



Youth Homelessness **Joint Working Protocol**

This Joint Working Protocol brings together key stakeholders to provide comprehensive support for young people aged 16 and 17, and care leavers of Lincolnshire who are at risk of homelessness. It involves collaboration between the seven Lincolnshire District Councils, Lincolnshire County Council, Children's Services, Adult Care and Community Wellbeing, and the Nacro Education, Support and Transitions Services (NEST).

Together, these partners work to ensure that vulnerable young people receive the advice, guidance, resources, and support they need to achieve stability and independence.

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Introduction..... | 4 |
| 2. Statutory Responsibilities..... | 5 |
| 2.1 Housing Act 1996 | 5 |
| 2.2 Children Act 1989 | 6 |
| 2.3 Children and Social Work Act 2017..... | 7 |
| 2.4 Supported Accommodation Regulations (England) 2023..... | 8 |
| 3. Children’s Services Thresholds of Intervention and Support | 8 |
| 3.1 Team Around the Child | 8 |
| 3.2 Child in Need (Section 17 of the Children Act)..... | 8 |
| 3.3 Child Protection (Section 47 of the Children Act)..... | 9 |
| 3.4 Child in Care (Section 20 or 31 of the Children Act) | 9 |
| 4. Background of Advice & Support Agencies | 9 |
| 5. Responsibilities & Process | 9 |
| 5.1 Young People who are NOT open to Children’s Services – District Council Responsibility & Process | 9 |
| 5.2 Young People who ARE open to Children’s Services - District Councils Responsibility & Process | 10 |
| 5.3 Young People aged 18+..... | 11 |
| 5.4 Young People who are NOT open to Children’s Services - Lincolnshire County Council Children’s Services Process | 11 |
| 6. Housing Provisions for 16- and 17-year-old Children in Care | 14 |
| 6.1 Nacro Education Support and Transition (NEST) | 14 |
| 6.2 Lincolnshire County Council Supported Accommodation Provision | 15 |
| 7. Housing Provisions for 16- and 17-year-old Children in Care | 15 |
| 8. Housing Provisions for 18+ | 16 |
| 8.1 Adult Care and Community Wellbeing (Adult Housing Related Support Service) | 16 |
| 8.2 District Councils..... | 17 |
| 8.3 Private Rented Sector | 18 |
| 8.4 Intensive Housing Management Services..... | 18 |
| 9. Support..... | 19 |
| 9.1 NEST Care Leavers Homeless Prevention Service | 19 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 10. Collaborative Planning | 19 |
| 11. Contacts | 20 |

1. Introduction

The Youth Homelessness Joint Working Protocol aims to define the working arrangements for all agencies involved in supporting 16- and 17-year-old young people and care leavers who need advice and assistance due to struggling with accommodation or being at risk of homelessness. This group of people are especially vulnerable and likely to be at risk without support.

This protocol aims to ensure that this vulnerable group of young people receive the support they need to stay at home, stay close to their family or support network because more often than not that is the best place for them. In the event that is not possible, this protocol outlines the pathways that young people can follow to access accommodation and support.

Commitment to this protocol is particularly relevant when young person who is about to turn, or has already turned, 18 years of age (or 21 if a care leaver) and is receiving support under the Children's Services (Ofsted regulated) Commissioned Youth Housing contract.

It also aims to ensure that all agencies with a statutory duty towards this group of young people understand and fulfil their responsibilities. Effective implementation of the pathways relies on all agencies working together and delivering agreed actions. Key agencies include all seven Lincolnshire District Councils, Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) Children's Services and Leaving Care Services, and the Nacro Education, Support and Transitions Service (NEST).

2. Statutory Responsibilities

The statutory responsibilities outlined in the Housing Act 1996, the Children Act 1989, and the Children and Social Work Act 2017 guides the Youth Homelessness Joint Working Protocol by detailing the specific duties of allocated workers within local authorities and Children's Services. These responsibilities include ensuring that every young person has suitable accommodation, that delivers essential support services and safeguards the welfare of vulnerable young people. The Housing Act 1996 focuses on the local authority's duty to provide suitable housing for those at risk of homelessness and ensures fair and transparent access to accommodation. The Children Act 1989 establishes the framework for child protection and welfare, including the provision of care and support for children in need. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduces additional responsibilities for supporting young people transitioning from care.

