

BOLTON COUNCIL
CHILDREN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

**PROTOCOL FOR WORKING WITH FORMER RELEVANT YOUNG
PEOPLE**

**HOUSING ASSISTANCE TO CARE LEAVERS INCLUDING THOSE
WHO MAY PRESENT AS HOMELESS**

BETWEEN

CHILDREN'S SERVICES (LEAVING CARE TEAM)

AND

**COMMUNITY HOUSING SERVICES (HOUSING OPTIONS
HOUSING OPTIONS)**

This protocol sets out Bolton Council's response and approach to Former Relevant young people (18+) who need housing assistance and/or present as homeless.

It clearly outlines the responsibilities and roles of the two key services involved.

MARCH 2018

1. Introduction

This guidance sets out the Local Authority's approach to Former Relevant young people. Former Relevant young people are 18 or over up to the age of 25 and were previously Eligible and Relevant under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. Bolton's Children's Services are responsible for providing advice and support to this group of young people. There are two specific areas where Children's Services and Community Housing Services will share responsibility and work together:

- Where Former Relevant young people are applying for housing priority on the Homes For Bolton Housing Register;
- Where Former Relevant young people are at risk of or experiencing homelessness

This Protocol sets out the role of both Children's Services and Community Housing Services (Housing Options) in respect of the above two areas.

Community Housing Services (Housing Options) will work jointly with Children's Services (Leaving Care Team) with any Former Relevant young person that Bolton Leaving Care Team are providing a Leaving Care Service to. It is acknowledged that Former Relevant young people as a result of earlier disadvantage and the challenges they face may not make decisions in their best interests. Therefore, professionals involved with Former Relevant young people have to persist to engage them to work towards positive outcomes. It may mean this group of young people need more than a single opportunity to achieve a successful transition into housing stability.

2. Local Authority Responsibilities

2.1 Bolton Council recognises that it has a clear responsibility towards Former Relevant young people including those who are homeless and wishes to discharge those responsibilities to the best of its ability. Both Community Housing Services and Children's Services share in both that responsibility and commitment.

The Local Authority has a number of responsibilities under both the Leaving Care Act 2000 and Housing Legislation (including the Housing Act 1996 part VI and VII as amended by the Homelessness Act 2000 and Homeless Reduction Act 2017).

2.2 Under the Leaving Care Act 2000 we should:

- (i) ensure that young people leaving care have access to a range of accommodation and the support and skills to maintain themselves in their accommodation;
- (ii) ensure that there is necessary support offered to care leavers in the event of crisis;
- (iii) have a multi-agency response to meeting the needs of leaving care young people.

2.3 Under the Housing and Homelessness legislation the Local Authority has a duty to prevent homelessness occurring, offer housing options, advice and assistance and where homelessness does occur to assist and relieve homelessness with securing suitable alternative accommodation as appropriate. This may be on a temporary/interim basis and/or with a view to longer term re-housing.

- 2.4 Homelessness assistance is subject to an investigation that there is no other accommodation that the young person might reasonably occupy; to assess their circumstances; to provide assistance in the prevention and relief of homelessness; to provide assistance through a personal housing plan in order to do so; and where relief duties have been exhausted, to assess and offer appropriate assistance under any 'main duty' homelessness requirements (including that the person did not make themselves intentionally homeless; and that the person has a 'local connection').
- 2.5 Even if, for one of the above reasons, the person is not considered a responsibility of Community Housing Services ('the housing authority') for rehousing, they may still be entitled to temporary accommodation pending the investigation and advice and assistance in securing more appropriate alternative accommodation.

