young people and has delivered 64 units so far.

**Dispersed/step-down housing** – helping care leavers move gradually into independent living. Some supported housing providers have dispersed housing attached to their projects, usually as shared tenancies, that allow young people with higher support needs to try out managing their own tenancy within the safety of a housing project they already know. Tenancies can be available for several months or longer until the young person is ready to move out. In these arrangements, it may be that the local authority or the provider organisation has agreed a lease or license with a private landlord and is then sub-letting to young people. This can be a good way to establish longer term arrangements that can be closely managed by the local authority.

Support to use ‘setting up home’ allowance – care leavers are entitled to a one-off grant when they leave care, usually worth around £2,000. Depending on their living situation when they leave care, young people may need some of the money immediately but others are more likely to need it only when they are ready to furnish their own independent housing.

### Top tips

- Housing teams are the experts in working with private landlords and are likely to have a private rented access scheme. Rather than develop a different, smaller scheme for care leavers, draw on Housing expertise and try to work with what is already there. This could include taking properties on lease or license and sub-letting to young people as part of their progression to independence.
- Housing teams also have significant expertise in social housing and allocations - joint working to increase or improve access for care leavers or consider changes in allocations policy is essential.
- Consider the option of shared social housing for some care leavers. It won't be right for everyone, but it's an option that can be positive if managed carefully.
- When assisting care leavers to find suitable accommodation, personal advisers are required to make sure that the choice is affordable within the young person's income. It is important that personal advisers help young people to work out how they will continue to pay for their accommodation if they are living in the private rented sector and require benefit support after their Housing Benefit reduces at age 22 to the level of the Shared Accommodation Rate. Otherwise, there is a real risk that care leavers could lose their housing. Advanced planning is critical and this is now easier, as care leavers can be supported by personal advisers up to the age of 25.
- A local policy decision to exempt care leavers up to the age of 25 from Council Tax is likely to impact positively on the ability of care leavers to manage their finances and sustain their accommodation. If this is not yet policy in your area, consider creating a business case for doing so.
- Some young people can lose items bought using their setting up home allowance if they lose the tenancy where they kept them. For care leavers who experience multiple moves, it may be necessary to provide some facility to store their belongings when they are not needed.



## Annex 1: The legal framework

### Leaving care legislation

Care leavers in England have a range of entitlements set out in legislation to ensure that they are properly housed. In addition, care leavers receive some additional support through the general homelessness legislation. This section sets out the key legislation and its interpretation through case law.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000<sup>39</sup> sets out various duties that local authorities have towards young people in and leaving care, including those relating to accommodation. The duties differ depending on care leaver status (i.e. eligible, qualifying, relevant or former relevant child) but the general requirements are that local authorities should:

- plan with young people and involve them in decisions
- avoid moving young people who are settled
- assess young people's needs and prepare them for any move
- ensure that the accommodation meets any needs relating to impairment
- consider education, training and employment needs
- where practicable, offer a choice of accommodation
- set up a package of support to go with the accommodation
- have a clear financial plan for the accommodation and a contingency plan.

The regulations and guidance also detail how the local authority strategy for care leavers should take into account:

- the diverse accommodation and support needs of care leavers
- the capacity to offer young people a degree of choice in accommodation
- existing and planned provision of suitable, safe and affordable accommodation
- gaps in provision
- priority setting
- the need for contingency arrangements.

The guidance<sup>40</sup> states that it is “good practice for local authorities to commission a range of semi-independent and independent living options with appropriate support, for example supported accommodation schemes, foyers, supported lodgings and access to independent tenancies in the social and private rented sectors with flexible support” (paragraph 7.2). It also advises that “provision and partnerships should be developed in such a way as to permit young people to move to other accommodation in a crisis, including returning to more supportive accommodation if appropriate” (paragraph 7.77).

It also states that “Children's Services will need to work with housing strategy, housing options, housing related support functions and other partners to secure a range of suitable housing and support options for young people leaving care” (paragraph 7.4) and that “Housing Services and Children's Services should adopt a shared strategic approach to the provision of emergency accommodation and housing and support pathways for young people in order to avoid the use of B&B accommodation” (paragraph 7.79).

39. See: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/35/crossed>

40. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-transition-to-adulthood-for-care-leavers>

In January 2015, the Department for Education revised guidance to clarify that B&Bs were unsuitable accommodation for care leavers, and should be used for no more than two working days in an emergency (paragraph 7.12).

Statutory guidance following the Children Act 1989, **Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children**,<sup>41</sup> sets out additional requirements on local authorities regarding looked after children's accommodation. Section 22G of the 1989 Act requires local authorities to:

Take steps that secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority's area which meets the needs of children that the local authority are looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority's area ('the sufficiency duty').

A 2010 judgement from the Court of Appeal clarified the duty on Children's Services authorities to provide accommodation for care leavers aged over 18 ("former relevant children") in certain circumstances. **R (on the application of SO) v Barking and Dagenham**<sup>42</sup> concluded that:

...if the former relevant child is unable to access appropriate accommodation through some other means (such as through a combination of a council tenancy and housing benefit), and the provision of accommodation is necessary for that young person's welfare, then social services will be under a duty to provide or arrange suitable accommodation.

Since 2018, Ofsted's inspections of local authority children's services (ILACS) has used a framework which sets out the characteristics that inspectors will be looking at for care leavers:

- Care leavers have timely, effective Pathway Plans (including transition planning for children in care with learning difficulties and/or disabilities). These plans address all young people's needs.
- Reviews of plans for care leavers are thorough and involve all key people, including the young person, who understands their Pathway Plan and contributes to its development. Plans for their future continue to be appropriate, as well as ambitious.
- Care leavers develop the skills and confidence they need to maximise their chances of successful maturity to adulthood, including parenthood. Care leavers have trusted relationships with carers and staff from the local authority and develop supportive relationships within the community, including with family and friends. They receive the right level of practical, emotional and financial support until they are at least 21 and, when necessary, until they are 25.
- Care leavers move towards independence at a pace that is right for them. Young people are encouraged to remain in care until their 18th birthday when this is in their best interest. They can remain living with their carers beyond their 18th birthday or, if more appropriate, receive ongoing support to live in permanent and affordable accommodation that fully meets their needs.
- Care leavers have good education and employment opportunities, including work experience and apprenticeships. They are encouraged and supported to continue their education and training, including those aged 21 to 24 years. Care leavers are progressing well and achieving their full potential through either being in further and higher education or in their chosen career/occupation.

41. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/securing-sufficient-accommodation-for-looked-after-children>

42. <http://www.maxwellgillott.com/pdf/accommodation-former-relevant-children.pdf>

- Care leavers have accommodation that best meets their needs and helps them to develop their independence skills safely. Risks of tenancy breakdown are identified and addressed; alternative plans are put in place promptly when necessary. HMOs are only used when it is a young person's preferred option and it can demonstrably be shown to be in their best interests.
- Care leavers are provided with all key documents they need to begin their lives as young adults, such as national insurance numbers, birth certificates and passports.

#### **The Children & Social Work Act 2017 includes new and extended duties for looked after children:**

- Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act sets out 'corporate parenting principles' that English local authorities (including county, district, borough and combined authorities) must 'have regard to the need' to take certain actions in their work for children in care and care leavers. These are:
  - a) to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
  - b) to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
  - c) to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
  - d) to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
  - e) to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
  - f.) for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;
  - g) to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.
- Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires each local authority to consult on and publish a local offer for its care leavers. A Local Offer will provide information about services which the local authority offers that may assist care leavers in preparing for adulthood and independent living. This includes services relating to health and well-being; relationships; education and training; employment; accommodation; participation in society; See the link here for Department for Education guidance on development of a Local Offer: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/683703/Local\\_offer\\_guidance\\_final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683703/Local_offer_guidance_final.pdf)
- Extension of local authority support to care leavers to age 25, including provision of personal advisers, assessment of the needs of former relevant children and preparation of a Pathway Plan. This includes corporate parenting support from other parts of local authorities, including Housing Departments. See the link here of Department for Education guidance on supporting care leavers until they are 25: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/683701/Extending\\_Personal\\_Adviser\\_support\\_to\\_all\\_care\\_leavers\\_to\\_age\\_25.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683701/Extending_Personal_Adviser_support_to_all_care_leavers_to_age_25.pdf)

#### **Housing and homelessness legislation**

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has amended Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 and places new legal duties on English councils so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness will have access to meaningful help, irrespective of their priority need status, as long as they are eligible for assistance.

The main measures introduced by the Act are:

- Improved advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness. LAs required to ensure services are designed to meet the needs of particular groups that are at increased risk of becoming homeless, including care leavers
- Extension of the period ‘threatened with homelessness’ from 28 to 56 days
- New duties to ‘prevent’ and ‘relieve’ homelessness for all eligible people, regardless of priority need and intentionality. Both duties last for up to 56 days. The 56 day period can be extended for anyone under the ‘prevention’ duty where homelessness is still a threat and could be extended for anyone who is not ‘Priority Need’ under the ‘relief’ duty.
- Intentionality is assessed if homelessness is not ‘relieved’ within 56 days, which means there is a window of time to assist people who are likely to be found to be intentionally homeless with finding accommodation during the ‘relief’ stage.
- As before, interim temporary accommodation will only be offered to people who are or may be: eligible, homeless and ‘Priority Need’. Temporary Accommodation under the ‘Main duty’ is only offered to people who are eligible, homeless, ‘Priority Need’ and not intentionally homeless
- Assessments and creation of personalised housing plans, setting out the actions or ‘reasonable steps’ housing authorities and individuals will take to secure accommodation
- All care leavers under the age of 21 will be considered as having a local connection with an area if they were looked after, accommodated or fostered there for a continuous period of at least two years, which started at some point before their 16th birthday. If they are looked after by an upper tier authority, (a County Council) they will have a local connection to all the district housing authorities within the two tier structure.
- Encouraging public bodies to work together to prevent and relieve homelessness through a new statutory ‘duty to refer’ placed on many public bodies:
  - o prisons;
  - o youth offender institutions;
  - o secure training centres;
  - o secure colleges;
  - o youth offending teams;
  - o probation services (including community rehabilitation companies);
  - o Jobcentre Plus;
  - o Social service authorities;
  - o emergency departments;
  - o urgent treatment centres; and,
  - o hospitals in their function of providing inpatient care.
  - o The Secretary of State for Defence in relation to members of the regular forces (Royal Navy, Royal Marines, the army and the Royal Air Force)

These public bodies must refer, with consent, someone who is or may be homeless to the housing authority of the person’s choice

The Act is about providing more statutory assistance to more people, including single people who are not assessed as having ‘Priority Need’. Note that care leavers do not have automatic ‘Priority Need’ automatically once they reach the age of 21, but will have priority need if assessed as being vulnerable as a result of having been in care.

The Act brings about a culture change from a perception of systematic 'gatekeeping' whereby people were denied the chance to explain their needs and access services, and there were a significant number of 'intentionally homeless' decisions

The emphasis on earlier intervention and prevention contained in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is not new to local authorities. Having arrangements in place to actively prevent homelessness was recognised best practice before the new legislation, but this is now on a statutory footing. New duties to provide advice, assessment and preparation of a housing plan for all customers at risk of homelessness constitute a significant change, aimed at improving the service and the outcomes particularly for non-priority single homeless applicants, including some care leavers aged 21 and over.