2.1. Housing Act 1996

2.1.1. Section 159

Local housing authorities must comply with the provisions of Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 when allocating housing accommodation. This section ensures that housing allocations are conducted in a fair and transparent manner, following established criteria and prioritising those in the greatest need.

2.1.2. Section 162

Local housing authorities must establish and maintain a housing register of qualifying persons. This register is essential for managing the allocation of housing, ensuring that those who meet the criteria for housing assistance are properly documented and prioritised.

2.1.3. Section 166

Local housing authorities must ensure that free advice and information are available to residents about their right to apply for housing. They must also provide necessary assistance in making such applications. This provision ensures that all residents are aware of their housing rights and have the support they need to navigate the application process.

2.1.4. Section 179

Local housing authorities have a duty to provide advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness, and to provide assistance to residents in their area. This includes offering guidance on available housing options, understanding tenant rights and responsibilities, and accessing housing support services.

2.1.5. Section 184

If a local housing authority has reason to believe that an applicant may be homeless or threatened with homelessness, they must make inquiries to determine whether any duty is owed to the individual under the homelessness provisions. This includes practical assistance which is available to help people remain in their current home or access alternative suitable accommodation. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 extended the period during which an applicant is considered threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days, requiring authorities to assess and provide meaningful assistance to all eligible individuals, regardless of priority need status. This ensures that more individuals receive the help they need to prevent homelessness or secure alternative housing.

2.2. Children Act 1989

2.2.1. Section 17

This section imposes a duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are identified as being in need. This includes providing a range of services designed to meet the needs of children and their families, ensuring their well-being and development. Local authorities must offer appropriate services, such as support for families, accommodation, and other forms of assistance to prevent impairment of the child's health or development. This responsibility is particularly relevant for children who are at risk or in difficult circumstances, including those who may be homeless.

2.2.2. Section 20

Under this section, local authorities are required to provide accommodation for any child in need within their area if it appears that the child requires it, including situations where there is no person with parental responsibility for the child, the child is lost or abandoned, or the person who has been caring for the child cannot provide suitable accommodation or care. According to Homeless Code of Guidance (2018), in almost all cases, a homeless 16- or 17-year-old will be considered a child in need under Section 17, thereby necessitating that local authorities provide appropriate accommodation to these young people. Homeless Code of Guidance (2018) further posits that there remain circumstances when the housing authority will have duties towards a homeless 16- and 17-year-olds, including when the young person, having been fully informed of the implications, and being judged to have capacity to make that decision, declines to become looked after under the Children Act 1989 and instead applies for assistance under homelessness legislation.

2.3. Children and Social Work Act 2017

2.3.1. Section 1

Local authorities are required to have regard to the seven corporate parenting principles outlined in Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 when exercising their functions in relation to Children in Care and Care Leavers. These principles apply to all local authorities in England, regardless of whether they are, or were, the local authority looking after a particular child or young person. Importantly, these principles are relevant to the entire local authority, not just Children's Services, in any function that affects Children in Care and Care Leavers.

The corporate parenting principles are intended to ensure that, as a good parent would, local authorities promote the well-being of children and young people under their care. The principles require local authorities to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people; to encourage them to express their views, wishes, and feelings; and to take those views, wishes, and feelings into account.

In addition, local authorities must help these children and young people access and make the best use of services provided by the authority and its relevant partners. They must also promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for them. Authorities are obligated to ensure that children and young people are safe and experience stability in their home lives, relationships, and education or work. Finally, local authorities have a responsibility to prepare these children and young people for adulthood and independent living, providing them with the necessary skills and support for a successful transition.

2.3.2. Section 3

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduces a new duty requiring local authorities to offer Personal Adviser (PA) support to all care leavers up to the age of 25, regardless of their involvement in education, training, or employment. This duty extends to care leavers who return to request PA support at any time between the ages of 21 and 25. The provision of Personal Adviser (In Lincolnshire County the PA is called a Leaving Care Worker) support is aimed at ensuring continued guidance and assistance for care leavers as they transition to adulthood.

NOTE - Where a young person is suspected not to have recourse to public funds, support should be sought to verify their status. Please check guidance - No Recourse to Public Funds- Citizens Advice - for further information

2.4. Supported Accommodation Regulations (England) 2023

Accommodation providers are required to register with Ofsted in order to provide a service to 16- and 17-year-olds who are children in care. The regulation states that young people should:

- Have relatively good or increasing levels of independence.
- Do not require high levels of supervision.
- Are ready to gain further skills in preparation for adult living.
- Have multi agency support package to meet holistic needs.
- Have a safety plan that will keep them and others they may live with safe.

