



Lancashire Joint Protocol - Joint Working Arrangements for Meeting the Needs of Homeless Young People

Additional Guidance

Social Work Practice

16th March 2018

www.lancashire.gov.uk

As stated in LCC's joint protocol, "It is widely recognised that young people are generally best placed living with their families. Every effort will be made to assist young people to remain in their family home through a range of interventions.

However, it is acknowledged that there are situations where a young person cannot remain at home and alternative accommodation and ongoing support must be provided"

This guidance outlines the action to be taken by social workers in local Children's Social Care Teams when assigned, by MASH, a young person (16/17 year olds) who is homeless or at risk of homelessness. The Joint Protocol for dealing with 16/17 year olds and all associated guidance, which has been agreed between the districts council, LCC and providers, can be accessed at the following link. **This includes guidance in relation to trying to prevent homelessness or reunite young people with their parents, carers or family where it is reasonable to do so.**

Copies have been emailed to Heads of Service and Housing Reference Group for circulation within Teams

http://www.proceduresonline.com/lancashirecsc/p_homeless.html?zoom_high_light=Joint+protocol+lowchart

1. Each area has a nominated single point of contact within children's social care who is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the protocol within the area by:
 - providing advice and guidance to social workers regarding the operation of the protocol;
 - providing a single point of contact for the district councils;
 - ensuring that the joint assessment process is operating effectively (joint assessments will be undertaken with housing on set days of the week, dependent upon local arrangements)
2. The allocated social worker is responsible for arranging a joint assessment appointment slot at the next scheduled meeting.
3. The social worker is responsible for ensuring that all relevant participants have been invited to the meeting (young person, family or advocate, district council, supported housing provider, children and family wellbeing service)
4. The joint assessment must be started within five working days of the placement.

5. The information gathered and the outcome of the assessment meetings must be included within the assessment and plan. The child in need plan or care plan will be shared with all participants who attend the joint assessment panel
 - The young person is entitled to request an advocate from the Children's Society. Permission should be sought from the young person before a referral to the Children's Advocacy Service is made
6. for that young person, with the young person's consent The record of meeting must be logged on case notes as follows:
 - Type of contact " meeting"
 - Reason for contact – "joint homelessness protocol assessment meeting"
7. When determining if a young person is homeless regard should be had to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and associated guidance. This details the duties that a district housing authority is required to consider when determining its statutory responsibilities towards a young person. The social worker should liaise with the district housing authority in determining this. **Where it is safe and reasonable to do so, the main focus should be on working with the family to prevent homelessness or to reunite young people with their parents, carers or family.** Further guidance / direction will be available through local launches/joint meetings
8. The social worker is responsible for reviewing any existing care history and liaising with the team manager of the leaving care service if they believe the young person has any leaving care entitlement. If young person is believed to be "Relevant" then the existing social worker will assess the young person's needs. The available outcomes for these young people differ slightly, in that they can be supported as Relevant Care Leavers or can be accommodated under section 20. Their financial entitlements is the same for either outcome.
9. If a child approaches children's social care and is accommodated they will immediately be considered a looked after child subject to section 20 with their consent.
10. If a child approaches the districts they will be considered to be subject to section 17 of The Children Act 1989 and be found accommodated by the district for the period of the assessment process until a joint conclusion and recommendation is achieved regarding the long term plan of the child/young person. Housing benefit will be claimed by the provider
11. Where the young person has approached LCC, the allocated social worker will send referral form to ART to seek appropriate accommodation. Management approval will also be sought for the cost of the placement for up to ten working days.
 - *If a property is offered and the young person is not already a Child Looked After, the social worker advises CSC Team Manager and seeks approval for payment of rent for up to 10*

days pending the outcome of a Joint Statutory Assessment (JSA) to determine whether the young person becomes Sec 20 or Sec 17 or returns home.

- SW to process CLA and placement status on LCS, which will automatically alert ART that the plan is updated. ART to add the costs onto LCS.
- *Social worker to email ART to confirm that the Team Manager has agreed the placement for up to 10 days whilst JSA is being undertaken.*
- *Where the young person has already been fully assessed as a Child Looked After under Section 20 then the guarantee will be for the period that they remain a Looked After Child*
- *ART to send email to provider confirming rental payments for an initial period of up to 10 days.*
- *Where a payment is required due to financial hardship, the social worker arranges for benefit equivalent funding to be paid if required. Social worker to contact SPOC if advice required. This would include where a young person has been assessed as Section 17 and is experiencing hardship as a result of delays in processing benefit claims or the young person is subject to sanctions.*

12. The outcome of the assessment may fall into the category of continuation of section 20 and as such the young person will remain in the accommodation or alternative accommodation sought if not appropriate. SW to advise ART of the outcome of the assessment. If alternative placement required, SW to send placement request to ART and SW to update placement plan when confirmed. This will automatically alert ART to input costs.

