

Leeds City Council
Leeds Housing Options & Children and
Families Services



Joint Protocol for addressing the needs of 16
& 17-year-olds who are homeless or are at
risk of being homeless

July 2025

About the Document	
Title	Joint Protocol for addressing the needs of 16- & 17-year-olds who are homeless or are at risk of being homeless
Purpose	The purpose of this guidance is to outline how Leeds Housing Options and Children and Families Services will work together to prevent youth homelessness or support children who find themselves homeless.
Author & Role	Amy Walker (Service Delivery Manager Capacity and Change)
Owner & Role	Ben Finley (Chief Officer Corporate Parenting) Kerrie Murray (Leeds Housing Options)
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This protocol sets out how Children and Families Services (C&F Services) and Leeds Housing Options (LHO) will work together and with partner agencies, when 16 /17-year-old children are homeless or at high risk of becoming homeless.
- 1.2 The purpose of this joint protocol is to ensure that children are appropriately supported and that they and their parents (or those with parental responsibility) get a timely and helpful response from Leeds City Council, which focusses on the well-being and safety of the child and supports them to remain with their family wherever it is safe to do so.
- 1.3 There are specific legal duties to 16/17-year-old children who are, or may be at risk of homelessness, which, because of their age and legal status as children, mean that staff from both C&F Services and LHO need to understand the interplay between two different sets of legal duties, as set out in the Children Act 1989 and the Housing Act 1996.
- 1.4 As well as understanding legal duties and how they work in practice, professionals need to be alert to the breadth of safeguarding issues relating to teenagers and ensure that any concerns are managed promptly and in accordance with statutory procedures, alongside any issue of threat of homelessness.
- 1.5 This joint protocol has been jointly written and agreed by C&F Services (including Early Help Services and Children's Social Work Services) and LHO.

Within C&F Directorate there are several services for children and their families which are directly relevant in terms of this joint protocol, they include:

- Family Help Hubs and Clusters
- Education establishments such as schools and colleges, including Virtual School
- Relationship Matters
- Family Group Conference
- Duty and Advice 'Front Door' Service
- Children Social Work Services (CSWS)
- The Youth Justice Service
- The Care Leavers Service

Within LHO are the following services for households in housing need:

- Statutory homelessness services including prevention and relief of homelessness and access to temporary accommodation for households owed accommodation duties
- Management of the Housing Register
- Assistance to secure accommodation in the private rented sector
- Contact points for housing assistance by members of the public is Merrion House with some [Community hubs](#) also offering support

- 1.6 There are other agencies outside Leeds City Council that are key to the delivery of services to prevent youth homelessness, these include 'Our Way Leeds' (OWL) which is a consortium of 3 agencies in Leeds who together provide a range of services to children and young people aged 16-25 who are or may be at risk of homelessness. OWL are commissioned by Leeds City Council to provide prevention services, as well as accommodation and support services.

2. Our Shared Principles

- 2.1 [Leeds Children and Young People's Plan 2023-2028](#) outlines our shared vision for Leeds to be the best city for children to grow up in and thrive from early years to adulthood. We want Leeds to be an inclusive and welcoming child friendly city where children live in loving and nurturing families. Our methods to achieve this include,
- [Think family, work family](#)
 - [Early Help Approach and Strategy including Right Conversation, Right Time](#)
 - and utilising a [Restorative Practice Approach](#)
- 2.2 We are committed to preventing 16/17-year-old homelessness and together we will work with children and their families to maintain them in a family setting where it is possible and safe to do so.
- 2.3 The safety and welfare of the child remains paramount.
- 2.4 All children aged 16 or 17 will be able to access services, regardless of which service they approach, there is no 'wrong door'. The joint protocol aims to minimise the number of times children are sent between services, by offering the right services as quickly and seamlessly as possible at the right times.
- 2.5 The Leeds City Council joint assessment process will reduce the number of times a child has to 'tell their story'. The joint assessment combines the Child and Family Assessment (CAFA) and the statutory homelessness assessment.
- 2.6 Front line staff will consider the wishes and feelings of the children with whom they are working, and provide children with:
- Clear and accurate information on rights
 - Independent advocacy through the Children's Rights Service if required
 - Good communication between C&F Services and LHO
 - Understanding and sensitivity to their needs
- 2.7 Becoming homeless at a young age could add to or exacerbate the possibility of poor life chances for children as they make the transition to adulthood. In most instances, it is in children's best interests to remain with their parents or wider family network. We will work together wherever possible to support children to remain or return home, or support them to live within their extended family, or with another responsible adult in the child's network.
- 2.8 Statutory guidance will be followed when completing joint assessments for children who present as potentially homeless and in need of accommodation and support services.
- 2.9 Staff will have a good understanding of each other's duties and work collaboratively, sharing information as appropriate and with children's consent, unless there are safeguarding reasons that would necessitate information sharing without consent.
- 2.10 Staff are required to ensure they communicate the outcomes of joint assessments between C&F Services, LHO and other relevant agencies. The levels of assistance a child receives and from whom, will be clearly confirmed to all those directly involved.
- 2.11 The child will be kept informed of, and involved with, all progress and decisions made. As appropriate, their parents and families will also be informed.

- 2.12 Where accommodation is needed, this will be provided based on the assessed needs of the child and in accordance with the relevant statutory duties of the Service which is offering accommodation to the child.
- 2.13 Where accommodation is provided, work will be undertaken with the child to reunify them with their families wherever safe to do so, and in the shortest appropriate timescale.
- 2.14 **Bed & Breakfast accommodation is not suitable for homeless 16 /17-year-olds and will only be used in exceptional circumstances**, which will require authorisation from the Director of Children’s Services. This will be strictly time limited, reviewed on a daily basis and additional support will be provided to the child. Learning will be shared between partners to avoid any future use of B&B provision. Where the child is offered unsupported accommodation, additional support will be provided directly or arranged through the team with responsibility for the child within C&F Services if assessed as required.

3. The aims of the joint working arrangements in this protocol

The aims of the joint protocol are to:

- 3.1 Prevent homelessness occurring wherever possible through early identification and a timely response.
- 3.2 Establish collaborative and effective working between frontline staff through shared understanding of the respective legal duties and how these are met by Leeds City Council; effective information sharing and timely interventions for children.
- 3.3 Stop children needing to have more than one assessment and ‘telling their story’ several times, through establishing a seamless joint assessment process.
- 3.4 Make best use of Early Help and other services including OWL to provide mediation or Family Group Conferencing to reunite families wherever possible and safe to do so.
- 3.5 Provide local information for children, their families and professionals about preventing homelessness; realistic accommodation options that are available; the rights of children who are homeless or threatened with homelessness; other help that is available and how to access that help.
- 3.6 Ensure we undertake accurate and timely joint statutory assessments which meet both the requirements of Sections 17 and 20 of the Children Act 1989 and the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- 3.7 Assist children to make informed decisions by giving them clear information about the outcomes of their assessments and options or resources available and the offer of an independent advocate, through the Children’s Rights Service.
- 3.8 Ensure children have access to suitable short stay/emergency accommodation if required, with continued work with families as appropriate to re-unite children with parents, extended family, another responsible adult in the child’s network.