Accommodation providers can register under one of four categories:

- Single occupancy
- Ring-fenced shared accommodation
- Shared accommodation non ring fenced
- Accommodation in a private residence, such as supported lodgings.

3. Children's Services Thresholds of Intervention and Support

3.1. Team Around the Child

This is a collaborative approach involving multiple agencies to support a child and their family. The Team Around the Child (TAC) plan is used when a child has additional needs that require coordinated support from various services but does not meet the threshold for statutory intervention. To learn more, visit: <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/keeping-children-safe/team-around-child>

3.2. Child in Need (Section 17 of the Children Act)

A child is considered "in need" if they require additional support to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development, if their health or development is likely to be significantly impaired without such services, or if they are disabled. Homeless children often fall into this category as they require extra support to ensure their well-being.

3.3. Child Protection (Section 47 of the Children Act)

This status is applied when a child is at risk of significant harm. If a homeless child is identified as being at risk of abuse or neglect, they may be the subject of a Child Protection Plan. This plan outlines actions to protect the child and support the family.

3.4. Child in Care (Section 20 or 31 of the Children Act)

If a homeless child cannot be safely cared for at home, they may be designated as a Child in Care (CIC), also known as Looked After Child, under the Children Act 1989. This designation

occurs either voluntarily under Section 20, where the local authority assumes responsibility for the child's care and welfare with the agreement of the child's parents or guardians, or through a court order under Section 31, where the local authority takes responsibility due to concerns about the child's safety or well-being.

When a young person becomes a CIC, they receive support from the Children in Care teams. This support continues until they reach the age of 18, at which point they transition to "Leaving Care" status if they were in care prior to their 18th birthday. As a care leaver, they will then receive support from the Leaving Care Service from 16.

4. Background of Advice & Support Agencies

There are various agencies that provide advice and support specifically aimed at addressing youth homelessness. These agencies work together to offer early intervention, conflict resolution, and targeted assistance for young people at risk of homelessness. Their collaborative efforts are designed to prevent homelessness, support stable living situations, and ensure young people receive the help they need to transition successfully into independent living.

Detailed descriptions of each agency and their specific roles in responding to youth homelessness are provided in the Appendix 1.

5. Responsibilities & Processes

5.1. Young People who are NOT open to Children's Services - District Councils Responsibility & Process

5.1.1. Responsibility

If a young person aged 16 or 17, presents as homeless or struggling to stay at home, the District Council will determine the last address and contact the relevant Children's Services department to check if the child is looked after. If it is confirmed the child is not looked after, District Council will make every effort to support them to remain at home or return home and ensure their safe transit back to their family or carers. *

If a resolution is not achieved and an emergency arrangement is necessary, the District Council will explore and source suitable alternative emergency accommodation with family or friends. Where this is not possible, a referral will be made to request support from the LCC Restoring Family Relationship (RFR).

5.1.2. Process

The District Council will contact the parent/carer to discuss the situation and explore the viability of the young person returning to the family home, ensuring that parents/carers are reminded of their parental responsibility.

If a return home is not possible an early help assessment should be completed and sent via email to Youth.Homelessness@lincolnshire.gov.uk at the earliest opportunity, so that the RFR Team can begin supporting the young person in returning to the family home/network and exploring alternative options. If the individual has presented to the district council in person, and a return to the family home is not possible, the District Council will contact Customer Services on 01522 782111 to coordinate with Children Services to arrange a safe and timely transfer to Children Services support. The Early Help Assessment is available on the Team Around the Child website. For more information, visit: <https://professionals.lincolnshire.gov.uk/team-around-child>.

Requests to the RFR Team should be made between 9 am and 5 pm, Monday to Friday. Any young person who presents as homeless outside of these hours should be directed to LCC's Emergency Duty Team (EDT) at 01522 782333. EDT is responsible for informing the RFR Team, enabling them to start supporting the young person the next working day via Future4MeLeadership@lincolnshire.gov.uk

**The authority cannot refuse to consider the young person's immediate needs and expect them to return to their previous authority. An initial interview, combined with inquiries in the area where the young person came from, should establish their connection with the new area and their reasons for seeking help there.*

These inquiries may help determine whether it is possible for the young person to return to their previous area. For example, the new authority might negotiate with the previous authority to transfer the assessment.

