

Accommodation (Children Leaving Care)

SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER

This chapter provides additional guidance on accommodation for young people leaving care. It should be read in conjunction with [Leaving Care and Transition](#), the **Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Protocol**, **Accessing the Supported Lodgings Service and Emergency Accommodation Options – Young People 16 Plus**

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1. Suitability of Accommodation

The identification of suitable accommodation should take place at an early stage in the production of the Pathway Plan.

Forward planning may help to reduce unplanned moves that may result in homelessness. A contingency plan should also be written into the Pathway Plan.

The following should be considered before placing a young person in accommodation in an unregulated setting:

General State of Repair

- How many rooms are there in the property?
- Are there enough facilities being provided for the number of people who will be sharing the house?
- Furnished or unfurnished? If furnished – is the furniture in a good state of repair?
- How is the property heated?
- Access to utilities and services
- Is the house free of damp and/or mould?

Safety

- Does the landlord possess a current gas safety certificate; fire safety for the property?
- Is the accommodation secure – burglar alarms/locks on the windows?
- Have the previous tenants all returned their keys?

Location

- Is the area convenient for access to education, training and employment?
- Proximity to public transport?
- Community safety – is the area safe at night (including information about local crime statistics)?

Support

- How will housing related floating support respond to the child's assessed needs
- Where accommodation is to be provided in a domestic setting (not with former foster carers) how have hosts been selected, assessed and trained. Was the assessment subject to independent scrutiny and if so, by who?
- How are supported lodgings providers supervised? What arrangements are in place for keeping their suitability under review?

Tenancy Status

- Does the young person understand the nature of their rights and responsibilities set out in their tenancy agreement?
- Has the tenancy been independently scrutinised and the young person been provided with independent advice about the implications of their accepting this tenancy?

Young Person's Views

- Does the young person understand how the position of accommodation and related support is intended to respond to their assessed needs as set out in their pathway plan?

2.Armed Forces Leave

Consideration should be given to young people who join the Armed forces and have no base to return to whilst on leave. Assistance will be given to access suitable accommodation and this should be set out in the young person's pathway plan.

3.Accommodation Options

There are a wide variety of accommodation options open to young people within County Durham.

Supported Accommodation

Supported accommodation schemes offer young people the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to live independently within community.

The schemes vary slightly from provider to provider, however their main premise is to provide an accommodation based service that offers in-house support from staff on site.

There are also a number of different schemes across the county that offer specialist supported accommodation to meet the needs of people who have issues in relation to alcohol misuse and mental health or offending behaviour.

In order to access a supported accommodation scheme in the County, a generic Supporting People referral form must be completed and signed by the young person.

Once completed the form needs to be sent with supporting information, where appropriate, to individual supported accommodation providers. (See Appendix 1)

The individual schemes will then assess the application and make arrangements to meet with the young person to assess their suitability. It is the responsibility of the individual schemes to notify the young person and their worker of the outcome of their application.

Supported Lodgings

The Young People's Service operates a supported lodgings scheme, which offers planned and unplanned emergency placements for young people.

Planned Placements – Offer young people the opportunity to live with host families for a period of two years. The scheme offers a supportive environment in

which a young person can develop the skills they need to live independently and allows for a planned transition into independence.

Unplanned Emergency Placements – These placements are offered on a night by night basis to young people in need of emergency accommodation for a maximum period of 3 weeks. During this period, a plan around future accommodation needs is to be made and consideration will be given as to whether it is appropriate to find a long term planned placement within Supported Lodgings for the young person; subject to a matching report being completed.

See **Accessing the Supported Lodgings Service**.

Holistic Temporary Accommodation and Support Service (HTASS)

HTASS provides a holistic temporary accommodation and support service.

The Scheme offers a range of temporary accommodation options to both Housing and Children's Social Care, which include a number of self-contained crash pads.

The aim of the crash pad is to offer young people an alternative to bed and breakfast, whilst waiting for more appropriate and longer term accommodation to become available.

The accommodation is available for a period of 14 weeks, with support being provided by the commissioned voluntary sector provider.

Placements can be extended beyond 14 weeks, when circumstances dictate the need for this.

Independent Tenancies

Where a young person has chosen the option to seek an independent tenancy, a Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Protocol (CLASP) multi-agency planning meeting should be held with the young person to discuss the range of options available to them and the process involved in applying for a tenancy in their own name. See **Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Protocol**.

If an independent tenancy is deemed the most appropriate accommodation to meet the needs of the young person, an application will be made to Durham Key Options.