- 3.9 Establish joint monitoring arrangements in order that information gathered can improve our understanding of any trends, inform service development and commissioning.
- 3.10 Arrange joint briefing and training opportunities to ensure continued understanding of roles and responsibilities and promote collaborative working.
- 3.11 Review the operational application of the joint protocol on an annual basis in order that there is learning from any disputes or difficulties, as well as those cases where joint working has successfully taken place.

4. Statutory Guidance

- 4.1 This joint protocol reflects national legislation and guidance with respect to local authorities' duties. There is more detail on the legal duties in Section 5 below. This Section provides an overview of the statutory guidance, which staff will find helpful to be aware of:

[The Prevention of Homelessness and Provision of Accommodation for 16- and 17-year-old Young People who may be Homeless and/or Require Accommodation](#), published in 2018 jointly by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and the Department for Education (DfE). This reflects all changes to legislation and case law in relation to 16/17-year-olds and how Children's Services and Housing Authorities will work together. It starts with the premise that most children are best living with their families or kin and requires local authorities to help them to achieve this wherever possible.

[Working Together to Safeguard Children](#), published in 2023 by the Department for Education. This sets out how agencies will work together to safeguard children and promote their welfare. This guidance promotes a child-centred and coordinated approach to safeguarding, expecting compliance by local authorities. This is informed by two key principles:

- safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part; and
- a child-centred approach: for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children.

[The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations, Volume 2: care planning, placement, and case review](#), most recently updated in 2021 by the Department for Education. This sets out the legal duties, considerations, and guidance for looked after children, including types of and suitability of placements.

[The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations, The Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers](#), most recently updated in 2022 by the Department for Education. This sets out the legal duties, considerations and guidance for children who are care leavers.

[The Homelessness Code of Guidance for local authorities](#) most recently published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in 2018, recently updated in 2025 by the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG). This sets out the detailed guidance on how housing authorities should exercise their functions in respect of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Chapter 8 of the Code of Guidance concerns Priority Need for accommodation, and this includes 16/17-year-olds. However,

the detail of the way in which homelessness law applies to the 16/17-year-old age group is set out in the DLUHC and DfE joint statutory guidance.

[Leeds Children's Social Work Service Procedures Manual](#) outlines information about the above legislation and guidance in practical terms for Social Workers

5. The Legal Framework

- 5.1 The legal framework for responding to 16/17 years old presenting as homeless is set out in:
- Section 17 and Section 20 of The Children Act 1989
 - Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 and the Homelessness (Priority Needs for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002
- 5.2 **C&F Services duty to accommodate a child in need, under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 takes precedence over duties under the Housing Act 1996 in providing for accommodation for homeless 16/17-year-olds.**
- 5.3 In almost all cases of a 16/17-year-old who presents as homeless, they would need to be assessed under Section 17 to determine if they are a child in need, and under section 20 to determine if they are a child in need of accommodation. This is where the joint assessment process (C&F and LHO) is most helpful to ensure that both services gather information in a timely way to assist in decision making. In almost all instances where homelessness cannot be prevented, the child who is homeless would be offered the option of becoming a child looked after under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. Subject to their wishes and feelings and capacity to make decisions, they would become a child looked after because they are homeless and require accommodation.
- 5.4 There are very few exceptions to a 16/17-year-old not being assessed as a child in need of accommodation and Section 20 not applying. These may be:
- A homeless 16/17-year-old may be assessed as a child in need of accommodation, but they decide they do not wish to become a child looked after. If they are judged by Children Social Work Services to have the capacity to make this decision, then the Section 20 duty to accommodate would not apply. There is additional information on this in Section 6 under the wishes and feelings of the young person.
 - If a 16/17- year- old has already been living independently **successfully** with no one exercising parental responsibility. *There will be very few children in this group.*
 - A 16/17-year-old is homeless, but they are part of a family group which is homeless, so need to be accommodated with their parents/ family.
- 5.5 **Section 20 of the Children Act 1989:**
- The decision to accommodate a child under Section 20 is one that must be based on legal duties, assessment and professional judgment, with the best interests of the child and their welfare driving decision making. Leeds City Council has a responsibility under Section 20(1) of the Children Act 1989 to accommodate a child where-
- There is no one exercising parental responsibility for them.
 - The child is lost or abandoned.
 - The person who did provide the child with accommodation is being prevented from doing so.

Leeds City Council also has a responsibility under Section 20(3) and Section 20(4) of the Children Act 1989 to accommodate a child aged 16 or 17 in other circumstances, as set out below:

- 20 (3) Every local authority shall provide accommodation for any child in need within their area who has reached the age of sixteen and whose welfare the authority consider is likely to be seriously prejudiced if they do not provide him/her with accommodation
- 20 (4) A local authority may provide accommodation for any child within their area (even though a person who has parental responsibility for him/her is able to provide him/her with accommodation) if they consider that to do so would safeguard or promote the child's welfare

Where a child is to become looked after under Section 20, Section 20(6) states that before providing accommodation under this Section, a local authority shall, so far as is reasonably practicable and consistent with the child's welfare:

- ascertain the child's wishes and feelings regarding the provision of accommodation; and
- give due consideration (having regard to his age and understanding) to such wishes and feelings of the child as they have been able to ascertain.

5.6 **Section 17 of the Children Act 1989**

Section 17 assistance can be used in a preventative way, intended to support children in need and families to remain together.

In the case of a homeless 16/17-year-old, the powers of local authorities to provide accommodation under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 **cannot** be used as a substitute for their duty to provide accommodation under Section 20(1) of the Children Act 1989 if they are assessed as being a child in need. Children in this position should become looked after.

Where a child is assessed as being homeless and is a child in need under Section 17 but decides **they do not wish to become looked after under Section 20** and has the capacity to make this decision, they will have a Child in Need plan, which will set out the practical, emotional and any financial support from C&F Services and any other agencies (as agreed). The accommodation would, in these cases, be provided under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, **unless** there were specific circumstances that meant that LHO had no statutory duty to the child.

These situations are covered in detail in the DLUHC and DfE joint statutory guidance, ['Prevention of homelessness and provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation'](#).

5.7 **Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017)**

The homelessness legislation is set out in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. Some of the key duties and powers available to housing authorities which are most relevant to the situation of 16- and 17-year-olds being homeless or threatened with homelessness are:

Section 183: A duty to take a homelessness application for anyone which LHO has reason to believe is or may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days.

Section 184 and Section 175: A duty to make enquiries to satisfy themselves they are **eligible for assistance** (in terms of citizenship and immigration control) and if so, are **they homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days** and what duties may be owed to them.

Section 189A: A duty to assess 3 areas:

- What are the circumstances that have caused their homelessness/risk of homelessness?
- What are their housing needs?
- What, if any, are their other support needs to be addressed to enable them to keep/ obtain and then sustain accommodation?