3 Bolton's Approach

- 3.1 Bolton Council seeks to apply the above legislation in a way, which recognises that different care leavers have needs requiring individual responses. Both the Leaving Care and Housing Options teams have cross-cutting responsibilities and both teams recognise the council's ongoing responsibilities as corporate parent. There is also recognition that both teams bring particular skills and avenues of assistance to care leavers seeking help.
- 3.2 Where difficulties arise with a planned approach there may be need to offer homelessness assistance. This assistance may involve: interventions to prevent homelessness; provision of emergency/temporary accommodation; referrals to secure supported/resettlement accommodation; and help to find alternative accommodation either through the housing register or with advice and support into the private rented sector. As a first course of action the Local Authority will deal with a young person's immediate need for accommodation.
- 3.3 Where a return to their last accommodation is not possible the Local Authority will help young people find and retain accommodation elsewhere.
- 3.4 Where situations of homelessness occur the Local Authority recognises that this is often accompanied by other problems and also creates many of its own. It is important to recognise and help with these problems, which may be even more serious than that of accommodation.
- 3.5 The authority also recognises that the histories, behaviours and risks associated to some care leavers may severely limit the options and assistance available in particular individual circumstances.

Both teams will work together to explore and open up possible options for assistance even in situations where duties to assist may have been fulfilled and discharged. Provision of assistance where options have been exhausted and duties discharged cannot be guaranteed and will depend on individual circumstances.

- 3.6 Community Housing Services and Children's Services Leaving Care Team work closely together in trying to help young people. However, they do have different powers and duties and often young people may need to engage with both services in order to meet their needs.

4 Role of the Children's Services Department

4.1 The transition from childhood to adulthood and independence is recognised as a lengthy process and one in which a young person requires individual support. It is understood that not in all cases will this transition be smooth.

4.2 Children Services (Leaving Care Team) work with Eligible/Relevant young people in order to try to ensure that they develop the necessary skills to secure and maintain suitable accommodation identified as appropriate to their needs. Assessment and identification of needs in this area is highlighted through the Pathway Plan process, which is regularly reviewed and updated.

Former Relevant young people will have had the opportunity to engage in their Pathway Plan and in making plans for an organised and planned transition into independent living. However, due to the difficulties faced and experienced by Former Relevant young people, homelessness may be an unwanted outcome that will need to be addressed.

4.3 Former Relevant young people will be living in a variety of accommodation situations ranging from ex-foster carers through to their own tenancy. Therefore any accommodation breakdown will require an individual response.

4.4 Despite engagement with the Pathway Plan and continuing work leaving care young people continue to be over-represented in the category of young homeless people.

4.5 In the majority of situations there will be evidence that a Former Relevant young person's accommodation is either fragile or at risk. In these cases work must be undertaken by the Leaving Care worker and Former Relevant Young Person to try and address the presenting issues in order to stabilise the accommodation. A Young Person's Action Meeting will be called in order to clarify roles and actions. It may be appropriate that Housing Options Officers are invited to these meetings along with other agencies working with a Former Relevant young person.

4.6 If a Former Relevant young person is living with family/friends or ex-carers one response may be a referral to the Time 2 Talk project (which is a service managed with Community Housing Services). This is a mediation service for young people at risk of homelessness. The Time 2 Talk service will try to engage with the young person and the other party in order to effect an improvement in their relationship which either may prevent homelessness or may result in a return home. Although a return home in most cases would be the preferred option it is recognised that this may not always be possible. A referral to Time 2 Talk will still be relevant as a positive outcome would be for the parent/carer and young person to maintain and improve their relationship which may result in ongoing support to the young person.

4.7 In cases where the breakdown of accommodation is an emergency situation or where no resolution seems possible then a referral to the Housing Options service should be made for a joint assessment.