When combined with the duties on public bodies to notify local authorities of a person at risk of homelessness, the legislation provides a renewed impetus to improve pathways for young people who are at risk of homeless on leaving care.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published the **Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities** in February 2018, which sets out local authorities should exercise their homelessness functions under Part 7 of the Housing Act, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Within the Code is more detail on all aspects of the homelessness legislation, including guidance on:

- Eligibility for assistance
- Duty to refer
- Homelessness or threatened with homelessness
- Assessments and personalised housing plans
- Preventing and relieving homelessness
- Priority need groups
- Intentionally homeless decisions
- Local connection and referrals to other local authorities
- Suitability of accommodation

The Code can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities>

Chapter 22 provides guidance on specific duties towards care leavers including:

- Housing authorities, children's services authorities and other relevant departments within local authorities, are advised to develop joint protocols or procedures to ensure that each department plays a full role in providing corporate parenting support to young people leaving care. In two tier areas all housing authorities in the county should be party to these arrangements.
- Advisory services provided by housing authorities' under section 179 must be designed to meet the needs of care leavers in their district
- It is recommended that housing options advice be made available to young people preparing to leave care to help them to make informed choices and avoid becoming homeless. Housing authorities may wish to provide training and information to social workers, Personal Advisers and others who have responsibility to support looked after young people, to ensure that the most up to date and accurate information on housing options is available to them.

- The Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government considers that all attempts should be made by housing authorities to avoid the impact of intentionally homeless decisions in relation to care leavers aged 18–25.
- Categories and definitions of people who have priority need include young people under 21 who were looked after between the ages of 16 and 18; and people aged 21 or more who are vulnerable as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered.
- Housing authorities should take particular care in assessing whether a care leaver aged 21 or over is vulnerable, and should take into account whether, if homeless, they would be at particular risk of exploitation, abuse or involvement in offending behaviour as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered.
- Bed and breakfast accommodation, including hotels and nightly let accommodation with shared facilities, is not considered suitable for care leavers aged under 25 and should only be used in exceptional circumstances and for short periods.

#### Priority Need and being a care leaver

- As before, care leavers aged 18 – 20, including qualifying care leavers, are automatically ‘Priority Need’. Once they are 21, they may be assessed as being in ‘Priority Need’ for another reason, such as being a young parent with a dependent child. But if not, they would need to be assessed to see if they were ‘vulnerable’ as a result of being a care leaver or for any other reason.

#### G v Southwark

In May 2009, the House of Lords made a landmark judgement in the case of R (G) v London Borough of Southwark which affects how local authorities provide accommodation and support for homeless 16- and 17-year-olds. The judgement ruled that:

- the primary duty to a homeless 16- or 17-year old is under the **Children Act 1989** and the ongoing duty to accommodate and support that young person will fall to Children’s Services. This will include the range of support available as a looked after child and a care leaver.
- Children’s Services cannot avoid their duty to accommodate a homeless 16-or 17-year-old under section 20 of the **Children Act 1989** by claiming they were providing assistance under section 17 or by helping the young person to get accommodation through the homelessness legislation.
- a homeless 16- or 17-year-old who applies to a housing authority should be provided with interim accommodation under the homelessness legislation. They should then be referred to Children’s Services for an assessment of their needs under section 17 of the **Children Act 1989**.

## Annex 2 : Questions to ask your teams

The legislation and case law relating to care leavers and their housing can be complicated and affect young people in different ways and at different times. How well do staff in your leaving care and housing teams know the legal context?

In thinking about what housing young people can access, what access do they have to finances? Young people may be entitled to different funding sources, depending on their past experiences and their current situation. Are your teams up to date on the funding sources available? They might include:

- Universal Credit including housing costs
- Housing Benefit
- Entitlements to tax credits
- Local welfare assistance
- Council Tax support schemes or exemption from Council Tax as a care leavers
- Child benefits
- Disability benefits
- Junior ISA
- Setting up home allowance (leaving care grant)
- Financial support as a student
- Funds from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

### Annex 3: Self-assessment: How joined up is your commissioning?

On a scale of 0 – 5 and using the suggested set of statements to guide you, rank where you think your local authority is on joint commissioning for support to young people as they learn to live more independently.

0 No progress at all and it's not looking possible currently

1 No progress and we haven't made a start yet

2 Yes – some early progress, we have agreed in principle but taken no practical steps as yet

3 Yes – we are beginning to work on this now with a clear aim of joint commissioning

4 Yes – it's well underway now

5 Yes – it's well embedded and it's positive

#### Statements relating to joint commissioning that may help your judgment

- There are agreed and shared corporate outcomes for young people who leave care that are used for commissioning of accommodation and support.
- All relevant services and stakeholders have contributed to a detailed needs analysis, which informs the commissioning process.
- Children's services, Housing and Housing Related Support commissioners (and any others) work together on service/pathway modelling, drawing up specifications for services and involvement in the commissioning process.
- Relevant budgets are agreed across the local authority (and other public sector agencies) and either pooled or managed seamlessly across directorates/service areas.
- The local authority consciously avoids 'cliff edges' based on age, e.g. young people having to make a placement move around their 18th birthday.
- There is a shared understanding of what accommodation options are suitable for care leavers and a locally agreed set of quality standards which are used to monitor all commissioned provision.
- Housing officers assist Children's Services in undertaking suitability assessments of accommodation.
- Access into the provision available is managed through a single point/gateway so we know who is in what provision and can better manage risk and meet needs.
- There's a body/group led by Children's Services and Housing Related Support commissioners which meets regularly to review, monitor and agree changes to commissioning of accommodation and support options.
- There is a process for agreeing move on/progression into more independent accommodation (e.g. a panel, an assessment, an accreditation achieved by the young person).
- There is a high expectation of providers of accommodation and support services (for example, having a theory of change, to partner strategically with the local authority, a co-investment approach, good standards of accommodation and support, strengths-based progression model, and youth voice and agency.)
- Funding is realistic for the standards and skills required and partnership working is genuine.



## Annex 4: Summary for Lead Members and Directors of Children's Services

The Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework has been developed by two charities that work with care leavers and homeless young people, Barnardo's and St Basil's. It has been developed collaboratively with a wide range of partners from local authorities and charities who together have pooled their knowledge and ideas about what works well in helping care leavers transition to adulthood.

The Framework is not prescriptive but gives a model – based on a wide range of expertise – for how young people can be supported as they leave care. It has been developed for commissioners and managers of leaving care and housing services, but can also be useful for elected members and senior officials to review existing or plan future provision in their local area. The Framework is flexible, reflecting current innovation and knowledge, and can be adapted to suit local needs and circumstances.

The Framework identifies five stages that young people may experience as they leave care. Although the stages are not always sequential, they have been identified to help local authorities and service providers think through the range of areas in which young people will need housing support as they leave care.

Whilst the five stages give practical ideas for delivering good services, the Framework is based on some underlying principles to give young people the best start possible as they leave care, and the attitude of the corporate parent is key to making the Framework work well. These include helping care leavers to succeed, allowing 'mistakes' without harsh penalties, offering flexible support and providing unconditional relationships.

The Framework also relies on different parts of a local authority working well together. Experience from all those using an accommodation pathway model demonstrates that effective joint working between Housing and Children's Services, as well as with health, education, training and employment agencies, criminal justice partners, the voluntary sector and the private sector, is an essential driver of a successful pathway approach. This is "corporate parenting" in action and will support your work on delivering your 'local offer' to care leavers and meet your sufficiency duties through providing different local options in terms of housing and support for young people leaving care.

## Annex 5: Engaging children and young people in using the framework locally

### Information to share with children's and young people's groups

The Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework has been produced by a group of charities that work with young people, including with care leavers. Although it's aimed at people who work in the local authority, young people have been involved in helping decide what should go in the Framework.

The Framework brings together lots of good ideas from across the country about what can help young people with their housing as they move out of care. It doesn't tell your local authority what to do, but it does give them a lot of suggestions about what works in other areas – and so what might be good for young people where you live.

For example, it gives ideas about what young people need whilst they are still in care and are starting to think about the next step for them. It also looks at what different sorts of housing choices might be available for young people leaving care, and it gives ideas for what support is most helpful if a care leaver finds themselves having a problem with their housing.

We want to know what you think about the Framework and how it could be changed for our area. We need to be upfront and honest with you because, like everywhere in England, there are some limits of the housing choices we have to offer young people. But based on what options are available, we would like to know more about what would work best for you, what we can do to improve things and also any ideas you have for changing things.

### Ideas for engaging children and young people in use of the Framework locally

Share the one-page Framework diagram with existing participation groups, such as the Children in Care Council or care leavers' participation group. Ask children currently in care and those leaving care about:

- In which areas does our local authority do well for care leavers?
- Where are there gaps in what our local authority provides for care leavers?
- Which groups of care leavers in our area do you think would need particular support around housing?
- What do you think about some of the suggested services in the Framework and whether they would work locally? (Examples could include: training flats; mediation; peer landlord or shared housing schemes; Housing First).

Review care leavers' Pathway Plans to assess what is working well and where there are gaps in existing provision. This will assist with engaging those young people who are not involved in participation groups. Ask personal advisers as part of their regular catch-ups to find out what care leavers think about current provision and what could change.

Invite a group of children in care and care leavers to meet with the Lead Member and/or Director of Children's Services. With the Framework in mind, facilitate a guided discussion about what currently works and where there could be improvements in the local housing services for care leavers.

Carry out informal focus groups or discussions with young people about to leave care who are in different placement settings in your area. Do young people leaving foster care, Staying Put, in residential care, Staying Close, or living in 'other arrangements' have different views about what housing support they need? What about those who are or have been in custody, or with physical disabilities or mental health issues?

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## Coronavirus (COVID-19) (/coronavirus)

Latest updates and guidance

1. Home (<https://www.gov.uk/>)
  2. Parenting, childcare and children's services (<https://www.gov.uk/childcare-parenting>)
  3. Safeguarding and social care for children (<https://www.gov.uk/childcare-parenting/safeguarding-and-social-care-for-children>)
  4. Looked-after children and children in care (<https://www.gov.uk/childcare-parenting/looked-after-children-children-in-care>)
  5. Children and young people leaving care (<https://www.gov.uk/childcare-parenting/children-and-young-people-leaving-care>)
  6. Joint housing protocols for care leavers (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers>)
- Department for Education (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>)
  - Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-levelling-up-housing-and-communities>)
  - Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-and-local-government>)

## Guidance

# Joint housing protocols for care leavers: good practice advice

Published 26 October 2020

## Contents

1. Introduction and summary
2. Areas to cover in a joint protocol
3. Summary of recommendations



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# 1. Introduction and summary

## 1.1 About this document

This good practice advice document has been produced by the Homelessness Advice and Support Team (HAST) within the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), and with the Department for Education (DfE), to support the development of joint protocols that can help local authorities to meet the accommodation needs of care leavers.