A duty to provide a Personalised Housing Plan (PHP) which sets out the ‘reasonable steps’ the authority will take to try and prevent or relieve homelessness. The PHP will also include steps the applicant will take and can identify any support from other agencies.

Section 195: The ‘prevention’ duty applies where an applicant is not homeless but is threatened with homelessness within 56 days. The authority must take reasonable steps to help the applicant to secure that accommodation does not cease to be available for the applicant's occupation.

Section 189B: The ‘relief’ duty applies where an applicant is homeless. In these cases, the authority has 56 days to take reasonable steps to help the applicant to secure suitable accommodation becomes available for the applicant's occupation for at least 6 months.

Section 189: Sets out which groups have a ‘**priority need**’ for accommodation if homeless. This includes 16- and 17-year-old homeless applicants, who must be accepted as having a priority need except for an applicant who is:

- a child in need to whom a local authority owes a duty to provide accommodation under section 20 of the Children Act 1989.
- a relevant child. A relevant child is a child who is aged 16 or 17, who has now left care but has spent at least 13 weeks in care while over the age of 14, at least one day of which must have been when s/he was over the age of 16.

Section 188: The provision of interim temporary accommodation. Where a local housing authority have reason to believe that an applicant may be homeless, eligible for assistance and have a priority need, they must ensure that suitable accommodation is available for the applicant's occupation.

Section 213B: Often called ‘**the duty to refer**’, this Section sets out the duty of a specified public body to refer cases to a housing authority if it is considered someone is homeless or threatened with homelessness. This is where a specified public body, which includes all C&F Services, and the Youth Justice Service is required to refer cases where it is considered that a person is homeless or threatened with homelessness.

This can only take place with consent from the person the public body wish to make the referral about and enables the housing authority to then contact the person. The ‘**duty to refer**’ referral **does not diminish C&F Services responsibilities** towards children. It should be used to help strengthen communication between children’s and housing services; it will not be an alternative to carrying out a child in need or early help assessment.

- 5.8 **Case law:** The most significant of piece of case law relating to homeless 16- and 17-year-olds is the judgment in the House of Lords, [\(R \(G\) v Southwark LBC\) May 2009](#), which did not change the law, but clarified the legal position, in terms of where responsibilities lie between C&F Services and Housing Authorities in the case of a homeless 16/17 year old. It also clarified the inter-play between Section 20 and Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

This case law is reflected in the DLUHC and Department for Education joint statutory guidance.

- 5.9 [The Mental Capacity Act \(2005\)](#) is the law which provides protection and support for people who, even on a temporary basis, cannot make decisions for themselves. It lays out how we should assess whether someone can make their own decisions and, if not, how decisions should be made for them. Everyone who is caring for or supporting someone who may lack capacity to make their own decisions must comply with Mental Capacity Act and this should also be borne in mind when considering a young person or their parent's decisions about accommodation.

6. The Joint working arrangements in Leeds

- 6.1 This part of the joint protocol is set out to reflect what happens in Leeds when children are homeless, or at risk of homelessness. It covers the joint assessment process and the legal duties which are owed and local processes. Staff should be mindful that we need to evidence ways in which we have tried to prevent homelessness and ensure that children remain with their families.

All of this Section reflects the legal duties and how they are applied in practice by Leeds City Council services.

- 6.2 **Where either C&F Services or LHO believe a child aged 16/17 is homeless or at high risk of becoming homeless in the next few days or weeks (up to 56 days in total), this should trigger a joint assessment.** The joint assessment brings together the Section 17 Child and Family Assessment and the statutory homelessness assessment. This process will assist in joint decision making, more seamless communication and reduce the number of times the child needs to 'tell their story'.
- 6.3 **Different groups of children are covered by the joint working arrangements.** Some 16/17-year-olds will already be known to C&F Services and may already have an open case as a child in need for a different reason. They may be getting support through Early Help Services, have a Child in Need Plan already or have a Child Protection Plan. The fact that a 16- or 17-year-old is already supported or receiving services through C&F Services does not alter the legal duties toward them if they are or may be at risk of homelessness. This joint protocol still applies to these children and a joint assessment should be undertaken.

Other 16/17-year-olds may not be known to any service and could present to or be referred to either C&F Services or LHO. This joint protocol still applies to these children and a joint assessment should be undertaken.

- 6.4 **There are some groups of children aged 16/17 whose circumstances mean that additional considerations need to be considered** if they are homeless or at risk of homelessness. These include:
- 6.4.1 **Young parents:** All 16- and 17-year-olds are children until they are aged 18 years, including those who already have children of their own. The statutory duties and the joint assessment process will therefore apply to young parents aged 16/17. If a 16/17-year-girl is pregnant or a young parent has a child or children of their own in their care, C&F Services' duties will be determined towards the young parent as a child in their own right and their children individually.
- 6.4.2 **16/17-year-olds in relationships with older partners:** If a child aged 16/17 is in a relationship with an older person, who is aged 18 or over, any assessment will take into account the nature of that relationship.

6.4.3 **16 /17-year-olds in custody:** The Youth Justice Service oversee children subject to remand. The provisions of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 ensure all remanded children aged under 18 also become Children Looked After. The legal remand status, when bail is refused by the criminal court, can either be in the community (Remand to the Local Authority or RLAA) or in custody (Remand to Youth Detention Accommodation or YDA). Applications can also be made to change the remand from a custodial setting to a remand in a community placement at relatively short notice, with robust multi-agency planning and an agreed application in court via the defence solicitor.

A remand to local authority accommodation is available for all children under 18 years of age. Local authorities have a legal duty under [Section 21 of the Children Act 1989](#) to provide accommodation for all children remanded to local authority non-secure accommodation. C&F Services' will decide what the most appropriate placement will be, but the court can specify an address where they cannot be placed. Local authorities can include placements within foster care or a children's home or to family or friends, if appropriate, following checks.

If the court is considering a remand to local authority non-secure accommodation, it is required to consult with the local authority about availability and suitability, although this could be on a next day/same day basis if the child is in police custody. In all of these cases, the responsibility for finding appropriate accommodation is with C&F Services', as this is a placement for a child looked after.

In terms of custodial sentences, the Youth Justice Service will have worked on resettlement planning with the child and their family from the start of the sentence. Planning will include guidance from [Supporting Children on their Journey: Constructive Resettlement Guidance within South and West Yorkshire Resettlement Consortium \(March 2022\)](#). This includes good practice guidance of **identifying accommodation 6 weeks prior to release**. Where a child aged 16/17 is in custody, is not already looked after or is not a 'relevant child' and may be homeless on release because they have no accommodation to return to, they will require a child in need assessment before they leave custody. Resettlement planning is key to ensure better outcomes for this vulnerable group of children, ensuring they get the right support to engage in positive progress rather than reoffending behaviours.

If the child is already open to a Children's Social Work Team, then the Youth Justice Service will refer to the Area Team directly for an assessment. If they do not, then they will refer to the Duty and Advice team.