5 Role of the 'Housing'/Community Housing Services

Applying For Housing Priority

- 5.1 Assistance with housing and move-on from care will be offered to young people in a planned way so as to avoid the need for emergency assistance or homelessness intervention. The Leaving Care team can make planned referrals for priority re-housing through the Homes for Bolton housing register or by planned placements in one of several young person's resettlement supported housing schemes. Once ready for move-on, again this will be dealt with in a planned way through assessments for priority through the register.
- 5.2 Where assistance is being sought to move-on a care leaver in a planned way, there are formal referral arrangements between the Leaving Care team and the Principal Housing Options Officer for care leavers up to 25 years of age (including those who have remained in higher education). Cases where continued support and involvement is being actively provided by the Leaving Care team and engaged with by the young person a request can be made for the prioritising of that young person's housing application. Such referrals may be made in order to prevent homelessness or enable move on from being looked after. Relevant information from the pathway plans detailing support needs/provision and engagement will be made available as part of this referral. Referrals are considered on the basis of their preparedness for move-on and ability to adequately maintain a tenancy (with support). Ultimately allocation decisions will be made by partner social landlords and will need to be satisfied as to the individual being 'suitable to be a tenant'. (Appendix A).
- 5.3 Care leavers who have secured medium term resettlement accommodation through a supported housing provider may also be referred for assistance with priority move-on through the housing register, again subject to satisfactory engagement and provision of support to enable an appropriate move-on into independent accommodation.

At Risk Of/Experiencing Homelessness

- 5.4 Where difficulties arise and a Former Relevant young person is in a situation of being homeless or threatened with homelessness, Housing Options will work with the Leaving Care team in the first instance to help prevent or delay the loss of any accommodation if possible and appropriate. The Housing Options team will deal specifically with the accommodation needs, providing assistance to the Leaving Care team in addressing the early needs of a young person's homeless presentation; assist with provision of temporary accommodation and to prioritise the young person's housing application for move-on accommodation where appropriate.
- 5.5 From 3rd April 2018, any presentation for homelessness assistance will be considered within the scope of the amended Part vii Housing Act 1996 (amended by Homeless Reduction Act 2017) requiring provision of assistance to prevent homelessness within 56 days of a threat of homelessness; and where homelessness occurs, to provide assistance to relieve homelessness including through the use of a Personal Housing Plan and provision of temporary accommodation assistance as appropriate, for a period of 56 days. (The former 'prevention' duty not being subject to any local connection considerations, though being taken into account when considering 'relief' duty assistance.)

- 5.6 It is noted however that that once prevention and relief duties are exhausted any further homelessness assistance is subject to the usual 'main duty' tests to determine what if any duty is owed to the applicant. This will include consideration of any other accommodation that the young person might reasonably occupy; that the person did not make themselves intentionally homeless; and that the person has a 'local connection'.
- 5.7 The Leaving Care Team will need to contact the Housing Options Team and share information about the placement breakdown of the Former Relevant young person. Housing Options will then offer a homeless interview at the earliest possible opportunity. It is expected that the Leaving Care worker will accompany the Former Relevant young person to this interview in order to ensure all relevant information is shared. If this is not possible then the Leaving Care worker must ensure that this information is shared as soon as possible and preferably before the interview.
- 5.8 This joint assessment process will be triggered by the Leaving Care Team submitting a Leaving Care pro-forma to Housing Options (see Appendix B). Once the pro-forma is received then an interview that is convenient to the young person, Leaving Care Team and Housing Options will need to be arranged as a matter of priority.
- 5.9 Housing Options will provide emergency accommodation for the Former Relevant young person if necessary and appropriate. The decision as to what form this accommodation will take will be made by Housing Options but this will be informed by the information shared at interview. Issues of intentionality, earlier discharge of duty or any other inappropriate behaviour or unacceptable risk associated with the young person's behaviour, lifestyle or lack of engagement may affect whether there is a requirement to do so and/or the nature and suitability of accommodation available.
- Housing Options will work with the Leaving Care Team in the referral to and securing of resettlement accommodation at projects such as Bolton Young Person's Housing Scheme, Sarah Lodge, Fleet House, Muamba House, and Chorley Old Road (see Appendix C). If appropriate Housing Options can support the registration and prioritising of a housing application through Homes for Bolton for move-on accommodation.
- 5.10 The purpose of the joint assessment is to ensure that the needs of Former Relevant young people who are homeless are met and that they receive appropriate priority within the accommodation projects. It is recognised that some young people will present with difficult and chaotic behaviours, and may struggle to be accepted onto any accommodation project. The joint assessment process will highlight these difficulties and help to identify and secure a support package from appropriate agencies in order to help a Former Relevant young person secure and maintain accommodation.
- 5.11 The Leaving Care team and Housing Options recognise that emergency temporary accommodation is not a long term solution and that it can have a negative impact on a young person's wellbeing. Therefore any Former Relevant young person being placed in emergency temporary accommodation for a significant period of time will have an assessment of risk and vulnerability. This will inform the level of contact that is required with this young person and enable welfare monitoring to take place.