A joint housing protocol should help children's services and housing authorities deliver the local accommodation offered to care leavers and prevent homelessness. It sets out commitments as corporate parents, and how these will be delivered in practice.

This document is not issued with the status of statutory guidance but provides information and advice which has been drawn from good practice and offers a framework which local authorities and partners can use when developing local arrangements.

## 1.2 Relevant legislation and statutory guidance

This document refers to the following legislation:

- Housing Act 1996 - [Part 6 \(Allocations\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/part/VI) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/part/VI>) and [Part 7 \(Homelessness\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/part/VII) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/part/VII>), as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- [Homelessness \(Priority Need for Accommodation\) \(England\) Order 2002](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/2051/contents/made) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/2051/contents/made>)
- [Children Act 1989](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>)
- [Children \(Leaving Care\) Act 2000](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/35/contents) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/35/contents>)
- [Children and Social Work Act 2017](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/contents) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/contents>) - sections 1, 2 and 3

The following is a list of statutory guidance that this document refers to:

- [Homelessness code of guidance](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities>)
- [Applying corporate parenting principles to looked after children and care leavers](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/applying-corporate-parenting-principles-to-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/applying-corporate-parenting-principles-to-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers>)
- [Children Act 1989: care planning, placement and case review](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-care-planning-placement-and-case-review) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-care-planning-placement-and-case-review>)
- [Children Act 1989: transition to adulthood for care leavers](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-transition-to-adulthood-for-care-leavers) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-transition-to-adulthood-for-care-leavers>)
- [Extending Personal Adviser support for all care leavers to age 25](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/extending-personal-adviser-support-to-age-25) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/extending-personal-adviser-support-to-age-25>)
- [Local offer guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-offer-guidance) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-offer-guidance>)

### Children and Social Work Act 2017

The [Children and Social Work Act 2017 \(CSWA\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/contents) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/contents>) strengthened the role of local authorities as corporate parents and applies to all local authorities as set out in section 1(3) of the Act.

Corporate parenting means local authorities doing the most they can for looked after children and care leavers, to give them the same opportunities as other children and promote the best possible outcomes.

The Act sets out corporate parenting principles to be applied when supporting children in care and care leavers. In carrying out their functions, the local authority must have regard to the following needs:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and care leavers
- to encourage those children and care leavers to express their views, wishes and feelings
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and care leavers
- to help those children and care leavers gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and care leavers
- for those children and care leavers to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- to prepare those children and care leavers for adulthood and independent living

The ~~DfE~~ statutory guidance on applying corporate parenting principles to looked after children and care leavers stresses the importance of joint working in supporting care leavers to navigate their way through the transition to adulthood:

Good preparation, a gradual transition and flexible ongoing support are key to helping care leavers achieve a successful move to independent living. The most effective local authorities establish joint working arrangements between children's services, housing and other specialist services to help care leavers prepare for the realities of living independently, involve them in planning and decisions about their housing options, ensure suitable housing and support is in place and are ready to respond with contingency arrangements if things do go wrong. (Applying corporate parenting principles to looked after children and care leavers - Chapter 2).

The ~~CSWA~~ also extended the provision of Personal Adviser support to care leavers up to the age of 25, whether or not they are in education or training, which the care leaver can choose to take up. Local authorities have a duty to provide care leavers with Personal Adviser support and a pathway plan up to their 21st birthday.

For care leavers aged 21 or over the duty to assess needs, and develop and keep under review a pathway plan – apply only where the young person requests support.

It is therefore important that joint housing protocols cover the support available from a local authority area to care leavers up to the age of 25.

## **The local offer**

Local authorities are required under section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 to publish a local offer, which sets out the services and the support available for care leavers.



The local offer should include information on how care leavers are supported to access suitable accommodation, including the support available from housing services. Joint housing protocols should be aligned with the local offer and can help to ensure that the commitments to support care leavers to access and sustain accommodation are met.

Local authorities should consider providing a link to the joint protocol within the local offer so that care leavers, advocates and other professionals can have access to the document.

## **The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017**

The [Homelessness Reduction Act \(HRA\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/13/contents) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/13/contents>) amended the Housing Act 1996, introducing significant new duties for local housing authorities and partners. Particularly relevant for care leavers are:

- a duty to provide advice and information on homelessness free of charge to all residents, including advice to meet the needs of care leavers
- duties to help prevent and relieve homelessness for those who are eligible irrespective of priority need or intentional homelessness. Provision of a Personalised Housing Plan to applicants threatened with homelessness or actually homeless, which sets out the steps the local authority and applicant will take to prevent or relieve homelessness
- changes in local connection requirements for care leavers which provide more choice to those who have lived out of the placing authority area, or who are looked after by a county council within two-tier areas
- a duty to refer placed on specified public bodies, including children's services, where their service users are homeless or threatened with homelessness

The Homelessness code of guidance was revised in 2018 to reflect changes introduced by the HRA. [Chapter 22 of the Code](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-22-care-leavers) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-22-care-leavers>) focusses specifically on care leavers. The Code outlines the importance of joint working when planning housing options for care leavers and states that:

By working together, housing authorities and children's services authorities can better ensure that as a corporate parent, the appropriate accommodation and support is available to care leavers. (Homelessness code of guidance - Chapter 22: Care leavers).

Furthermore, the guidance also advises that authorities should have in place joint protocols which clearly outline jointly held corporate parenting responsibilities for care leavers. Joint protocols should cover:

- arrangements for achieving planned, supportive transitions to independent living
- identifying homelessness risk early and acting to prevent it
- providing a quick, safe, joined up response for care leavers who do become homeless

Protocols should clearly lay out the processes followed by local authorities that support care leavers to transition to independent living and avoid homelessness. The joint protocol is an opportunity to bring together staff from across services and to build shared responsibility for supporting care leavers through a successful transition to adulthood and independent living.

## **1.3 Developing, embedding and reviewing the protocol**

Development and effective delivery of a joint protocol will be assisted by leaders and senior managers from across housing and children's services leading the activity, overseeing compliance and being involved with ongoing review. Local corporate parenting boards should also have oversight of joint protocols and be involved in the ongoing review of delivery across children's services and housing.

The protocol should be informed by the views and experiences of care leavers who are leaving or have left care, and local authorities should consider working with the [Children in Care Council](https://cicc.org.uk/) (<https://cicc.org.uk/>) or other participatory forums to involve care leavers in developing the protocol and reviewing ways of working.

In order to ensure consistency and embed shared commitments to support care leavers, frontline staff from children's services and housing authorities should be aware of the protocol as a core document directing their ways of working together.

This means introducing the protocol through initial training and briefings, including within induction for new starters, and having arrangements to review how the work is delivered in practice. Too often protocols become historical documents that are far removed from the operation of the service, and so all parties should be prepared to keep the protocol alive.

The protocol document should include a date for implementation and for ongoing review. Carrying out an annual review helps to ensure the protocol is a live and up to date document and enables partners to confirm their shared responsibilities as corporate parents.

When developing the protocol local authorities should also consult with local third sector organisations including providers of accommodation and support and ensure that the protocol is shared with these organisations on completion.

Local authorities must be mindful of their Public Sector Equality Duty when developing the protocol. Involving care leavers, partners and community organisations in development and implementation should help to ensure the final document is fair, inclusive, and reflects the diversity of the community.

## **1.4 The care leavers accommodation and support framework**

Barnardos and St Basils, with support from [MHCLG](#) and [DfE](#), developed an [Accommodation and support framework for care leavers](https://stbasils.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Finalframework2_CareLeavers_A4.pdf) ([https://stbasils.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Finalframework2\\_CareLeavers\\_A4.pdf](https://stbasils.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Finalframework2_CareLeavers_A4.pdf)) which draws on expertise from across local government, the voluntary sector and care leavers, to outline best practice in providing suitable accommodation and support pathways for care leavers. This framework has recently been updated.

It outlines the following 5 stages in supporting care leavers to independent living:

1. Preparing for the reality of housing options
2. Planning care leavers' accommodation and support options with them
3. Reducing housing crisis
4. Accessing housing and support as needed
5. Accessing and successfully managing longer term move-on and support options

To help ensure best practice we recommend that the framework can be used by commissioners and local providers of housing support in consultation with care leavers, to map existing services for care leavers care leavers. The framework can also be used as a point of reference when developing your joint protocol.

This section sets out headings and contents that might be included within a joint protocol and can be used as a practical checklist for local authorities and partners working together to develop a protocol.

The list is not exhaustive, and authorities will wish to add or take away from the suggested headings according to local arrangements.

## **2.1 Introduction**

The introduction sets out the background and context to the document, and the key objectives that it aims to achieve. This could include:

- shared aspirations for care leavers, and how this document links to the local offer as corporate parents
- the process by which the protocol has been developed, who was involved and the input from care leavers
- aims and objectives of the protocol and outcomes that it will be measured against
- arrangements for monitoring and review of the protocol
- reference that the document includes a list of key contacts responsible for delivering the protocol, probably in the form of appendices which should be reviewed annually and updated as personnel change

## **2.2 Transitions planning for care leavers before they leave care**

The following are some areas that local authorities should consider when working on this section of the protocol:

- The intention to ensure well planned moves, which involve care leavers, carers and others with responsibility for providing services and support, as part of the transition from a care placement to living independently.
- Recognition that care leavers have varying needs and levels of maturity and will not all be ready to manage alone at a certain age. Planned moves into independence should take account of individual needs and any support available.
- The role of the Personal Adviser (PA) in the transition process, including care planning and Looked After Child review meetings.
- The role of the Independent Reviewing Officer and LAC reviews in working with the young person to agree accommodation and support pathways when they have left care which may include:
  - the local accommodation options for care leavers, including Staying Put and Staying Close
  - living away at university and needing vacation accommodation
  - living in supported lodgings arrangements
  - living in supported housing
  - sharing a house with other people
  - living in a self-contained social housing or private rented tenancy
  - returning to live with family
- Planning for accommodation when care leavers may move on from Staying Put or Staying Close arrangements into other settled independent accommodation and how these plans are managed.

- Arrangements that are in place to review and plan for housing options for care leavers if they are not going to live in Staying Put or Staying Close arrangements. This could be delivered through a joint/ multi-agency panel which reviews the needs of care leavers as they approach 18, to plan for appropriate post-18 accommodation and support.
- The contribution to joint planning that is made by key services such as Adult Social Care, mental health services, housing related support providers, the Youth Offending Service and the National Probation Service.

## 2.3 Helping care leavers to prepare for independent living

A key principle of corporate parenting is a responsibility to prepare children and care leavers for adulthood and independent living. Care leavers who are well prepared and supported through the transition will have greater resilience and be less likely to become homeless after they leave care. The protocol could include:

- The programmes and support available to care leavers preparing to leave care; including work to build personal and emotional resilience as well as practical knowledge and skills, such as financial confidence, budgeting skills, access to welfare benefits, tenancy rights and responsibilities.
- When and how care leavers benefit from the available training and support; including their access to structured and accredited programmes on pre-tenancy awareness and independent life skills preparation.
- How the local authority assesses a young person's readiness for independent living or need for further support before deciding on appropriate accommodation options for them.
- Any peer mentoring that is available, through which care leavers can learn from each other's experiences and insights.
- The training and support available to foster carers and residential care staff with responsibility for helping care leavers prepare to manage independence.
- The contribution that all providers of accommodation and care are expected to make to help care leavers prepare for independence, and how this is monitored.
- The protocol should outline how care leavers living out of area and those in custody will also be able to access preparation for independence programmes.