5.2. Young People who ARE open to Children's Services - District Councils Responsibility & Process

5.2.1. Responsibility

Upon a young person presenting as homeless the District Council must notify the allocated young person's Children's Services worker. All instances of youth homelessness must be formally recorded.

5.2.2. Process

If the lead worker is unavailable, the District Council must contact the Children's Services duty team at 01522 782111, or EDT for out-of-hours at 01522 782333.

5.3. Young People Aged 18+

If a young person between 18 and 21 presents as homeless and states that they are a Lincolnshire Care Leaver. Care leaver status should be confirmed with LCC/Leaving Care Services. District Councils must remember Lincolnshire care leavers will automatically have a local connection with all Districts within Lincolnshire meaning they are eligible to District Councils. District Councils should contact Care Leavers Homeless Prevention (CLHP) service (See section 9.1) to ensure the young person is supported whilst homeless.

Where a Lincolnshire care leaver is aged under 21 and has lived in a different area of the country for the last 2 years including some time before they turned 16, the young person will also have a local connection in that area.

Care Leavers who qualify to join the housing register should not be awarded a lower banding than applicants who meet a reasonable preference category as per section 166a of the Housing Act 1996 unless other criteria applies. Each Council has its own Housing Allocation Scheme which determines who qualifies to join the housing register and the level of priority awarded to the application. Each policy still differs meaning Care Leavers over 21 may not be awarded the same level of priority/banding across Lincolnshire.

Care Leavers up to the age of 25 will be awarded at least the level of reasonable preference when applying to a housing register or presenting as homeless.

5.4. Lincolnshire County Council Children's Services Responsibility for Homeless Young People

Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) Children's Services have the duty to support homeless young people aged 16- and 17, and care leavers up to 21. LCC are responsible for ensuring homeless children are accommodated appropriately if they are assessed as being unable to live with their family.

5.4.1. Young People who are NOT open to Children's Services - Lincolnshire County Council Children's Services Process

When the request for the RFR Team has been received from the district, RFR Team will make every effort to support the young person to stay at home, return home or seek alternative accommodation with friends/family members. They will:

- Contact the young person and their parents/carers by phone.
- Visit the home that the young person has recently left.

- Explore with the young person and their parents/carers what support is needed to remain at home.

If they stay at home, the RFR Worker will ensure there is on-going support from agencies to maintain the arrangement to stay at home and sustain the safety of the young person. If the young person cannot remain at home, the RFR Team will explore a wider network of friends or extended family to request support for accommodation for the young person.

Where homelessness cannot be prevented and the young person might need to access suitable alternative accommodation, a request to seek accommodation requires approval from the Corporate Parenting Manager (CPM) or Children's Services Head of Service. If the approval has been gained. The duty worker will complete Children's Services Placement Provision Request C1430 and send to Youth Housing for sharing with accommodation providers. It is important that the worker outlines the proposed exit plan for the young person.

Restoring Family Relationships should take into consideration that 16- and 17-year-olds who are homeless and estranged from their family will be vulnerable and in need of support. Therefore, it is not appropriate for them to be placed in temporary accommodation without on-site support. Bed and breakfast accommodation, including hotels and nightly let accommodation with shared facilities, is not suitable for any 16- or 17-year-olds.

In all cases where a young person is placed in a commissioned OFSTED regulated service, the worker making the referral should take responsibility for arranging a placement planning meeting within timeframes specified by the accommodation provider. If a young person accesses alternative accommodation, then proactive and continued attempts must be made by the RFR teams who may engage Family Group Conference (FGC) to mediate with the young person, and their family to rebuild the relationship and to increase the potential for a young person returning home.

The young person should never be closed to support from LCC when they have placed them in accommodation, they should at the very least remain open to Early Help for support to move on to new accommodation.

The RFR Team should ensure that the referrer is kept up to date, informed and involved regarding the young person.

In the event the young person remains within alternative accommodation for four weeks, they will be offered a Child and Family Assessment. Young people will be given the leaflet found in Appendix 2, Rights and Entitlement Guidance Leaflet so that they understand their rights, entitlements and the possible outcomes. It is important for RFR to communicate to accommodation providers the perceived nature of the placement. I.e., this is an emergency

accommodation, or it is deemed that in the foreseeable future it is not appropriate for them to go home so a longer stay is required.