- 5.12 If a Former Relevant young person is deemed to have lost accommodation through their own behaviour then Housing Options will consider each case on an individual basis taking into account the information shared by the Leaving Care worker, accommodation history, particular circumstances leading up to the loss of accommodation and bearing in mind Bolton Council's collective corporate parenting responsibility.

Whilst there may be individual cases in which a discharge of duty will be the only appropriate response under housing legislation, before any decision is made by Housing Options to discharge their duty to such Former Relevant young people the Principal Housing Options Officer and Leaving Care Team Manager will discuss the case and look at identifying a way forward.

The options available may include:

- Calling a Young Person's Action Meeting to identify a plan that would ensure continued multi agency involvement including Housing Options;
- That although temporary duty may have been discharged, Housing Options may continue to work with Leaving Care Team to secure long term accommodation for the Former Relevant young person.

These options take into account any significant changes in the young person's circumstances, any associated behaviour or risks and improvement in engagement and acceptance of personal responsibility for their situation.

- 5.12 It is agreed that Housing Options will review the position with individual Former Relevant young people even when they have persistently presented as homeless and have lost accommodation through their own actions or behaviour including where duties to that young person have been discharged. This may not result in the provision of temporary accommodation but will inform an assessment of need. Having completed their assessment of need for this young person Housing Options may ask for a Young Person's Action Meeting to address concerns and consider what if any further assistance may be offered.
- 5.13 This joint process including interviews and assessment of need will help to identify any unmet need of a Former Relevant young person and ensure that appropriate accommodation is identified and secured. It is acknowledged that young people can lose accommodation for a variety of reasons and that it may be necessary for a young person to agree to engage with other services in order to have their accommodation needs met for example, Connexions, 360, Probation, mentoring service etc.
- 5.14 Former Relevant young people can also seek advice and assistance with any housing related problem or difficulty as well as assistance with securing alternative private rented accommodation by accessing Housing Advice Service.

On Release From Custody

- 5.15 Housing Options have a prison release protocol with a number of prisons and therefore Leaving Care Team workers need to inform Housing Options of the name of the young person, the prison they are in and the expected release date at least one month prior to release. Housing Options will then liaise with the prison as appropriate. It is important the young person in prison is referred to the prison's Housing Advice Worker in a timely manner.
- 5.16 It is essential the young person presents to Housing Options on the day of their release in order to secure temporary accommodation. If, because of distance, this is not possible it has been agreed Housing Options will fund one night's emergency accommodation organised and arranged by the Leaving Care Team on the understanding that the Former Relevant young person presents at Housing Options on the following day.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 Assistance with housing and move-on from the looked after system will be offered to Eligible and Relevant young people in a planned way so as to avoid the need for emergency assistance or homelessness intervention. It is however recognised that in some circumstances young people may be threatened with homelessness or become homeless and that this can have a destabilising effect on a young person's life and opportunities. A Former Relevant young person's life experiences will impact upon their positive outcomes and behaviour and this may result in a delay in securing and maintaining accommodation appropriately. There is a commitment from Children Services and Community Housing Services to ensure that Former Relevant young people presenting as homeless are met with a service that will meet their needs, both accommodation and welfare.
- 6.2 It is recognised that a young person's needs cannot be met by the Local Authority in isolation and therefore referrals, liaison and joint working with young people's services in Bolton will be a significant part of the assessment process and service offered.