As outlined in Point 5.7, there is a 'duty to refer' (Section 213B of the Housing Act 1996) placed on some specified public bodies to make a referral, with consent to the housing authority, where someone is or may be homeless within 56 days. This applies to the situation of a child in custody. With the child's consent, the Youth Justice Service should make a referral to the housing authority of the child's choice. This referral should be made with as much notice as possible.

The joint assessment should explore all possibilities of reunifying the child to their family home, the extended family network or to a responsible adult in the child's network. The Youth Justice Service officer should be involved in the joint assessment process, as well as any family members and other services.

6.4.4 Children from other local authority areas: Where a child who is ordinarily resident in another local authority area approaches Leeds City Council as homeless, an initial interview combined with some enquiries in the local authority area where the child came from (including the other area C&F Services) will assist in establishing if it is possible for the child to return to the area they have come from. This will be undertaken by the Duty and Advice Service in C&F Services.

The welfare of the child is paramount, and this should be at the heart of decisions to assist children ordinarily resident in other areas. Any negotiation or resolution of dispute concerning which local authority is responsible, should not override the need to assist the child with their immediate situation.

Where it is not possible for the child to return to the authority where they are ordinarily resident on the same day, the duty to assess and meet the child's immediate needs will be with Leeds City Council. All matters relating to cases of children aged 16/17 from other areas should be discussed jointly between C&F Services and LHO.

Where the 16/17-year-old child wishes to make a homelessness application to Leeds City Council, if they are already homeless then LHO has the discretion, based on the information available, to consider whether the child has a local connection.

If they appear to have a local connection to another local authority area, and do not have a local connection to Leeds, then a referral can be made to the local authority where the connection is established, but this should only be undertaken after discussion with and the agreement of C&F Services, to ensure there are no safeguarding or risk issues that LHO are not aware of. Clear recording of this decision and its rationale should be set out on case files.

6.5 When the initial approach is to C&F Services

Children who come to the attention of C&F Services have different sets of circumstances. Some will be already working with C&F Services, and some will not. The responsibility within C&F Services for undertaking any Child and Family Assessment will be dependent on the child's circumstances and history.

6.5.1 All children who approach C&F Services as homeless or at risk of homelessness and do not already have an allocated social worker in Leeds, will come initially via the Duty and Advice 'Front Door', which will then refer the child through to the Children Social Work Teams. The list below is not intended to be exhaustive but may include children who are:

- Unknown to C&F Services and are identified by another service /agency and comes through to Children and Families Service Duty and Advice 'Front Door'.
- Unknown to Children's Social Work Services within C&F, and are identified by another service/agency e.g. Youth Service on outreach or West Yorkshire Police, and comes through to C&F's Emergency Duty Team
- Known previously to C&F Services – they have had a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan, and the case is already closed.
- Known previously to C&F Services - the child had a statutory plan in the past; this has been stepped down to Early Help Services
- Known to C&F Services through the Youth Justice Service, have an open case but there is no other active involvement with any Children Social Work Team or Early

Help Service

- Known to C&F Services and had an open case through Early Help Services, but they do not have a statutory plan or an allocated social worker.
- Known to Early Help but the case is closed and there has been no previous statutory plan or allocated social worker.
- Known to C&F Services and they are already a child looked after or a 'relevant' care leaver aged 16/17.
- Lives outside Leeds area and asks C&F Services or comes to the attention of C&F Services for assistance.

6.5.2 Where a child already has an open case with an allocated social worker in a Children Social Work Team and a current Child in Need or Child Protection Plan, and they approach C&F Services as homeless or at risk of homelessness then the allocated Social Worker or duty Social Worker in that team will take the lead on ensuring the child has safe and suitable accommodation and will need to undertake a new Child and Family Assessment through the joint assessment process with LHO. This is triggered through the Significant Information on an Open Case Record on Mosaic.

6.5.3. If it is the case that the child is or could be homeless or at risk of homelessness in the next few days or weeks, consent is needed from the child to make a referral under the 'Duty to Refer' to a housing authority of the child's choice in England. In most instances this is most likely to be LHO due to the local connection.

Children Social Work Service are responsible for making the referral to LHO under the 'Duty to Refer'. This can be done by either emailing: dutytorefer@leeds.gov.uk
Or logging in here: <https://live.housingjigsaw.co.uk/alert/duty-to-refer>

A referral under the 'duty to refer' will inform LHO there is a 16/17-year-old who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness. **Note:** *that this does not diminish the legal duties which C&F Services have. The referral will formally notify LHO that there is a young person at risk of homelessness and the need for a joint assessment.*

LHO and the referring team within C&F Services will then communicate with each other and agree what the next steps will be in terms of undertaking a joint assessment together, and any prevention work which could run alongside or in conjunction with this process.

As set out in the Government's statutory joint guidance, a Child and Family Assessment **must** be triggered where homelessness is actual or is imminent. This means where homelessness is likely within the next few days or weeks. Within Leeds City Council there is an agreement that the assessment would be a joint assessment with LHO.

6.6 **If the child needs short stay or emergency accommodation during the assessment process and the initial approach was to C&F Services**

Where a child has approached or been referred to C&F Services on the basis of being homeless, and if they require short stay or emergency accommodation, in the first instance C&F Services will determine if there is someone with parental responsibility who is willing to offer or arrange accommodation for the child or if there is a suitable adult within a wider friendship group who would be willing to have the child with them for a short period of time. This should be no more than a few days. Any such planning needs to be carefully considered to ensure consent and safety, as well as other legal obligations under Care Planning. C&F Services need to ensure that any

appropriate checks of adults that the child is staying with are undertaken as part of this process.

If this is not possible or appropriate then suitable accommodation will be found, offered, and funded under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 until the outcome of the joint assessment is known.

Where a child is placed under Section 20, they will become a looked after child.

Note: that emergency accommodation ***should not*** be provided under Section 17 for a 16/17-year-old who is or may be homeless and is not with his or her parent/family. Any provision of accommodation, even for a short time, should be made in accordance with section 20.

6.7 When the initial approach is to LHO.

If the child approaches LHO, they will conduct an initial interview with the child first to be satisfied there is reason to believe the child may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless within 56 days. If there is reason to believe they may be homeless or threatened with homelessness, LHO **must** take a homelessness application.

An immediate same day referral **must** be made to C&F Services at this point, requesting a joint assessment, comprising of the child in need assessment and the statutory homelessness assessment.

LHO **will not** owe a duty to a 16/17-year-old if it is established that the child is:

- already a child looked after (under Section 20 or Section 31 of the Children Act 1989)
- or is a 'relevant' child, who is aged 16/17 and has already left care.
- or is not eligible in terms of immigration control.
- or is not homeless or threatened with homelessness, because they have somewhere that is available to them, and it is reasonable for them to occupy.

In these instances, a same day referral **must** be made to C&F Services. Issues regarding the welfare of the child, any safeguarding issues and a LHO decision about not owing the child a duty should be shared.

LHO will seek to co-operate with C&F Services in these instances, if necessary, as set out in Section 27 of the Children Act 1989, as long as in doing so does not prejudice the discharge of their own functions.