## 2.4 Accommodation and support options for care leavers

This section of the protocol will outline accommodation and support options available for care leavers, and how each may be accessed. The options might include:

**Staying Put:** This enables care leavers to remain with their former foster carer when they leave care. Where both the young person and their former carer wish to continue living together, the local authority is under a duty to support this arrangement, including financially. The protocol should outline the assessment process which determines suitability for 'staying put', the support – including financial support – provided to facilitate this, and how the placements are continually reviewed post 18 to ensure planned moves as and when needed.

**Staying Close:** A number of Staying Close pilot schemes are currently operating around England with support from DfE's Innovation Programme, helping care leavers moving on from residential care to continue receiving support from their residential home after they have left care. Where Staying

Close is running in a local authority area the protocol could outline the sort of support care leavers leaving residential care will receive from residential providers, what agreements are in place to plan for and review these arrangements and how care leavers are involved in this process.

**Commissioned supported accommodation:** Many care leavers who do not ‘Stay Put’ or ‘Stay Close’ will need further accommodation and support beyond their 18th birthday, before taking on their own tenancy. The protocol should provide information on supported accommodation available locally, who it is for (age range, levels of support, gender, household types, e.g. single people, couples, young parents and usual lengths of stay). Examples of different types of options include:

- 24 hour staffed short stay units
- 24 hour supported accommodation for care leavers with complex needs
- dispersed accommodation with visiting support
- supported lodgings
- specialist accommodation or reserved spaces for care leavers coming out of custody

**Semi-independent and independent ‘unregulated’ accommodation:** Local authorities may make use of privately provided accommodation for care leavers, such as supported living, which is not regulated by Ofsted. In areas that are using unregulated accommodation, your protocol might outline how services are procured and quality assured, and the way in which care leavers are matched appropriately with regard to their needs and assessment of risk.

**Training/taster flats:** Short term training flats for care leavers can help care leavers to gain a sense of the responsibilities that comes with independent living, and also experience the reality of living alone, which may identify other challenges such as loneliness, isolation and accessing support.

**Living with family:** Some care leavers choose to return to live with immediate or extended family when they leave care. The protocol might describe how the suitability of this option is assessed, as well as the support provided to the young person and their family to build and maintain positive relationships, including access to mediation or family group conferencing services.

**Support for young parents:** Protocols should also include the specialist accommodation available to care leavers with children or who are pregnant, how care leavers are supported to access this accommodation and longer term move on options.

## Suitability of accommodation

Local authorities must ensure that accommodation provided for care leavers is suitable for their needs. The protocol should outline who is responsible for assessing the suitability of accommodation and how this will be undertaken. The relevant guidance regarding suitability is set out below:

- The suitability of accommodation for care leavers is provided in the Children Act 1989: care planning guidance – [volume 2 \(pages 74 – 80\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-care-planning-placement-and-case-review) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-care-planning-placement-and-case-review>) and [volume 3 \(7.12 – 7.18\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-transition-to-adulthood-for-care-leavers) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-transition-to-adulthood-for-care-leavers>).
- Where a young person is homeless, a housing authority must have regard to suitability of accommodation provided for them as set out in the Homelessness code of guidance – [chapter 17](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-17-suitability-of-accommodation) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-17-suitability-of-accommodation>) and in [sections 22.24 to 22.29](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-22-care-leavers) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-22-care-leavers>).

- The use of bed and breakfasts (B&Bs), which is privately owned accommodation in which residents share facilities with other individuals or households, is not suitable accommodation for care leavers. B&Bs should only be used in exceptional circumstances as a last resort. Local areas that use B&Bs should include a statement on how its use will be minimised, and outline how care leavers will be supported and kept safe during a B&B placement.
- Protocols should also set out the process to be followed in order to make an appeal where a care leaver is not satisfied that the accommodation being provided is suitable.

## Referral routes

The protocol should include how access to supported accommodation is managed, the referral routes and arrangements for prioritising and matching care leavers to available vacancies. In developing the protocol local authorities, commissioned providers and key partners may wish to review arrangements to ensure they avoid the duplication of assessment/interviews and make the process as seamless as possible for a young person.

Where referral routes are managed by a single point of contact (SPOC) or gateway, the protocol should make clear where this role sits within the authority and how decisions on the prioritisation of referrals are made.

## 2.5 Joint contingency planning

Most care leavers move on from care into independent accommodation without being put at risk of becoming homeless and are able to sustain their own accommodation with or without support.

However, there will always be a need for contingency planning and a readiness to respond to emergencies, including the loss of accommodation. The protocol should set out how children's services, housing authorities and other key partners work together to minimise and manage crises.

It is particularly important to have strong contingency plans in place for care leavers who are identified as being at risk of homelessness. This would include care leavers with a history of placement breakdown, and/or those with additional needs such as mental health issues, learning disability, attachment disorder, substance misuse and experience of offending behaviour.

Local authorities might oversee placements and contingency planning for care leavers with more complex needs, via a multi-agency forum involving partners with responsibility to help support the health and wellbeing of care leavers. A multi-agency panel or team around the young person, can ensure additional support is made available as and when it is needed, to better manage risk.

Effective contingency planning avoids being reliant upon the use of unsuitable accommodation options such as bed and breakfast or hostel placements in which the most vulnerable care leavers share facilities with other homeless households, without on-site support. The protocol should set out the suitable accommodation options available in an emergency, and how care leavers will be provided with appropriate support to sustain the new placement.

Arrangements to minimise unplanned moves and evictions could also be included in the protocol. This could include a process for identifying and intervening early where care leavers are at risk of losing their placement and/or having separate pre-eviction protocols with providers.

## 2.6 Care leavers leaving custody

Care leavers leaving custody will need additional support to secure suitable accommodation on release. The [Youth Justice Accommodation Pathway \(https://stbasils.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Finalframework3\\_YouthJustice\)](https://stbasils.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Finalframework3_YouthJustice) published by St Basils sets out some of the

particular challenges care leavers with experience of offending might face and options for improving planning and support.

A joint housing protocol should map out how the local housing authorities will work with children's social care, the youth secure estate, and with prisons, the National Probation Service, Community Rehabilitation Companies and the Youth Offending Services; to support the release of children from custody and secure accommodation, to ensure that adequate pre-release planning is in place and that suitable accommodation forms a central part of this.

Areas that local authorities may want to detail in the joint housing protocol include:

- Any agreements that are in place with Young Offender Institutions and prisons in the region/area around joint planning for release.
- How accommodation needs are identified early, and actions taken to ensure care leavers do not leave custody without an accommodation plan in place.
- How the statutory duty to refer (see 2.10 below) operates when a care leaver is threatened with homelessness on release.
- The suitable accommodation options that may be provided for care leavers that are leaving custody.
- Local arrangements that facilitate smoother transitions from custody into accommodation, such as supported housing units that can be 'held' for a young person, or specialist placements.
- Any reciprocal arrangements that are in place with other local authorities to support care leavers for whom living in the parent authority area has been assessed as unsafe.

## **2.7 Care leavers living outside the children's services authority area**

A protocol could outline the particular ways the local authority will accommodate and support care leavers who are living outside the children's services authority area. Whilst this is not an exhaustive list, this could be due to the young person:

- already living in a foster or residential placement out of the area and being settled there
- being assessed as or presenting risk if accommodated in the local area
- requiring university vacation accommodation outside the authority area
- wanting to live nearer to a family member or former carer
- moving away to take up employment or training

The protocol could set out what options may be available for care leavers to settle in another area where they chose to do so. This should include the Personal Adviser contacting the local authority where the young person resides to explore what accommodation options may be available in advance of them leaving care.

Where a young person lives in another area the responsible local authority may wish to contact the authority in which they now reside, with the consent of the young person. This can assist with joint planning for the future accommodation needs of the young person in particular where they may be in need of support from adult social care or mental health services.

Should a young person be found accommodation under any homelessness duty the placing housing authority has a statutory duty ([section 208 of the Housing Act 1996](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/section/208) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/section/208>)) to notify the local housing authority for the area where the young person is placed.

## **2.8 Accommodation options for 21-25 year-old care leavers**

Accommodation options for care leavers aged 21-25 are likely to differ from those for younger care leavers. Where this is the case your protocol should highlight what sort of support and accommodation types older care leavers can access including care leavers who have requested further support aged 21-25.

## **2.9 Move on accommodation**

A joint protocol should set out the types of more settled accommodation available for care leavers, how each is accessed, and the support provided to help a young person settle in and manage their home.

### **Social housing**

Many local housing authorities continue to offer a local authority or registered provider (housing association) allocated tenancy to some, or all care leavers. Where this is the case the protocol might include:

- The process followed between children's services and the housing authority to support care leavers to apply for social housing.
- How allocation scheme residency criteria are applied to care leavers (see below).
- The age when care leavers in care can join the housing register and any specific arrangements that are in place. For example, care leavers may be able to register for social housing before they turn 18, with the option that their applications are not made until they are ready to live independently.
- The level of priority care leavers are awarded in the allocations scheme in order to effectively manage their move into settled housing in a timely manner.
- How the young person's readiness to manage a tenancy is assessed and agreed, including reference to any local tenancy readiness programmes.
- How care leavers are supported to bid for properties (where choice-based lettings applies), and to take up their tenancy once a property is offered to them.
- Access to additional floating support where available. Care leavers are likely to need support to set up and manage in their new home, particularly in the first months.
- How the local authority allocates social housing to care leavers who have moved away e.g. to attend university but wish to return to their home authority.

### **Local connection and residency requirements**

The Homelessness Reduction Act introduced amendments to the way local connection is assessed for care leavers who are homeless.

Care leavers now have a local connection with the children services authority that looked after them, and up to the age of 21 with a local authority area where they have lived for at least 2 years including sometime before their 16th birthday. In two-tier areas care leavers have a local connection with every housing authority in the county council area.

When developing the protocol local authorities might consider how a similar degree of flexibility and choice could be provided within residency criteria for housing authority allocation schemes. This could include providing that looked after care leavers and care leavers:



- are able to register for social housing with a housing authority(ies) of their choice in a two-tier area
- are able to register from out of area placements should they wish to return
- can be registered for social housing in an area where they have been placed and have lived for some time

In two-tier areas where offering choice might lead to disproportionate demand on particular housing authorities, consideration might be given to how to ensure arrangements are fair and equitable. This could include, for example, having reciprocal arrangements whereby authorities cooperate to enable moves between areas for other housing applicants to address any imbalance.