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Head of Service
Looked After Children/Leaving Care Team
Department of People

Jon Powell
Housing Options and Advice Services Manager
Community Housing Services
Department of Place

INFORMATION FOR HOUSING RE PRIORITY STATUS (PRO FORMA)

To be completed by Leaving Care Team and sent to Julie Waring at Homeless Welfare with Housing Registration Form.

Name:

Dob:

Name of Worker:

Contact number:

1. Application *Is this application for a tenancy part of an agreed move on plan or response to crisis. Please explain?*

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2. Worker analysis of why the young person is currently considered suitable to be given their own tenancy *(include in this, information from the Pathway Plan about accommodation issues and look at independence skills around the area of maintaining a tenancy. Be aware that this is about your professional judgement because you are indicating that this young person is ready for their own tenancy and you have to justify this judgement)*

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3. History of accommodation *(general if the young person is only just leaving residential or foster care, but more specific if they have been in supported accommodation project/scheme and indicate how well they have managed with this).*

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4. List of agencies and informal support systems involved with the young person and the support offered *(include Leaving Care Team support package for at least the initial three months of the tenancy, eg how often you will visit and also give an indication of the level of support likely to be offered by Leaving Care Team after this time. Include family support if this is likely to be offered and how proactive this is likely to be).*

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5. Engagement of young person with Leaving Care and other agencies <i>(eg whether they attend appointments etc)</i>

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6. Areas of concern <i>(indicate in this section any risks you have assessed the young person to pose to professionals and themselves, eg solvent misuse, chaotic lifestyle etc. It might be that you can only comment about the risks they have posed to you and so make this clear).</i>

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7. List of employment/training/education

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8. Financial issues <i>(eg, whether we are financially responsible for the rent payments and indicate for how long that will continue).</i>
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FORMER RELEVANT YOUNG PERSON REFERRAL TO HOUSING OPTIONS

Full Name: _____

NINO: _____

DOB: _____ Age: _____ contact tel no: _____

Current Address: _____

Last 5 Years Addresses:

_____	from _____	to _____
_____	from _____	to _____
_____	from _____	to _____
_____	from _____	to _____
_____	from _____	to _____

Leaving Care Worker

Referred by: _____ date: _____

Reason for Homelessness:

Risk Issues:

Other agencies involved:

Housing Schemes specifically for young people:

BYPHS (Bolton Young Persons Housing Scheme)

- Emergency young persons' accommodation
- Shared and Individual Tenancies with outreach support
- Individual flats with outreach support
- Within households

(Including Lucas Housing, Project Front door , Bridge House, and supported lodgings)

Other schemes that provide accommodation services including young people

- **Sarah Lodge** (Great Places Housing Association)
- **Fleet House** (Adullam – Bridges (females))
- **Chorley Old Road** (Adullam – Bridges (males))
- **Muamba House** (Adullam – Bridges (males))

Most of the projects listed above provide resettlement and move-on support.

Other services and young people processes

- **Time2Talk** – Bolton Mediation Service intervention to prevent homelessness and / or improve familial relationships & support
- **Homes For Bolton** – the local authorities choice based lettings scheme for housing incorporating Bolton Community Homes partnership

- **Bolton at Home - Homeless Prevention Floating Support services** (Bolton Council commissioned services)

Bolton At Home use of equitable tenancies to enable the allocation and sign-up of minors where appropriate

Tenancy Sustainment Officer (Bolton At Home) – interventions to tackle and reduce anti-social behaviour, help sustain tenancies, prevent homelessness in particular working with those with identifiable vulnerabilities