6.8 If the child needs short stay or emergency accommodation during the assessment process and the initial approach was to LHO.

Where a child has approached LHO on the basis of being homeless, and if they require short stay or emergency accommodation, in the first instance LHO will determine if there is someone with parental responsibility who is willing to offer or arrange accommodation for the child, or if there is a suitable adult within a wider friendship group who would be willing to have the child with them for a short period of time. This should be no more than a few days.

If this not possible, LHO will identify appropriate suitable interim accommodation, offered and funded under Section 188 of the Housing Act 1996 until the outcome of the joint assessment is known. A claim for housing benefit can be made at this point.

If the child has approached LHO for assistance but already has an 'open' case with C&F Services,

the responsibility for providing the short stay accommodation will rest with C&F Services, who will need to place the child into suitable short stay or emergency accommodation, as set out in Point 6.6. The joint assessment will inform future planning of accommodation needs based on evidence gathered and wishes and feelings of the child.

6.9 **When the initial approach is outside usual office hours.**

Where 16 /17-year-olds presents or are referred as homeless outside of usual office hours, the priority must be the safety and well-being of the child.

If the C&F Services 'Emergency Duty Team' receive a referral, and accommodation is needed that night, the 16/17-year-old will be placed into accommodation by C&F Services until the next working day when a joint assessment must take place.

Where a referral of a 16/17-year-old comes to the LHO 'Out of Hours' Service this should be referred to C&F Services 'Emergency Duty Team' and a joint decision reached regarding placement into accommodation which is suitable. The placement would be made by LHO unless the child has an open case with C&F Services.

6.10 **The Joint Assessment process**

With the consent of the child a joint assessment will take place as soon as possible. This will be undertaken by C&F Services and LHO together. **A joint assessment is undertaken as part of a conversation in a meeting together with C&F Services, LHO, a representative of OWL and the child.**

6.10.1 C&F Services will lead the joint assessment process from the beginning, reflecting the legal position that in the case of children in need of accommodation, the Children Act 1989 has primacy over the Housing Act 1996 in providing for 16/17-year-olds who are not with their parents or anyone with parental responsibility for them.

6.10.2 It is critical that throughout the assessment discussion, any opportunities to prevent or relieve homelessness are taken and where possible, the actions are jointly undertaken. Where this is not possible, the prevention actions should be communicated between C&F Services and LHO.

6.10.3 The joint assessment will commence **within 2 working days** of the child presenting as homeless or at risk of homeless. Where possible, a joint assessment should start **immediately**, in which case both C&F Services and LHO will agree this at the earliest point on the same working day, and the assessment will commence. A joint assessment for a homeless 16- or 17-year-old should be completed within **10 working days** from commencement unless there are reasons which both C&F Services and LHO agree regarding why this would not be the case. This timescale is aligned with statutory guidance.

The joint assessment will cover both the Child and Family Assessment and the housing authority statutory enquiries into eligibility, homelessness and the child's housing circumstances, housing needs and related support needs.

The joint assessment will involve:

- the child
- their family including parent/carer with parental responsibility.
- any other significant family friends

- other agencies or services which work with the child or the family
- It would be beneficial to plan Family Network Meeting as part of the assessment if this can be facilitated within the timescale of the assessment outcome

6.10.4 The joint assessment will aim to determine the following:

For C&F Services:

- Is the child aged 16 or 17?
- Are they a child in need, as set out in Section 17 of the Children Act?
- Does the need arise because they are homeless and require accommodation?
- Is that need the result of Section 20 (1 (a-c)) or Section 20 (3) or Section 20 (4)?
- Do they usually live in Leeds?
- What are their wishes and feelings regarding the provision of accommodation?
- What considerations (having regard to the child's age and understanding) is to be given to their wishes and feelings?
- What capacity does the child have to inform the assessment?
- What support does the child require to return to their family home, or to live independently if this is not possible?
- Is the child able to live independently and what support will they require?
- What are the wishes and feelings of the parent/carer/wider family network?

For LHO:

- Is the child eligible in terms of immigration control or other reasons regarding their status in the UK?
- Is the child homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days?
- Would the child have a priority need for accommodation ¹?
- What are the circumstances that have led to their current situation of homelessness?
- What are their accommodation needs?
- What is the relevant support needs to be addressed and who will assist them, in order that they can manage in their accommodation (whether this is to stay with family/friends or move into alternative accommodation)?

6.10.5 Decisions regarding the ongoing responsibility of providing accommodation will be dependent on the outcome and recommendations following completion of the joint assessment.

6.11 Wishes and feelings of the child.

The joint assessment will also consider the child's wishes and determine the most appropriate pathway for the child, considering the legislative context and the statutory guidance.

6.11.1 It is important that all staff emphasise the long-term positive benefits of remaining in, or returning to, the family home/network and maintaining family relationships where this is safe and appropriate to do so, and that these aspects are not forgotten but are focused on.

¹ See information within 5.7 in relation to Section 189: 16/17-year-olds will not have an automatic priority need for accommodation if they are already a care leaver who is a 'relevant' child or if they are owed a duty under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. The final decision on 'priority need' can only be made by LHO once the outcome of the joint assessment and wishes and feeling work has taken place and a decision reached on if the young person will become looked after. If they are not going to be looked after, and are not already a care leaver, and they are eligible and homeless, they will have a priority need.

This is likely to be in the best long-term interests of the child.

6.11.2 If a child cannot stay within or return to the family home or extended family or friends' network, it is likely that they will be a child in need of accommodation. In this case they would be offered the option to become a child looked after under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. The joint assessment will determine this, but there are only a few instances where this would not be the case, as set out in **Points 5.3 and 5.4** above. C&F Services practitioners will need to ensure that the Scheme of Delegation around the offer of Section 20 is utilised at this time.

6.11.3 Decisions on becoming looked after must be based on full and impartial information about the practicalities and support offered if a child is in care, being a care leaver and what would happen if they did not become looked after but decided to be accommodated under Housing Act duties. This work should be supported by clear written information in a leaflet format, and through the Children's Rights Service, which will provide independent advocacy where appropriate.

Professionals conducting the joint assessment must provide impartial, balanced, and realistic information about the support that the young person can expect as a child looked after by Leeds City Council, including details of the care plan, where they might live and with whom, regular Children Looked After reviews and social worker visits and subsequently, if the criteria are met, entitlements as a care leaver.

6.11.4 C&F Services and LHO must also ensure that a child who is homeless is informed of their entitlements and receives accurate information about what assistance may be available to them if they do not become looked after, and how any entitlement for assistance will be determined.

A package of practical, emotional and financial support can be offered to children in Leeds who decide not to become looked after. This will be part of the Child in Need Plan and Personal Housing Plan, which when combined, may help with some key areas of the child's development, including for example, financial support to travel to attend college or training, an OWL key worker and assistance with some other costs as required relating to their general health, emotional well-being and development. The financial element might, for example, include some money for new clothes and footwear, equipment or clothing for college or training/work, a small gift for a birthday or other celebration.