### **Private rented sector accommodation**

In local authority areas where private sector tenancies are offered as settled housing for care leavers the protocol might include:

- Opportunities for care leavers to access rent in advance/ deposit schemes managed by housing authorities or commissioned providers.
- Arrangements for ensuring accommodation is suitable for the young person, as set out in DfE and MHCLG guidance (where placed under homelessness duties).
- How the local authority will mitigate against the impact of a change in benefit entitlement once a young person reaches the age of 22\*.
- How landlords are engaged and supported to offer accommodation to care leavers.
- Training for landlords so that they may better understand the needs of care leavers.
- Tenancy sustainment support provided to care leavers accessing private rented housing.
- Expectations on landlords to update, with the consent of the young person, a named contact or a service where there is a risk of tenancy breakdown including where rent arrears are accumulating or there are concerns around anti-social behaviour.
- How standards of accommodation are quality checked before properties are offered to care leavers and how this is reviewed.
- Support available to care leavers that have sourced their own private rented sector accommodation independent of the local authority.

\*The Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) limits the level of housing costs available to care leavers through housing benefit or universal credit to the cost of a room in a shared house. Care leavers are exempt from SAR until they reach the age of 22. From October 2023 the SAR exemption for care leavers will be extended to 25 years as announced in the Budget of February 2020.

### **Home ownership**

Joining the housing ladder may seem a distant goal for many care leavers. However, housing markets and affordability vary around the country, and the joint protocol should seek to be aspirational and consider all possible options, including working towards buying a home.

The protocol could include reference to current support that is available to first time buyers including younger people such as the Help to Buy and Shared Ownership schemes.

## **2.10 Support to prevent and relieve homelessness**

## Early Intervention tools to prevent homelessness

This section can outline the tools available and interventions that may be put in place to prevent a care leaver from becoming homeless. This could include:

- Provide tenancy sustainment/ floating support services, particularly at the start of a tenancy to help the young person settle in, or to assist through any crises that may put the tenancy at risk.
- Providing the landlord with contact details for the Personal Adviser, with a care leaver's consent, so any issues can be addressed early.
- Setting up Alternative Payment Arrangements (APAs) to enable the housing costs component of Universal Credit to be paid direct to the landlord where appropriate.
- Providing mediation support where a tenancy, placement or return to a family home is at risk of breaking down.
- Budgeting plans to assist with day to day budgeting or where a young person is struggling to manage rent or other costs.
- A placement panel to track and review care leavers placed in supported accommodation, particularly those at high risk of eviction, involving local providers of housing support.
- A tenancy surrender scheme to enable care leavers who might otherwise be evicted, to surrender their tenancy and return to a more supported environment.
- Identified trigger points at which parties to the protocol will notify one another of any risk of homelessness that may arise.

## Joint working to deliver Homelessness Reduction Act duties

Where a care leaver is eligible for assistance and is threatened with homelessness within 56 days or has become homeless, they are entitled to receive support from the local housing authority to either prevent or relieve their homelessness.

The joint protocol should clearly outline how authorities will work together to support care leavers threatened with becoming homeless. It will be useful to refer to [Chapter 22 of the Homelessness code of guidance \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-22-care-leavers\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-22-care-leavers) in drawing up this section of a joint protocol.

The protocol might include:

- How children's services will meet the statutory duty to refer (with consent) care leavers who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The protocol might set out how referrals are made, acknowledged and responded to.
- Arrangements for notifying and involving children's services (with consent) when a care leaver applies to a housing authority for homelessness assistance.
- How Personalised Housing Plans (PHPs) provided for care leavers will be informed by, and inform, the pathway plan, and the role of Personal Advisers in developing a PHP.
- How the PHP is reviewed with the young person with input from both services.
- The steps that will be taken where there is a risk of duties to the young person being limited due to, for example:
  - refusal of a suitable offer of accommodation
  - a decision that the young person is 'intentionally homeless'

- a young person becoming ineligible for assistance due to a change in their immigration status
- the young person's deliberate and unreasonable refusal to co-operate with the steps taken to prevent or relieve homelessness

The protocol should also outline the support available to a care leaver where they are found to be rough sleeping or are at high risk of doing so, either in the home authority area or elsewhere. This will include joint working between the children's services authority, housing authority and local rough sleeping outreach services to ensure that necessary steps are taken to support the young person into suitable and sustainable accommodation with the required level of support.

### **Intentional homelessness**

Although housing authorities have a duty to try and prevent or relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants, a long-term housing duty (the 'main' homelessness duty) is only owed to applicants who have priority need and who have become homeless through no fault of their own and are not considered 'intentionally homeless'.

The Homelessness code of guidance (section 22.17) states that local authorities should do all they can to avoid the impact of intentionally homeless decisions on care leavers; and through joint working between housing and children's services give full consideration to the needs and vulnerabilities of the young person. This would include taking into account the young person's emotional and mental well-being, maturity and general ability to understand the impact of their actions.

The protocol could include arrangements to ensure that negative decisions that will limit the assistance provided to care leavers have more robust scrutiny. This might include, for example, having a requirement for senior level sign off through which the circumstances are reviewed, and corporate parenting responsibilities taken into account.

### **2.11 Dispute resolution**

The protocol could be an opportunity to map out routes of escalation and ways of resolving disputes within the authority should there be any disagreement relating to the support and accommodation that a care leaver is receiving, including where they are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

## **3. Summary of recommendations**

Ensure that both housing and children's services contribute to the development of the joint protocol and that the document clearly lists the senior leaders that will be responsible for its application.

Joint housing protocols should reflect current legislation and statutory guidance covering both children's services and housing.

Involve care leavers in the development of the joint protocol and ensure that they can access this, possibly through a link within the local offer.

Clearly set out how the protocol will be embedded in your practice including how it will form part of your training and induction cycle for staff in housing and children's services.

The protocol should include a date for implementation and for ongoing review.

Robust joint transitions planning arrangements play an important part avoiding homelessness once a young person has left care and you should make clear the commitment across services to plan ahead to meet the accommodation needs of care leavers.

Care leavers who are well prepared and supported through the transition will have greater resilience and be less likely to become homeless after they leave care. Remember to include within the protocol, how care leavers will be prepared for independent living including the programmes of support that are in place.

Not all care leavers will be ready for independent living when leaving care. The protocol should therefore outline all of the accommodation and support options available to these care leavers including how they will be accessed.

The use of bed and breakfast accommodation is not suitable for care leavers. Outline an aspiration to minimise use of this accommodation and how this will be met.

To ensure that contingency planning arrangements are in place, set out how children's services, housing authorities and other key partners will work together to minimise and manage crises, particularly for care leavers that may be at risk of future homelessness.

For care leavers in custody, map out how the local authority will work in partnership with other services to ensure that the availability to suitable accommodation is agreed as part of pre-release planning.

Care leavers living outside of the parent authority area will need support to understand and access the local housing options available to them. The protocol should ensure that the needs of this group are addressed and planned for.

For care leavers that are ready for independent living, provide information on the range of accommodation available such as social housing, private rented accommodation and how children's services and housing will work together to plan seamless transitions into this accommodation.

Using a range of early intervention tools can help prevent homelessness further down the line and protocols should list the interventions that are available.

For care leavers that become homeless or are threatened with homelessness within 56 days explain how children's services and housing will work collaboratively in line with the Homelessness Reduction Act duties.

Where there are any disagreements in the application of the protocol make sure that you have provided clear escalation routes to help resolve these.

Set out how often the joint protocol will be reviewed and who is responsible for overseeing this.

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<b>Contains Confidential or Exempt Information</b>	No
<b>Title</b>	<b>CEX 541: Housing Supply and Accommodation for Care Leavers</b>
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<b>For Consideration By</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date to be Considered</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> June 2021
<b>Implementation Date if Not Called In</b>	24 <sup>th</sup> June 2021
<b>Affected Wards</b>	All
<b>Keywords/Index</b>	Housing, Accommodation, Supply, Care Leavers,

**1. Details of Recommendations**

The Cabinet is asked to **approve** the:

1. Revised Care Leavers pathway into housing which includes the provision of interim accommodation as set out in paragraph 3.5.5.
2. Housing Department to act as the ‘Housing Agent’ on behalf of Children’s Services for the purposes of identifying, sourcing and managing housing allocations for Care Leavers.

3. Proposals for providing accommodation for care leavers to be delivered in 2021/22 (as set at paragraph 3.4.7), and plans for developing a pipeline for care leavers for future years as part of the council house building programme using both existing Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Fund assets.
4. Appropriation of property from the General Fund into the HRA to facilitate the refurbishment using HRA Capital Programme to be let at Council Rents to increase housing supply as outlined in paragraphs 3.4.6 and 3.4.7.
5. Establishment of 2xFTE permanent staff within Housing to assist with immediate and ongoing pressures including the revised pathway, interim and permanent allocations, accommodation set up and income recovery via Housing Benefit and support for Care Leavers.
6. As part of the Council's Corporate Parenting role that we explore options for supporting care leavers to access suitable and flexible home ownership options in the future.
7. Delegate responsibility to the Executive Director of Housing, Planning and Communities, in consultation with the Lead Member for Corporate Strategy, Planning and Regeneration, to finalise the detail and terms of these recommendations; enter into the necessary procurement and legal processes to deliver these proposals; and enter into appropriate consultant appointments to undertake surveys and feasibilities to establish the full scope of works required to deliver the homes for Care Leavers to be funded from the feasibility budget within the approved HRA Business Plan 2021-28.

<b>If the recommendations are adopted, how will residents benefit?</b>	
This report puts forward recommendations which, when combined, enable more housing options for Care Leavers.	July 2021 onwards

## **2. Report Summary**

1. This report sets out the issues the council is facing in accommodating care leavers for whom the council has a Corporate Parenting responsibility.
2. The report sets out the issues faced by Children's Services in preparing and supporting care leavers to move into independent living accommodation whilst carrying a high financial burden and the pressure on the Housing Service in needing to meet the growing demand against limited availability of permanent council housing accommodation
3. The report sets out the work that has been carried out to transition Care Leavers from supported housing into independent living, which to date, has

been fully reliant on permanent social housing. It also takes into account and responds to housing needs and challenges outlined by the Leaving Care service and the council's wider Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

4. In order to address the issues, alleviate the financial pressures and effectively manage the increasing housing demand for Care Leavers - the report sets out a One Hounslow approach, and proposes a way forward which includes;
  - from a Children's Services perspective an improved care leaver pathway that starts with housing care leavers initially being placed into interim accommodation which will enable them to better prepare and successfully manage the transition from semi to independent living accommodation and prevent the chances of them becoming homeless. This approach will also contribute to relieving financial pressures on Children's Services who are currently carrying high cost supported accommodation placements.
  - from a Housing Service perspective, the Housing Service will act as the "housing agent", taking responsibility for the planning, management and allocations of care leavers current and future housing accommodation needs, with Children's Services continuing to provide advice, emotional support and support with education, training and routes into work.
  - the Housing Service will also take proactive steps to enhance the supply it currently has available taking into account general fund and HRA residential accommodation for the next 12 months and will also prepare a future housing programme which will form part of the wider council housing programme to ensure Care Leaver housing demand is continuously met and that supply meets future needs;
  - the report also seeks to grant delegated authority to the Executive Director of Housing Planning and Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Strategy, Planning and Regeneration, as set out in recommendation 7.
- In order to enable the above arrangements, the report seeks approval for the establishment of two resources (2xFTE permanent staff) within the Housing Service that will provide for the smooth transition and management of interim and permanent housing allocations and support for Care Leavers.
- Looking ahead, and in keeping with Council's wider corporate parenting responsibilities the report proposes to explore options for enabling Care Leavers to access shared homeownership. These proposals will be explored and findings will be brought back to Cabinet for consideration and approval.