The young person will continue to be a looked after child and continue to have an allocated social worker, looked after reviews, medicals and visits, until their 18th birthday unless the young person decides that they no longer wish to be accommodated under section 20 and the Director of Children's Social Care agrees to this decision. Social worker to make referral for a personal adviser.

13. The outcome of the assessment may fall into the category of section 17 whereby the young person remains in the accommodation or alternative accommodation will be sought if not appropriate. The young person will continue to be section 17 until their 18th birthday, unless he/she has decided that they no longer wish to be a child in need and, following an assessment of

risk, staff have determined that the young person is capable of making this decision.

SW to inform ART of the outcome of the assessment. SW updates YP's status on LCS. If previously section 20, CLA placement plan to be ended by SW which ends costs. If alternative placement required, SW to send placement request to ART and SW to update CIN plan when confirmed.

SW notifies **CSC Case Support** (Finance) of any costs (inc. hardship due to sanctions and delays in benefits). CSC Case Support (Finance) to add costs to LCS

A housing benefit claim should be submitted by the accommodation provider for a claim to start on the day following the outcome of the assessment if not already in place

14. If the outcome of the assessment is that the young person can return home and the young person is not owed a statutory duty, then the young person should be referred to CFW by the SW if additional support is required
15. The outcome of the assessment isn't the end of the process. Individuals have the right to change their minds as to whether or not they wish to be section 20 or section 17, until their 18th birthday. Where the young person is homeless and wishes to be assessed as section 20, then LCC does not have the legal right to refuse this request. If the young person subsequently wants to be assessed or re-assessed as section 20, the County Council must agree to this request. **Irrespective of whether a young person is deemed to be Section 20 or Section 17, providers and statutory agencies will continue to work with the young person with a view to reuniting them with their parents, carers of family where it is safe and reasonable to do so.**
16. If EDT have a request from the districts or indeed directly to them they will follow the same process and the funding will come out of the localities.
17. If a child approaches the districts, but is refusing to allow the involvement of children's social care, accommodation should **not** be refused. A single statutory homelessness assessment should be undertaken at this stage. Once supported accommodation has been secured, the provider can work with the individual to identify their needs, and make a referral to CSC (with the young person's consent) in the future if appropriate. If districts only have B&B accommodation available, the districts will be very clear with the young person that as they cannot guarantee their safety in a B&B, districts will have to refer to CSC so that a director can make the decision to place in B&B if alternative emergency accommodation can't be found
18. The draft Homelessness Reduction Act Code of Guidance for Local Authorities includes the following proposals:

"A young person owed leaving care duties under section 23C of the Children Act 1989 will have a local connection to the area of the children services authority that owes them the duties. If the children services authority is a county council and not a housing authority, the young person will have a local connection with every housing authority district falling within the area of the children services authority.

Where a care leaver is aged under 21 and normally lives in a different area to that of a local authority that owes them leaving care duties, and has done for at least 2 years including some time before they turned 16, the young person will also have a local connection in that area"

The above definition has been used to define local connection within the guidance

Where a looked after child or care leaver up to the age of 21 who does **not** have a local connection with LCC, as defined by the Homelessness Reduction Act, seeks to access supported accommodation in Lancashire, an assessment of their individual circumstances will be made. The application must be shared with ART and agreement reached regarding the most appropriate response. The young person will only be considered eligible in exceptional circumstances. Where this applies, low priority will be awarded.

19. If the protocol is not followed and social workers fail to undertake the joint assessment of need this will be escalated up to a senior manager to address. District to liaise with SPOC in the first instance then if not resolved go to senior manager

Should a young person present at either a CSC building or Local District Council building, irrespective of which agency has responsibility for that young person, the young person should remain on the premises while appropriate interventions are arranged and actioned. There is an expectation that the agency with responsibility will respond swiftly when contacted in these situations. This is to avoid young people being sent between agencies.