For those young people under 18 years, an independent tenancy can only be accessed once all parties within the CLASP meeting have agreed this and a Deed of Trust has been signed on behalf of the young person. See Deed of Trust Guidance, Appendix 2.

Within County Durham, there is a choice based lettings scheme in operation, which is run by Durham Key Options. Durham Key Options incorporates registered social landlords and approved private landlords within the scheme. The scheme allows any individual age 16 and over to apply to go onto a housing list.

If an application is accepted by Durham Key Options then the person is informed in writing that their application has been accepted and that they have been placed within a property band.

The property bandings are ranked in order of need and housing priority. All care leavers are given a banding of B, if their application has been accepted. This banding offers care leavers the same priority as someone found to be homeless and in priority need and not intentionally homeless under the Housing Action 1986.

Once a young person has been allocated a banding, they are then entitled to “bid” for properties via Durham Key Options. A young person can bid for a property in a number of ways; such as texting, internet bidding, telephone bidding, office bidding as well as proxy bidding.

Staff working with young people should discuss directly with the young person what assistance they require to successfully bid for properties.

If a bid is successful, the relevant housing provider will contact the young person directly to notify them of their success and to make arrangements for the property to be viewed.

Once a young person has viewed the property and is happy to accept the accommodation, arrangements will be made for the young person to complete the necessary paperwork to commence the tenancy.

At this point, a referral for Floating Support should be made, if not already in place.

Deed of Trust Procedures

In order to support young people to access independent tenancies under the age of 18 years, a deed of trust must be in place. The procedures around the deed of trust explain the process for accessing independent tenancies for young people and also contain copies for the different deeds that need to be signed depending on the housing provider, who is offering the accommodation.

The procedures also explain the support available to young people, who are at risk of eviction from their tenancy and the process involved, to ensure young people get appropriate advice to legal advice.

See Requesting a Deed of Trust: The Process (Appendix 3), Deed where Council is acting as Trustee (Appendix 4), Deed where Stonham acting as Trustee (Appendix 5), Referral to Housing Solutions to Notify of Potential Legal action to End Tenancy (Appendix 6)

4. Floating Support

Due to concerns regarding young people failing in their own independent tenancies and the risks of being found intentionally homeless, most accommodation providers now request that all young people receive additional support to manage their tenancy.

Therefore, when looking to secure independent accommodation for a young person, an application for floating support should be made.

As with supported accommodation, referrals for floating support can be made via the generic Supporting People referral form and sent to the most appropriate floating support provider.

There are various floating support providers across the county, offering varying levels of support, depending on the needs of the individual. (See Appendix 7).

5. Emergency Accommodation

There is a limited amount of emergency accommodation in the County and where a young person is in need of accommodation, the emergency procedures under the CLASP should be followed.

The types of emergency accommodation available are made up of the following:

Direct Access Accommodation

Changing Lives is a direct access hostel for men aged 18 years and over. The accommodation is managed and supported by staff from Tyneside Cyrenians.

Supported Lodgings Unplanned Emergency Placements

These placements are offered on a night by night basis to young people in need of emergency accommodation for a maximum period of 3 weeks. See accommodation options above.

Holistic Temporary Accommodation Support Service (HTASS)

HTASS is a provides temporary accommodation options to service users involved with each of the services.

Crash Pads – These are self-contained properties dispersed around County Durham offering temporary accommodation for young people and adults up to the age of 25 years. The accommodation is available for a maximum of 14 weeks with support available from HTASS staff for the duration of the stay.

During this period of time professionals from HTASS, Housing Solutions Service and the Young People's Service will work with the young person to identify the most appropriate move on accommodation and assist with referrals to the necessary accommodation providers.

Temporary Accommodation - This accommodation is available to the Housing Solutions Service for individuals, who have been accepted as homeless and in priority need.

All referrals for accommodation via HTASS should be done via a Joint Protocol Meeting for those young people who are 16 plus and vulnerable and in need or via a CLASP meeting for young people leaving care or those who have already left care. In extreme emergencies, referrals can be made prior to a meeting being called.

Bed and Breakfast Accommodation

Bed and Breakfast accommodation is not considered suitable for young people and should only be used in emergencies and for the shortest possible time.

If Bed and Breakfast accommodation is required, this will only be approved when all other alternative options have been exhausted. Approval will also need to be sought from a Strategic Manager/Operations Manager. See **Emergency Accommodation Options – Young People 16 Plus**.