To aid discussions in relation to options of support, a leaflet has been devised to be shared with children in every joint assessment. The joint assessment should record when the leaflet was shared with the young person. Children are entitled to digest the information and not be asked to make swift decisions in relation to support. Decisions are not 'one off' and can be altered depending on the child's circumstances.

6.11.5 Children will need to understand the ways in which a homelessness duty can be ended and the implications of this, for example:

- where someone is homeless but turns down a suitable 'Final Offer' of accommodation

- the possible risk of being assessed as ‘intentionally’ homeless.

6.11.6 Most children aged 16/17 will be assessed to have the capacity to make decisions but if through the joint assessment process there is a concern that the child may not have capacity, a meeting to discuss this should be called with the Team Manager and Service Delivery Manager from the relevant C&F Services team to explore next steps including a decision about gaining legal advice.

7. Working with families

- 7.1 As part of their enquiries, C&F Services and/or LHO will want to contact the child’s parents or carers and conduct a home visit where possible or appropriate. They may also work with OWL (our Way Leeds) Prevention Service or other agencies as appropriate, to gather relevant information and to explore whether it is possible and safe for the child to return home.
- 7.2 In some circumstances, it will not be appropriate to contact the child’s parents or carers as this may put the child at risk. Where there is any concern of a risk to the child or an allegation of abuse, information must be shared between C&F Services and LHO. Children’s safeguarding procedures (such as a strategy discussion being required) need to be considered during this time as to whether these need to be implemented. *C&F Services need to record clearly the decision making around whether there is a risk to the child and why or why not a strategy discussion was held.*
- LHO staff who are concerned that contacting parents or carers may place the child at risk for any reason, must seek guidance from C&F Services before making that contact.
- 7.3 In most instances, the use of prevention work, such as home visits, on-line or telephone discussions, involving negotiation, mediation, practical assistance and arranging family group meetings can assist children and their families to stay together. This should take place alongside the statutory assessment activity.
- 7.4 Where it is not possible or safe for the child to return home, other options will be explored by C&F Services and/or LHO, including enabling the child to live with their extended family or appropriate friends.
- 7.5 C&F Services and LHO will work together to conclude the determination of duties under the Children Act 1989 and Housing Act 1996. Where there are duties owed, services will work together to put in place a suitable package of assistance which reflects the child’s wishes and feelings, is realistic and will best assist the child in moving on to independence, including retaining supportive social and family networks, plans for education, training and work. To do this, families should be consulted and involved, unless there are clear reasons why this should not take place.
- 7.6 During and after the joint assessment, C&F Services staff and LHO staff and any other agency involved with the child, should continue to explore the possibility of the child returning to family, their extended family or to friends and, where this is a safe option, they will positively enable this with a package of support if needed.
- 7.7 Appropriate consideration will be given to the child’s informed choice and their level of understanding, resilience and resourcefulness to manage in the accommodation provided, alongside their vulnerability due to their age. Additional assistance in terms of practical or emotional support

can be provided or arranged by C&F Services or LHO, based on assessed needs. In some instances, this may be through OWL (Our Way Leeds) Prevention Service.

8. Actions following the outcome of the joint assessment.

- 8.1 Following the joint assessment, C&F Services and LHO will be able to determine whether:
- The child is a child in need of services under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989
 - C&F Services should offer accommodation under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989
 - There are any Early Help Services or other services which could be provided to meet identified needs.
 - Any duties are owed under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996
- 8.2 The outcome of the joint assessment will be communicated on completion to the child, and if appropriate, their parents or those with parental responsibility. Best practice is to ensure that this is in writing.
- 8.3 In many instances, the Child and Family Assessment will determine that the child is in need under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, but does not require housing, because he/she can stay at home, or with their extended family or friends. It will also inform the package of support to facilitate and maintain the return home and prevent future homelessness.
- 8.4 Whilst the joint assessment process should ensure a seamless approach between C&F Services and LHO, it is critical that the steps outlined in different scenarios are followed so children are supported in a seamless, client-focussed way and their need for accommodation and support is addressed. The actions following the joint assessment and the determination of duties are summarised below:
- 8.4.1 If a duty is owed under Section 17 AND Section 20 applies C&F Services will:**
- Discuss the assessment outcomes and options for the future with the child ensuring that they can make a fully informed decision on whether to accept the offer of assistance under Section 20
 - Ensure the placement options reflect and are suitable to meet the needs of the child. This should include the range of foster, residential care and supported accommodation options available. Placement matching should be informed by an assessment of need.
- 8.4.2 If the child accepts the offer of assistance under Section 20, C&F Services will:**
- Inform LHO and any other referring agency.
 - Inform parents/carers with parental responsibility
 - Arrange a placement under Section 20 in suitable accommodation taking over financial responsibility for the child's accommodation if they have previously been placed by LHO.
 - Put in place a care plan and allocated social worker for the child in accordance with looked after children's procedures. As part of this notification needs to be made the Integrated Safeguarding Unit for allocation of an Independent Reviewing Officer.
- 8.4.3 If the child does not accept the offer of assistance under Section 20, C&F Services will:**
- Inform parents/carers with parental responsibility
 - Consider if there is a need for some independent advocacy and if so, arrange this

with the Children's Rights Service

- Be satisfied that the child has the capacity to make this decision.
- Ensure LHO are aware of this and where LHO are not directly party to the decision, email LHO including the reasons why the child refused assistance.
- Assist or facilitate a meeting between the child and LHO to ensure they do not 'get lost' between services whilst they are homeless and in need of accommodation and support.
- Ensure that communication between the child and LHO continues to progress their homeless application.
- Develop a Child in Need plan for the child, based on their other assessed support needs. This should include the package of support, which is needed, in terms of meeting support needs relating to practical, financial and emotional needs. It will also include assisting them to access welfare benefits to ensure costs of accommodation are covered and a personal allowance is in place.
- Inform the providers of the short stay/emergency accommodation if the child has been placed in emergency accommodation of the date C&F Services will cease payment.

8.4.4 If the child is not owed any duty by LHO, (for example, because they have refused an offer of suitable accommodation or they are not eligible), but does not accept the offer of assistance under Section 20 of the Children Act, C&F Services will:

- Undertake further work on their wishes and feelings about becoming looked after and the implications of refusing this when there is no housing duty owed to them.
- Offer them accommodation under Section 17 if they again do not accept Section 20 and ensure this is signed off by senior managers²
- Draw up a Child in Need plan which reflects the need for both accommodation and other support and how this will be provided.