### **3. Reason for Decision and Options Considered**

#### **3.1 Background**

- 3.1.1 This report embraces the spirit of the council's One Hounslow approach with Children's Services and Housing working in new, improved, and collaborative ways. A cross service review to fully understand the number of Care Leavers requiring independent housing, and the different levels of support, along with the supply options available, has been carried out over the last 12 months and the recommendations arising from that review are contained in this report.
- 3.1.2 The council has a Corporate Parenting responsibility for Looked After Children who are in care up to the age of 18. When Looked After Children turn 18, they become a Care Leaver. Currently, Care Leavers between the age of 18 and 25 are in a range of accommodation options, some of which carry a very high cost to the council while providing a level of support that is no longer required by the young person.
- 3.1.3 Children's Services and Housing have established a joint Move on Panel for Care Leavers who need to transition to independent living. The services have been working together to review housing demand and supply and devise a revised pathway to better meet the housing and support needs of Care Leavers. However, Covid-19 has had a significant impact on the housing supply that is available to single people, including the majority of Care Leavers who require studio or 1 bedroom homes.

#### **3.2 The Housing and Support needs of Care Leavers**

- 3.2.1 Young people leaving care have a variety of needs and each person requires an accommodation and support package to meet their individual needs. Due to the lack of available options, it is often the case that when a young person who has been in care turns 18, they move into semi-independent accommodation because this is the only option available at the time.
- 3.2.2 Semi-independent accommodation provides accommodation and support, typically in shared houses. While there are a range of other accommodation and support options provided to Care Leavers with specific needs, this report is focussed on the need to reduce the reliance on semi-independent accommodation for Care Leavers who no longer require it but are remaining in a placement due to a lack of alternative housing options.
- 3.2.3 While the provision of support to Care Leavers can be combined with specific accommodation that the young person resides in, this does not have to be the case. In addition, the support needs of young people change over time and a more flexible model of support is required.
- 3.2.4 Children's Services and Housing have explored different levels of support needs of Care Leavers over the last 12 months and have broadly categorised them as below:



**a) No support or low support needs:** those who can be supported by their Personal Adviser or access floating support in independent living;

**b) Medium to medium/high support needs:** those needing daily support in an accommodation based setting such as semi-independent or supported housing;

**c) High/very high support needs:** those requiring Residential Placements with intensive support.

This report focusses on Care Leavers who are in category a) above. There are no recommendations in this report regarding young people who need support in categories b) and c) above and will remain in support settings with Children's Services. It is important for Care Leavers with medium to high support needs to continue to receive the levels of support they require. A minority of Care Leavers will fall within the transition process between Children's and Adult services where ongoing high support needs are met into adulthood.

### **3.3 The demands for independent housing from Care Leavers**

3.3.1 Over the last 3 years, there has been a higher number of Looked After Children turning 18 years of age compared to previous years. The council, as Corporate Parent, has a commitment and responsibility to ensure Care Leavers have suitable accommodation but there has been an over-reliance on this being permanent social housing.

3.3.2 To avoid a number of moves between different accommodation, and to prevent Care Leavers becoming homeless, Care Leavers in semi-independent and supported housing have remained in that accommodation until they are offered permanent social housing. The impact of this is young people remaining in placements with levels of support being provided that are not needed and at a higher cost to the council than necessary.

3.3.3 Covid-19 has exacerbated a shortage of supply of permanent social housing as less people have moved over the last 12 months, slowing down the relets of property at the same time significantly more people have become homeless due to the impacts of the pandemic. The result of this is that more Care Leavers are living in supported housing for longer with support they do not need.

3.3.4 Table A below, illustrates the approximate number of Care Leavers (as at March 2021) who require independent accommodation now or at some point during 2021/22.

**Table A**

	<b>Category of Demand</b>	<b>Number</b>
1	Care Leavers who are 18+ and ready to move to independent living now	74

2	Care Leavers who are 18+ who will be ready to move to independent living during 2021/22	50
3	Care Leavers aged 18+ who are not currently in accommodation provided by the Local Authority (e.g. in prison, staying with a partner or family member) and those arrangements will come to an end in 2021/22	10 <i>(estimate)</i>
4	Looked After Children turning 18 in 2021/22 who will be ready to move to independent living	50
5	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children who are 18+ or will turn 18 in 2021/22, receive leave to remain and will be eligible for housing and ready to move to independent living	10 <i>(estimate)</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>194</b>

3.3.5 In 2022/23 (and for each year thereafter), it is estimated that a further 40 Looked After Children will turn 18 and require independent living. In addition, there will be Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children aged 18+ who will become eligible for housing assistance although the actual number is difficult to predict.

### 3.4 Housing Supply for Care Leavers

3.4.1 It is proposed that the Housing Service, in its Housing Agent role, will develop a pipeline for housing for Care Leavers into 2021/22 as well as plans for developing a more sustainable Care Leaver housing programme and integrating it into the council's wider housing development programme going forward. It is intended that the revised delivery model will reduce the council's overall expenditure for Care Leaver accommodation and make a positive difference to their lives. Schemes brought forward under the programme will provide a number of high-quality homes suitable for Care Leavers. They will be designed to provide accommodation that is flexible and includes a mix of accommodation types to support a range of needs and levels of independence.

3.4.2 In 2019/20, 50 Care Leavers were housed into permanent social housing through the Council's usual allocations arrangements. The council's Housing Allocations Policy gives Care Leavers a 'local priority' which gives a high priority for rehousing.

3.4.3 In 2020/21, only 20 Care Leavers have been housed into permanent social housing, due in part to the impact of Covid-19. This has contributed to a backlog of Care Leavers who are ready and waiting to move into independent living (Table A, Row 1, above). However, even if 50 or more Care Leavers had been rehoused into permanent accommodation in 2020/21, there would still be a significant number of Care Leavers being ready to move into independent living in 2021/22 (Table A, Row 2).

3.4.4 To address current and future levels of demand, the One Hounslow approach will be taken forward with Housing Services acting as the Housing Agent for

Children's Services for the purposes of identifying, sourcing and managing housing allocations for Care Leavers.

3.4.5 There is currently an accumulating backlog of Care Leavers needing housing over the next few years. The overall number of Care Leavers requiring a move into independent living demonstrates the need for change ('Do New') to not only increase our housing supply options for Care Leavers, but also to revise and improve the accommodation pathway (see section 3.5 below).

3.4.6 An Asset Review of properties held within the General Fund has identified properties, either currently let on short term tenancies or are vacant, which are suitable for refurbishment and letting to Care Leavers. It is recommended that these properties are appropriated into the HRA so they can be refurbished with HRA capital funds, let at Council rents and accounted for within the 2021 HRA Business Plan and let at Council rents. Initial approval is required to undertake surveys and feasibility studies on each option, to be funded from the feasibility budget within the 2021 HRA Business Plan. Appropriation of these homes will involve the transfer of debt from the General fund into the HRA. The level of this debt will be based upon the existing open market value of these properties. The cost of servicing the transferred debt is then a revenue cost to the HRA. This revenue cost is expected to be covered by the additional rental income received from the tenancies granted.

3.4.7 Table B below sets out a variety of supply options that have been identified for Care Leavers in 2021/22:

**Table B**

	<b>Supply Options 2021/22</b>	<b>Number of units</b>
<b>Permanent Social Housing – long term</b>		
1	Usual allocations of re-lets through the Council's Housing Allocations Policy	52
2	Bulk purchase and new build stock where Care Leavers are given priority	34
	<b>Permanent supply</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Medium Term options</b>		
3	Private Rented Accommodation – this could be studio or one-bedroom accommodation for single Care Leavers, two-bedroom properties for those with children, and two or three bedroom properties suitable for Care Leavers to share	30
	<b>Medium term supply</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Interim Accommodation (IA) – existing stock</b>		
4	Use of some hostels and existing IA units – a combination of shared and self-contained units	30
	<b>TA supply available imminently</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Shared Accommodation - to develop</b>		

5	Following the Asset Review of General Fund residential properties, a number have been identified as suitable to transfer to the Housing Revenue Account	32
	<b>Shared TA supply in the pipeline</b>	<b>32</b>
	<b>TOTAL Supply in 2021/22</b>	<b>178</b>

3.4.8 Table B above contains a number of accommodation options that are permanent, semi-permanent and temporary in nature and which use new properties as shared accommodation. Semi-independent accommodation is generally a house where young people have their own bedroom and share facilities. The interim accommodation options are similar but with a greater degree of independence for the young people as they will not be expected to engage with support they no longer need. Shared accommodation options can reduce social isolation among young people and help with the transition to their own flat where they will be responsible for all utilities and others bills. In addition, support from a Personal Adviser and floating support can move with the young person as they transition to permanent accommodation.

3.4.9 It is anticipated that approximately 50 units of permanent social housing will be available each year for Care Leavers from 2022 onwards. In addition, a number of opportunities have been identified which could provide 20 additional TA homes for Care Leavers in 2022/23. We will also explore all opportunities across our wider programmes with all supply partners, such as Registered Providers and Lampton Development 360, to deliver both new build and acquisitions of existing homes.

### **3.5 Preventing homelessness and promoting positive transitions – an improved pathway for Care Leavers**

3.5.1 All Care Leavers need somewhere safe and suitable to live to help them make a positive transition into adulthood and independence. Good housing underpins success in other areas of life and as part of this process a revised and improved pathway is proposed. A key driver for the proposed revised pathway is to better support Care Leavers and avoid them facing a housing crisis, ensure homelessness is not part of their experience and instead provide them with greater chances of achieving positive outcomes in other areas of their lives alongside housing – for example, in education, training, employment, health and emotional wellbeing.

3.5.2 The current pathway for Care Leavers into independent accommodation is based primarily on the availability of semi-independent or supported housing, followed by permanent housing that becomes available for allocation through the council's Housing Register. Care Leavers are provided with accommodation that is available at the time, rather than the best type of accommodation to suit their needs. This can result in Care Leavers living in supported housing when they no longer need the support.

- 3.5.3 Care Leavers require a stable home and support as they make the transition from care into independent living. For each Care Leaver, this can happen from a different accommodation pathway (e.g. long term fostering arrangements, University accommodation) and at a different age, usually between 18 and 21 years. Some Care Leavers who require more intensive support and assistance with accommodation after the age of 21 are not impacted by the revised pathway as they will continue to receive the levels of support they need.
- 3.5.4 The joint ambition for accommodating Care Leavers based on need, would be for the majority of those aged 18 years with little or no support needs, to move to interim accommodation. This would reduce the flow of new Care Leavers moving into semi-independent accommodation where they do not require the levels of support provided in that type of accommodation.
- 3.5.5 An improved pathway has been designed between Children's Services and Housing which is summarised below:
- i) A joint assessment between Children's Services and Housing will take place when Looked After Children are age 17. The assessment will assess the housing and support needs and indicate the likely and most suitable accommodation option from age 18.
  - ii) For Care Leavers age 18 who are assessed as being ready to live independently, they will move into an interim shared accommodation option (with some limited self-contained options to be allocated based on need). Care Leavers will claim Housing Benefit to partly offset the housing costs.
  - iii) Care Leavers will stay in interim accommodation for an average of 1-2 years (from the age of 18/19 to 20/21 approximately) until they are able to move into longer term permanent accommodation.
  - iv) Some Care Leavers can move into the private rented sector and subject to the ongoing affordability of the accommodation, may not then have the need to move to social housing.
- 3.5.6 For Care Leavers who are 18, and deemed to be suitable for independent living, Housing would source and allocate the most appropriate form of accommodation to meet their needs. The council also needs to ensure that Care Leavers are fully supported during this transition to manage their accommodation and during their time in interim accommodation. Care Leavers will be supported jointly by Children's Services to meet their emotional, educational, training and employment needs, and by Housing to provide appropriate levels of housing support which will be pivotal to ensure Care Leavers get the best start on their journey to independent accommodation.
- 3.5.7 Additional permanent staffing resource of 2xFTE is required to take on the accommodation and housing support function which would also ensure income maximisation by way of Housing Benefit for Care Leaver placements. Care Leavers in interim accommodation would continue to be 'tracked' and

supported by Children's Services and Housing until they are in longer term settled accommodation.

- 3.5.8 Care Leavers turning 18 with higher needs, would be expected to spend less than 18 months in semi-independent or supported housing, before being ready to move into interim or permanent accommodation. All Care Leavers transitioning to independent living will be managed jointly by Children's Services and Housing through the Move on Panel.

### **3.6 Supporting Care Leavers to be the best they can be**

- 3.6.1 As a Corporate Parent, the council wants to be ambitious for its' Care Leavers and provide them with a helping hand so they can be the best they can be and help them deal with the challenges of stepping up into homeownership.
- 3.6.2 It is therefore proposed that as part of the wider housing offer package, the council will explore and consider Homeownership options and opportunities that can be made available for Care Leavers. The new Government Shared Ownership model, for example, allows purchasers to buy with deposits as low as 10% of the open market value with incremental shares purchased from as low as 1% that can be bought as and when purchasers can afford it. These options along with other opportunities will be considered and brought back to Cabinet for consideration and approval.

### **3.7 Wider impacts and implications**

- 3.7.1 The impacts of Covid-19 are far reaching and while the homelessness service is managing to keep the overall number of households in temporary accommodation stable at the current time, we do not know the full impact of homelessness demand that may be held back by, for example, furloughed staff that may result in redundancy and the impact of the end of the eviction ban at the end of May 2021.
- 3.7.2 The measures outlined in this report are based on current numbers and assessments of Looked After Children and Care Leavers. However, there could be an increase of young people approaching to enter care at the age of 16 or 17 if a higher number of family relationships breakdown (which could be compounded by the impacts of Covid-19). Children's Services and Housing will continue to work jointly with this age group to prevent homelessness and prevent children becoming 'Looked After' unnecessarily.
- 3.7.3 The Housing Service will continue to seek to increase its housing stock to meet the wider housing needs in the borough. Additional supply of interim accommodation taken on due to the impact of the pandemic will continue into 2021/22 and beyond to ensure there is sufficient accommodation available.

## **4 Conclusion**

- 4.1 As a Corporate Parent, the council is ambitious and wants to provide the same level of care and support that other young people get from their parents.

The package of measures set out within this report are based principally on the One Hounslow approach and principles of good Corporate Parenting. It seeks out to enhance the overall housing and support offer to Care Leavers and better prepare them for the challenges they will face as they progress into adulthood.

- 4.2 The improved pathway developed jointly between Housing and Children's Services acknowledges the needs of young people Leaving Care and that they are a vulnerable group of young adults who have particular needs in relation to housing, and the support they are likely to require. It also recognises the rising demands on social housing as well as the high financial pressures with Care Leavers living in semi-independent accommodation for longer than they need due to the lack of social housing supply available. Whilst the revised pathway into interim accommodation is likely to add financial pressure on housing, overall this will provide corporate financial efficiencies and better housing and support options for care leavers that will help them reach their potential to become independent, confident adults.
- 4.3 The proposals in this report are not stand-alone but will form part of the council's strategic governance and performance management arrangements for young people and Care Leavers. We will also monitor the effectiveness of the proposals and report measures of success principally through our Corporate Parenting Board and existing directorate performance management frameworks to also ensure decisive actions are taken to address any issues.

## **5. Financial Details**

### **5.1 Financial Impact On The Budget (Mandatory)**

- 5.1.1 There is a high cost to the council of housing Care Leavers in semi-independent accommodation for longer than they need to. There are currently 74 Care Leavers assessed as suitable to move onto independent living and the cost of them remaining in semi-independent accommodation throughout 2021/22 is £1.2m. In addition, if those turning 18 in 2021/22 remain in semi-independent throughout the year, there is an additional estimated cost of £1.5m.
- 5.1.2 A One Hounslow approach has been adopted to seek to reduce overall costs to the council by working collaboratively across Children's Services and Housing. Some of the financial pressure for accommodation will transfer from Children's Services to Housing if the recommendations in this report are approved but the overall cost to the council will reduce. It is estimated that the net additional interim accommodation costs picked up by Housing would be approximately £300k per year. In addition, the procurement, co-ordination of accommodation, allocations and support for Care Leavers requires additional resources of £90k (to cover the cost of 2xFTE staffing resources).
- 5.1.3 Once the backlog of Care Leavers living in semi-independent accommodation have moved into independent living, the current spend will minimise. It is estimated that approximately £1m could be saved by reducing the use of

semi-independent accommodation during 2021/22 on a phased basis. Further cost reductions in the use of semi-independent would then arise in future years as the number of new Care Leavers accessing semi-independent accommodation would reduce as they move to interim accommodation instead, although some spend will continue to be incurred for those with medium to high levels of need.

## **5.2 Comments of the Executive Director, Finance and Resources**

- 5.2.1 This report proposes a revised care leavers pathway into housing. This pathway enables a transition to independent living whilst seeking to reduce the cost of the current semi-independent accommodation arrangements which cost c£315 per week of which c£163 is offset by housing benefits.
- 5.2.2 The significant cost of accommodating care leavers in semi-independent accommodation has contributed to an overspend of £1.4m in 2020/21. This overspend has been reported against the Children's Social Care placements budget. If the options set out in Table B are taken forward they should facilitate care leavers to move from semi-independent accommodation to lower cost council managed accommodation where all or most of the rent is met from housing benefits.
- 5.2.3 The report proposes that Housing Service become the 'housing agent' for care leavers who are deemed by the Move On Panel as having no or low support needs. At that point responsibility for any housing costs that are not met from housing benefits should fall to the general fund housing budget
- 5.2.4 The report highlights that c32 bedspaces could be created through the appropriation of general fund accommodation to the Housing Revenue Account. Appropriate processes will need to be followed to process each appropriation including the valuation of the properties to be appropriated and the confirmation of the condition of each property and any resulting repairs and maintenance costs.
- 5.2.5 The 2021-2028 Council House Building programme approved by Cabinet in April 2020 includes an indicate budgetary allocation for care leavers accommodation. Decisions on the allocation of resources within the 2021-2028 Council House Building programme to actual schemes have been delegated by Cabinet to the Affordable Housing Committee. Approval of detailed proposals on the appropriation of general fund properties to the HRA to be used by care leavers and any resulting costs including the refurbishment of properties, professional fees etc should therefore be sought from the Affordable Housing Committee.
- 5.2.6 The financial implications of the proposal to establish 2 FTE roles within the Housing Service to support the discharge of the Council's housing responsibilities re care leavers will need to be addressed through the MTFs.



## **6. Legal (to be completed in conjunction with the Legal Department)**

### **6.1 Legal Details**

- 6.1.1 Local authorities have a duty under Children Act 1989, as amended by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017, to support young people and promote their welfare when they have ceased to look after them. The plan for each young person is set out in their pathway plan where their goals and aspirations are clearly outlined.
- 6.1.2 Responsibility for young people continues after they leave care at age 18. Since the introduction in April 2018 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, Care Leavers are entitled to support up until the age of 25. This has increased the number of young people entitled to support.
- 6.1.3 The Local Authority is obliged to ensure Care Leavers can access key services, including suitable housing, emotional wellbeing support and support to access education, training and employment.

### **6.2 Comments of Legal Services**

- 6.2.1 Our comments have been incorporated into the Legal Details section above. The Council has responsibilities to safeguard and promote young people who were previously in care up to the age of 25 years old. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 states that a council's corporate parenting principles are to have regard to the need to:
- Act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being of those children and young people;
  - For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
  - To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.
- 6.2.2 Councils are to publish information about services it offers for care leavers as a result of its functions under the Children Act 1989 and other services it offers that may assist in, or preparing for, adulthood and independent living. Those services include accommodation.

## **7. Value for Money**

- 7.1 While the use of interim accommodation options may not be regarded as desirable for Care Leavers, it offers significant value for money advantages over the inappropriate use of semi-independent accommodation for young people who no longer require the support that the council is paying for.
- 7.2 The review of Care Leavers housing and support options has illustrated the most cost-effective way the council can meet its obligations. This involves a change in and improvements to the pathway which promotes value for money solutions and improved outcomes for young people.

## 8. Sustainability Impact Appraisal

- 8.1 The Corporate Parenting responsibilities of the council are based on shared principles and wider goals. In addition, our wider preventative agenda extends to preventing children becoming looked after unnecessarily. We want to give Care Leavers the best start in life with the right levels of support so that they do not become homeless at a later date.
- 8.2 There are no specific adverse environmental impacts identified.

## 9. Risk Management

Risks	Uncontrolled Risk	Controls	Controlled Risk
Failure to manage increased demands on homelessness which has a knock on effect on accommodation available for Care Leavers	High	Homelessness Action Plan and investment in prevention of homelessness	Medium
Failure to manage the spend associated with increased demands for interim accommodation duties to homeless households	High	Mitigation action to increase supply and investment in prevention of homelessness	Medium

## 10. Links to Council Priorities

- 10.1 The London Borough of Hounslow Corporate Plan:

We will work with a wide range of partners to help create a borough where **People live in good homes and pleasant neighbourhoods.**

**This means:** Residents enjoy a good quality of life, living in homes that work for them and in communities where people thrive.

**How we can check we are on track:** i) housing numbers; ii) homelessness rate; iii) satisfaction with local area (and delivery against the Housing Pledge)

## 11. Equalities, Human Rights and Community Cohesion

- 11.1 The Council is required to have due regard to its Equalities Duties and in particular that set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and eliminate any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act, advance equality of opportunity between

persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. It is not considered that anyone with a protected characteristic: Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Pregnancy and maternity; Race; Religion or belief; Sex and Sexual Orientation will be adversely affected by the proposals within this report.

- 11.2 No specific groups have been identified as being disadvantaged by this report. The recommendations in this report are concerned with Care Leavers gaining access to accommodation to suit their needs and in doing so, promoting social inclusion.

**12. Staffing/Workforce and Accommodation implications:**

- 12.1 There are no major workforce and accommodation implications arising from this report.