8.5 LHO actions after being informed by C&F Services of their determination of duties under the Children Act 1989 are summarised below:

8.5.1 If a duty is owed under Section 17 and Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 applies and the child has accepted the offer of assistance under Section 20, LHO will:

- Issue a decision to end the relief duty due to them having accommodation available because they have accepted Section 20 and will have accommodation available on this basis for at least 6 months. **Note:** If the decision on Section 20 is reached whilst the 'main' housing duty is being assessed, a non-priority decision letter will be issued due to them being a looked after child.
- Assist C&F Services in finding suitable Section 20 placement options, if requested to do so.
- If the child has previously been placed in emergency accommodation by LHO, notify the Housing Benefit team that housing benefit entitlement has ceased, and the provider of accommodation that invoices should be directed to C&F Services from this point on

8.5.2 If a duty is owed under Section 17 but Section 20 does not apply because the child does

² Section 17 should not usually be used to provide accommodation to a child in need aged 16/17 who is homeless, and this will happen only in exceptional circumstances. In these instances, please refer to the Joint Statutory Guidance on 16/17-year-olds at risk of homelessness, which covers this. You must get approval for this decision at a senior level as part of the Scheme of Delegation and make this clear on the young person's casework record on Mosaic.

not wish to be looked after, LHO will:

- Determine which duties are owed under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996
- If the child is found to be homeless, accept the relief duty, draw up a Personal Housing Plan and place the child into suitable interim temporary accommodation under Section 188 and arrange for the child to claim housing benefit.
- Liaise with C&F Services about meeting the support needs of the child and the development of a Child in Need plan.

8.5.3 If a duty is owed under Section 17 but Section 20 does not apply because the child is not homeless, LHO will:

- Determine if a prevention duty is owed under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 and if so, draw up a Personal Housing Plan
- Liaise with C&F Services about meeting the support needs of the child and the development of a Child in Need plan.
- If there is a change in circumstances and the child subsequently becomes homeless, they should be re-referred to C&F Services for a further assessment.

8.5.4 If the child is homeless but there is no duty owed under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, LHO will:

- Call a case meeting to discuss the decision with C&F Services, to ensure it is correct, based on the limited set of exceptions to this decision in the case of a homeless 16/17-year-old.
- If this is the case, determine which duties are owed under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996
- If they are (or may be) homeless, place the child into suitable interim temporary accommodation under Section 188 and arrange for the child to claim housing benefit.
- Draw up a Personal Housing Plan setting out how their housing and support needs will be met, involving other agencies, including Our Way Leeds, as appropriate.

8.5.5 If the child is homeless but no duty is owed to assist under the Housing Act (for instance, if the child is found to not be eligible), LHO will:

- As a matter of urgency, discuss the decision and the child's future housing circumstances with C&F Services to ensure support and accommodation will be provided through C&F Services. If needed, re-refer the child for a further Child and Family Assessment
- Follow local procedures to end any emergency accommodation which has been provided under interim duties, allowing a reasonable period of time for C&F Services to make alternative arrangements with the child. No 16/17-year-old should be left without accommodation in these circumstances. **Note:** it may be the case that C&F Services pick up accommodation duties and fund the accommodation the child is already in, if this is suitable and meets their assessed needs

9. Financial support for the child

- 9.1 Any child assessed as a child in need must have a Child in Need plan. This applies to children who are homeless but have declined the offer of becoming a child looked after under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. They still require in law a Child in Need plan, which should set out the support to be offered, who will provide this and what might happen if, for example, there were a further risk to

the welfare of the child.

- 9.2 Provision of financial support is a critical part of the Child in Need plan. Depending on their circumstances, the child may be able to claim benefit, for example, Universal Credit, Job Seekers Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance. In order to do this, the 16/17-year-old will firstly need to satisfy Jobcentre Plus that they are estranged from their family.

If a child is unable to secure crisis benefits, C&F Services will need to provide the child with all reasonable living expenses, as a last resort, in accordance with duties under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

If financial support is requested by LHO, C&F Services will contact the child to discuss their financial situation. If a request for financial support is declined, C&F Services must provide the child and LHO with written confirmation of the reasons for the decision and the process that the child needs to follow to appeal against the decision or make a complaint.

Children can access support from Barnardo's in relation to advocacy – [Leeds Children's Rights - Advocacy \(Barnardo's\)](#)

If LHO are unhappy with the decision made by C&F Services, they should use the [Escalation Process](#)

- 9.3 As already stated, additional financial support may be provided to a homeless 16/17-year-old under Section 17 through the Child in Need Plan. Each circumstance is different, and therefore any such financial support should be based on assessed need and outlined in the Child in Need plan. An example of this could be - to top up their income to ensure they are able to travel to college or a training establishment, or for help with basic necessities, interview or work clothes/equipment, or costs with some key areas identified in the Child in Need Plan.

10. Escalation Process

- 10.1 If at any point in the practical working of this joint protocol there is disagreement between C&F Services and LHO, then either or both parties should escalate this to their direct line manager, or where this is not possible, to the next management tier as appropriate.
- 10.2 Disagreements should be routinely dealt with via peer-to-peer management discussions to seek to resolve the issue, considering any safeguarding issues and keeping the young person as the focus.
- 10.3 Disagreements could arise in several areas but are most likely to arise around:
- Communication
 - Service involvement and decision making.
 - Understanding of the legal duties and how these work in practice
 - Roles and responsibilities of different services/officers
 - The need for timely action and completion of assessments
- 10.4 Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and successful joint working to safeguard and promote the well-being of children. Professional disagreement is only dysfunctional if not resolved in a constructive and timely fashion.
- 10.5 Attempts at problem resolution may leave one worker or agency believing that the child remains at risk of significant harm. Individuals and each service have a responsibility for communicating such

concerns through agreed channels in line with our commitment to restorative practice, high support and high challenge.

- 10.6 It is the responsibility of every professional to try to resolve disagreements at the earliest opportunity, always keeping in mind that the child's safety and welfare is the paramount consideration.
- 10.7 If a professional disagreement arises and the issue cannot be resolved between workers; the matter must be referred to their line manager who will discuss with their counterpart in the other Service in the hope that the issue can be resolved.
- 10.8 Failure to resolve disagreements between line managers must be further escalated to senior managers within the respective service areas. If there continues to be no resolution, then the matter should be escalated to the Head of Leeds Housing Options Service and the appropriate Head of Service in Children and Families Service for the C&F Service.
- 10.9 A clear record of all discussions, agreements and actions must be kept by all parties. In the case of C&F Service, this should be on the child's case management record.

11. Reviewing the joint protocol

- 11.1 This protocol will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are any changes in legislation, local working arrangements and/or government guidance.
- 11.2 Collecting, analysing and acting on information, including data and qualitative feedback, will assist Leeds City Council to address the needs of 16/17 year olds who may be at risk of homelessness in the future. We will monitor data and practice through regular joint meetings between Leeds Housing Options and Children and Families.

12. Appendix – Quick Guide

Child presents as homeless to LHO and is not open to C&F Service	Child presents as homeless to LHO and is open to C&F Service	Child is not open and presents as homeless to C&F Service	Child is open and presents as homeless to C&F Service
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check the child has somewhere safe to stay pending the joint assessment• Speak to Duty and Advice in C&F to share information and refer for assessment• Book a joint assessment to take place and begin homeless application	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speak to the Social Worker or their Duty Team to notify of presentation• Both services to make a plan of support of where the child will stay pending the joint assessment• Book a joint assessment to take place and begin homeless application	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Referral to be progressed from Duty and Advice to Area Children Social Work Team and to check that the child has somewhere safe to stay pending the joint assessment• Social Worker to complete the Duty to Refer to LHO• Both services to make a plan of support of where the child will stay pending the joint assessment• Book a joint assessment to take place and begin homeless application	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social Worker to complete the Duty to Refer to LHO• Both services to make a plan of support of where the child will stay pending the joint assessment• Book a joint assessment to take place and begin homeless application

In all circumstances Our Way Leeds (OWL) should be involved in conversations and the joint assessment to ensure that we try all support possible for children to return to their families.