**13. Property and Assets**

- 13.1 This report considers the future use of land and property held within the HRA and General Fund. Land already held within the HRA will use HRA resources to fund the development of new schemes. Other General Fund assets will be developed within corporate procedures for land and buildings.

**14. Any Other Implications**

-NA-

**15. Consultation**

- 15.1 -NA-

**16. Timetable for Implementation**

- 16.1 Subject to approval, the recommendations would be implemented from June 2021 onwards.

**17. Appendices**

-NA-

**18. Background Information**

All relevant background information has been included in this report.

**REPORT ENDS**

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<b>Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission</b> <b>24<sup>th</sup> February 2022</b> <b>Item 5 – Minutes of the Previous Meeting</b>	Item No <b>5</b>
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**Outline**

The draft minutes of the previous meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021 and 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022 have been delayed and will be provided at the next LiH meeting.

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<b>Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission</b> <b>24<sup>th</sup> February 2022</b> <b>Item 6 – Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2021/22</b>	Item No  <b>6</b>
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## **OUTLINE**

The work programme for the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission 2021-22 is attached. Please note this a working document.

## **ACTION**

The Commission is asked for any comments or amendments on the work programme for the municipal year 2021-2022.

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# Overview & Scrutiny

## Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission: Work Plan June 2021 – April 2022

Each agenda will include an updated version of this Scrutiny Commission work programme

All meeting guests will be virtual until further notice.

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
<p><b>22<sup>nd</sup> June 2021</b></p> <p>Papers deadline: Thurs 8<sup>th</sup> June 2021</p>	<p>Trust and Confidence and Inclusive Policing</p>	<p><b>Metropolitan Police Service</b></p> <p>DCS Marcus Barnett, CE BCU Commander</p> <p>Commander Jane Connors</p> <p><b>Mayor's Office for Police and Crime (MOPAC)</b></p> <p>Natasha Plummer, Head of Engagement</p> <p><b>Independent Officer for</b></p>	<p>This meeting will be a discussion with Metropolitan Police Service (Head Quarters &amp; Borough Commander for Hackney), Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and the Independent Office for Police Conduct about building trust and confidence and inclusive policing. Further questions were sent to the IOPC, MPS and MOPAC for a response in advance of this meeting.</p> <p>This discussion will cover:</p> <p>Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. MPS complaints system</li> <li>2. Culture Change</li> <li>3. Youth Engagement.</li> </ol> <p>Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Representation of Hackney's diverse community in the MPS and MOPAC community engagement structures</li> <li>2. Trust and confidence</li> <li>3. Accessibility and transparency of MPS data.</li> </ol> <p>Metropolitan Police Service</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. MPS Complaint system</li> </ol>

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
		<p><b>Police Conduct (IOPC)</b></p> <p>Sal Naseem, Regional Director London</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Accountability of officers</li> <li>3. No set targets for the successful outcome rates for stop and search</li> <li>4. Reducing disproportionality</li> <li>5. Representation of Hackney's diverse community in the MPS and MOPAC community engagement structures.</li> </ol>
<p><b>14<sup>th</sup> July 2021</b></p> <p>Papers deadline: Mon 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021</p>	Play Infrastructure	David Padfield Interim Director of Housing	<p>Play infrastructure and design principles for play infrastructure.</p> <p>The Council's policy on play infrastructure for estates and provisions across the borough.</p> <p>The design principles for play infrastructure for developments and estate regenerations.</p>
	Play Infrastructure and Planning	Aled Richards Strategic Director Sustainability and Public Realm	<p>Planning - Child Friendly Borough</p> <p>Information about the consultation/feedback and work towards a child friendly borough linked to the Local Plan.</p>

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<p><b>26<sup>th</sup> October 2021</b></p> <p>Papers deadline: Fri 15<sup>th</sup> Oct 2021</p>	<p>Energy Strategy and Energy Systems</p>	<p>Procurement Service Energy and Carbon Management</p> <p>Planning Services</p> <p>Resident Liaison Group</p>	<p>Energy Strategy – overview of the strategy, its objectives and energy systems needed to meet net zero carbon targets.</p> <p>This discussion will cover:</p> <p><b>Planning Team</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information about how the Council’s planning policies support Hackney Council’s commitment to achieve the net zero carbon targets and requirements of COP 26 for all future developments in the borough.</li> <li>2. Information about the planning powers to ensure buildings and developments in the borough are as green as possible in relation to how they are built and that the materials used meet the ambitions of the council in relation to climate change and net zero carbon emissions.</li> <li>3. Information about planning’s role in ensuring developers in the borough are informed and engaged with the Council’s net zero carbon targets.</li> </ol> <p><b>Energy Team</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An overview of the Council’s Energy Strategy</li> <li>2. The Council’s roadmap and planned work to achieve net zero carbon for all council emissions and its properties?</li> <li>3. Information about the new energy systems being considered and the cost implications associated with the new energy technology systems?</li> <li>4. Information about how the Council’s Energy Strategy and objectives align with the Council’s fuel poverty strategy</li> <li>5. Information about planned engagement with the public about the Energy strategy objectives and ambitions to tackle climate change?</li> </ol> <p>A look at buildings and how they are built. A look at the process and how the</p>

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			council can ensure all the buildings built in the borough are environmentally friendly. Look at the carbon footprint from construction and the built environment.
<p><b>8<sup>th</sup> November 2021</b></p> <p>Papers deadline: Wed 27<sup>th</sup> October 2021</p>	Climate Change and Buildings	<p><b>Service Areas</b> Strategic Property</p> <p>Housing Services</p> <p>Inclusive Economy, Corporate Policy and New Homes</p>	<p>Climate change and buildings - council's work to meet its net zero carbon target in relation to building maintenance, developments and retrofit of buildings in the borough to ensure they are as green as possible. This will include looking at housing and corporate council buildings. Looking at the retrofit of buildings, materials used and any proposed energy efficient insulation work towards achieving net zero carbon. To consider if the materials used or available are recyclable and/or carbon neutral.</p> <p>This session will cover</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Council Housing - Retrofitting council homes to achieve net zero carbon target</li> <li>2. Private Sector housing - what the private sector need to do to achieve the net zero carbon target</li> <li>3. New Homes Delivery - how new build home and regeneration developments will achieve / deliver the net zero carbon target</li> <li>4. Council Strategic Property - How the council's maintenance programme aims to retro fit and deliver net zero carbon for all non-residential council property.</li> </ol>

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
<p><b>13<sup>th</sup> December 2021</b></p> <p>Papers deadline: Wed 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021</p>	<p>Electric Charging Infrastructure</p>	<p><b>Service Areas</b> Streetscene</p> <p>Procurement Hackney Light and Power</p>	<p>Development of electric charging infrastructure and the plans to encourage the shift to electric car use in the borough. A review of the electric charging costs and how cheap communal electric charging points can be provided to encourage shift to electric cars.</p> <p>The Commission will look at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of electric charging infrastructure in the borough</li> <li>• The Council's work with the community and partners (e.g. RSLs) to encourage the shift to electric car use in the borough.</li> <li>• Pricing and charging.</li> </ul> <p>Includes looking at the geographical location of electric charging bays and the number of bays across the borough. Work with housing associations and other partners The Council's role in helping to reduce the costs associated with running an electric car and making the shift?</p>
	<p>Climate Change and Buildings</p>	<p><b>Service Areas</b> Strategic Property</p> <p>Housing Services</p> <p>Inclusive Economy, Corporate Policy and New Homes</p>	<p>Climate change and buildings - council's work to meet its net zero carbon target in relation to building maintenance, developments and retrofit of buildings in the borough to ensure they are as green as possible. This will include looking at housing and corporate council buildings. Looking at the retrofit of buildings, materials used and any proposed energy efficient insulation work towards achieving net zero carbon. To consider if the materials used or available are recyclable and/or carbon neutral.</p> <p>This session will cover</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. New Homes Delivery - how new build home and regeneration developments will achieve / deliver the net zero carbon target</li> <li>2. Council Strategic Property - How the council's maintenance programme aims to retro fit and deliver net zero carbon for all non-residential</li> </ol>

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			council property.
<b>17<sup>th</sup> January 2022</b> Papers deadline: Wed 5 <sup>th</sup> January 2022	Fire Safety	Housing Services	Fire safety of buildings - to look at the arrangements in place covering fires safety products fitted; the checks on the products used to ensure they are of the highest fire standard grade available.
	Private Sector Housing – licensing scheme	Inclusive Economy, Corporate Policy and New Homes	Private sector housing licensing scheme - exploring an extension to the scheme across the borough.
<b>24<sup>th</sup> February 2022</b> Papers deadline: Mon 14 <sup>th</sup> February 2022	Housing Support for Young People Leaving Care	Hackney Council Benefits and Housing Needs Service  Hackney Children and Families Services Corporate Parenting  Inclusive	Hackney's Leaving Care Service provides an offer of support to all young people with leaving care rights from the age of 18. One of the most important statutory duties of the Leaving Care Service is the responsibility for ensuring that care leavers have access to suitable accommodation from the age of 18 up until their 21st birthday.  This scrutiny investigation is a joint piece with Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission to look at the housing options for young people leaving care. Includes looking at council's housing strategy and objectives for housing young people leaving care.  The proposed structure of the session is as follows: - Views from young people – focus groups written update - Local Policy & Practice

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		Economy, Corporate Policy and New Homes  Guest London borough of Lambeth  London Borough of Islington	- Comparative models of provision.
<b>7<sup>th</sup> March 2022</b>  Papers deadline: Wed 23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2022	Leisure Services and Facilities	Hackney Council Leisure, Parks and Green Spaces  GLL Services	A review of the council's leisure services offers, costs and the concessions available. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An overview of leisure facilities and services in the borough open to the public and an update on service development plans</li> <li>2. Information about the costs and access to leisure services. There are different prices for different facilities in the borough the commission would like to know why.</li> <li>3. Information about the concessions available, how this is promoted to local residents and how residents find out about the services on offer and concessions available?</li> <li>4. How are the leisure services on offer promoted by GLL and the council and do you both work with public health? Please note <i>the Chair noted in a survey by Kings Park Moving together some residents said they have never been in a leisure centre and couldn't foresee any circumstances where they would attend to exercise.</i></li> </ol>

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	Climate Change Net Zero Carbon Work Streams	<p>Consumption emissions work stream – Lead Council London Borough of Harrow</p> <p>Matthew Adams Motoko Doolan</p> <p>Retrofit work stream - Lead Council London Borough of Enfield and London Borough of Waltham Forest</p> <p>Dominic Millen James McHugh</p>	<p>As part of the scrutiny commission looking at climate change and the councils work to achieve net zero carbon for retrofitting, housing, council assets and energy emission. The Commission has asked to hear about the work of the lead councils for the workstreams by London Councils. The Commission has requested for information about the Consumption emissions and the retrofitting work streams. The following information was requested to aid this discussion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Findings of their work to date and any recommendations (analysis, data any national trends / research to support recommended approach).</li> <li>2. Any suggestions for governance structures to ensure the whole organisation works towards achieving climate change in all areas of service delivery in this sphere?</li> <li>3. A huge challenge is finances. How can the public sector find financial support to achieve net zero carbon for this work?</li> </ol>