13. Appendix – Joint Assessment Proforma

Leeds City Council Joint Assessment of Children aged 16/17 who may be Homeless or at Risk of Homelessness

This assessment should be jointly undertaken by an officer from Leeds Housing Options (LHO) and a Social Worker from Children Social Work Services (CSWS) in line with the Leeds City Council Joint Protocol between Leeds Housing Options and Children and Families Services.

It covers information to inform the:

- Child and Family Assessment (Section 17 of the Children Act 1989)
- the statutory Homelessness assessment (Section 184 and Section 189A of the Housing Act 1996).

It is intended to reduce the number of assessments a child has and promote seamless decision-making between LHO and CSWS

Names of officers completing this joint assessment								
Children’s Services				Housing Needs Service				
Name				Name				
Team				Team				
Date child and family assessment started				Date homeless assessment started				
Date of Assessment Progress Review <i>Within 10 working days of the contact</i>				Date of review				
Date assessment completed <i>Within 45 days</i>				Date assessment completed <i>Within 56 days of homeless application</i>				
Child and Family Details								
The child’s details								
Name	DOB	Gender	Sexual orientation (if shared)	Ethnicity	Nationality	Disability	Current address	Contact details

Which adult(s) does the child currently live with							
Name	DOB	Gender	Do they have PR?	Ethnicity	Relationship to the child	Current address	Contact details
Any other children living at the same address							
Name	DOB	Gender		Ethnicity	Relationship to the child	Current address	Contact details
Other significant adults (family or friends) who don't live with the child, but they see regularly or visit							
Name	DOB	Gender	Do they have PR?	Ethnicity	Relationship to the child	Current address	Contact details
Initial contact for assistance due to risk of homelessness							
Which Service in Leeds did the child first approach to ask for assistance due to the risk of homelessness? Or which Service became aware?							
Children's Services			Yes/No				
The Housing Needs Service			Yes/No				
If the child was referred by another agency:							
Agency /Service area making the referral			To which Service (Children's or Housing Needs Service) was the referral made?			If the referral was made to the Housing Needs Service, was the referral made under the 'duty to refer'?	

Background information /summary of history of the young person

Any previous or current involvement with Children’s Services or Housing:

Is the child already known to Children’s Services? Yes/No

**Reason for undertaking the assessment/Presenting Issues
(Short summary of the background information)**

Are they an open case to Children’s Services at the moment? Yes/No

**If yes, for how long has the case been open and under which provisions
(e.g., Early Help, Child in Need, CPP, Youth Justice)?**

If no longer open, when was the case closed?

What are the known concerns and risks? (summary)

What are the strengths and protective factors identified?

**What services are they and their family receiving from Children’s Services or
other agencies?**

What is the name of the allocated worker(s)?

Does the child have any children of their own or are they pregnant? Yes/No
If yes, please provide some brief detail

**If so, is there any involvement with Children’s Services in relation to their
child/unborn child?**

If the child is ordinarily resident in another area:

Which Children’s Services Authority area are they from?

Are they known to Children’s Services in that area? Yes/No
If yes, please give some brief detail

**Do they have any connection (family, significant friends/relationship) with
anyone in Leeds?** If yes, please give details

The Housing Needs assessment

To avoid duplication the Housing Needs section will be completed on the Abritas System by Leeds Housing Options (LHO)

What are the other risk factors and support needs of the child apart from risk of homelessness?

This section must be completed together so both departments have shared understanding of needs and risks

Risk area	Brief detail	Risk area	Brief detail
Neglect		Child sexual exploitation	
Physical abuse by an adult		Trafficking	
Physical abuse by another child		Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child	
At risk of/experience of domestic abuse		History of homelessness in the family	
Emotional abuse		Past episodes of being missing	
Mental health issues		Involvement in gangs/at risk of gangs	
Self-harm (actual or concern of)		Alcohol misuse/addiction	
Health issues – physical		Drug misuse/addiction	
Learning disability		Offending behaviour	
Physical disability		Antisocial behaviour	
Abuse linked to faith or belief		Not attending school/college (NEET)	
Victim of hate crime and/or bullying		Young parent needing additional support	
Female genital mutilation		Experience of bereavement of parent or close family member	

What are the other risk factors of significant adults in the child's life, including any partner			
Risk area	Brief detail	Risk area	Brief detail
Mental health issues		Risk of homelessness	
Victim of domestic abuse		Learning disability	
Perpetrator of domestic abuse		Physical disability	
Drug misuse		Physical health issues	
Alcohol misuse		History of offending	
Other		Other	
What does the child and their family say about their situation? How would they like this to be resolved?			
Different views		Outline of the views shared	
What are the views of the child about their situation?			
What are the views of their parents/ person with PR about the child's situation?			
Are there any views from the child's wider family?			
Are there any views from significant adults in the child's life?			

Note of any immediate accommodation actions needed					
Does the child need accommodation tonight or in the next 3 days?	Can they stay safely with family/friends?	If so, who will they stay with and what contact details are there?	Has the child been referred to OWL (Our Way Leeds)? If so, when, and do you know who the support worker is	If Leeds need to provide accommodation, which Service will provide this and under which legal duty?	In what type of accommodation will the child be offered and what is the address/contact?
Assessment summary and actions					
Assessment area	Yes/No/Comment			Jointly agreed by:	
What steps have been taken to provide support and prevent homelessness?					
Is the 16/17-year-old a child in need, as defined in Section 17 of the Children Act 1989?					
Does that need arise because they are homeless and require accommodation?					
If yes, are there any other options within the network of family or friends?					
If there are no other suitable and safe options except accommodation provided by the local authority, what are their wishes and feelings on becoming looked after?					
Have they been given impartial information about becoming looked after and other options, if they do not wish to be looked after, in order to make an informed decision?					
Have they been offered independent advocacy?					
Are we confident that they have the capacity to make this decision?					
Any other notes /comments					

Assessment summary and actions to be taken (to feed into a Child in Need Plan, a Care Plan and/or a Personal Housing Plan as appropriate)

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Contingency Planning - What will happen if the child becomes homeless or there is an unforeseen event requiring an emergency response?

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Management decisions

Decisions	Detail of the decision	Name of the Service or Team Manager
Is the child a child in need?		
If so, are they in need of accommodation due to homelessness?		
Will they become looked after under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989?		
Are any homelessness duties owed under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996?		
Have other safeguarding concerns been addressed through the plan?		
If they are ordinarily resident in another area and returning to that area, has the necessary follow up been provided by Leeds Services to ensure their safe return?		