The flow of work referrals to Youth Homelessness can be seen in **Appendix 3: Pathway of Assessment for 16/17 Year Old's Youth Homelessness Not Open To Services.**

5.4.2. Young People who ARE open to Children's Services – Lincolnshire County Council Children's Services Process

If a young person aged 16 & 17, is identified as struggling with housing and is already open to LCC's Children's Service, the lead for any support required will be the current Children's Services worker. The lead worker will be responsible for making every effort to support the young person to remain at home or return home if safe to do so (e.g., Social Worker, RFR, Early Help).

The involved Children's Services worker will first ascertain whether the young person is homeless or at risk of homelessness. They will seek to understand and capture the reasons for the young person's presentation and request for support, working holistically with the young person, their family, and all involved agencies to address the underlying issues contributing to their housing struggles. The Children's Services worker will explain the available options to the young person, including the realities of these options.

The worker will contact the parent/carer to discuss the situation, exploring the viability and safety of the young person remaining or returning home and ensuring that parents/carer are aware of their parental responsibilities. This may involve taking the young person to the family home to discuss the situation directly and ensure parents/carers understand their responsibilities. The Children's Services worker will also explore suitable alternative emergency accommodation with extended family or friends.

Where homelessness cannot be prevented and the young person might need to access suitable alternative accommodation, a request to seek accommodation requires approval from the relevant Corporate Parenting Manager (CPM) or a Children's Services Head of Service. If the approval has been gained. The worker will complete Children's Services Placement Provision Request C1430 and send to Youth Housing for sharing with accommodation providers. It is important that the worker outlines the proposed exit plan for the young person.

Children's Services worker should take into consideration that 16- and 17-year-olds who are homeless and estranged from their family will be vulnerable and in need of support. Therefore, it is not appropriate for them to be placed in temporary accommodation without on-site support. Bed and breakfast accommodation, including hotels and nightly let accommodation with shared facilities, is not suitable for any 16- or 17-year-olds.

In all cases where a young person is placed in a regulated commissioned service, the worker making the referral should take responsibility for arranging a placement planning meeting within timeframes specified by the accommodation provider. If a young person accesses alternative accommodation, if it deemed appropriate by Children's Services worker, then proactive and continued attempts must be made by Children's Services worker who may engage Family Group Conference (FGC) to mediate with the young person, and their family to rebuild the relationship.

Children's Services worker should ensure that the referrer is kept up to date, informed and involved regarding the young person.

If a young person accesses alternative accommodation such as NEST or Supported Lodgings, proactive and continued efforts must be made by every team to mediate with the young person and their family. This mediation aims to rebuild the family relationship and increase the potential for the young person to return home, while continuing to support them with their housing need.

It is important for Children's Services worker to communicate to accommodation providers the perceived nature of the placement. I.e., this is an emergency accommodation, or it is deemed that in the foreseeable future it is not appropriate for them to go home.

The flow of work for the following section and referrals to Youth Homelessness can be seen in **Appendix 4: Pathway of Assessment for 16/17 Year old's Youth Homelessness Open to LCC Services.**

6. Supported Housing Provisions for 16- and 17-year-old Children in Care

If a 16 or 17-year-old child in care requires accommodation, they can only be accommodated within an Ofsted regulated service (see section 2.4). LCC is main housing provision is NEST. For information about LCC Supported Accommodation provision, or supported lodgings please contact Youth Housing at Youth_Homelessness@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

6.1. Nacro Education Support and Transition (NEST)

Commissioned by Lincolnshire County Council, NEST provides accommodation and support to Young People 16-17 years old, including Children in Care, Care Leavers 18 to 21 including Young Parents. NEST is regulated by Ofsted under The Supported Accommodation Regulations (England) 2023.

This service is designed to meet the needs of Low to Intensive Need Young People including Young Parents', placements are informed by a cumulative risk approach. The service operates in Lincoln, Boston and Grantham providing a mix of shared houses dispersed in the community, self-contained flats and units within 24-hour hub buildings.

Access to this support is via the Single Gateway described in more detail within section 4.3.1 of this document.

Table 1. NEST number units

| District | Total Number of Units |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| Boston | 9 |
| Grantham | 10 |
| Lincoln | 53 |
| Total | 72 |

NEST will provide young people with varying levels of support according to the needs of the individual. All young people help to create and agree their own support plan, which is reviewed every 12 weeks. Support is expected to reduce as the young person's skills, confidence and independence increase, aiming to deliver agreed outcomes in time for the young person's move-on arrangements. To facilitate this young people are supported to develop independent living skills e.g., budgeting and maintaining a tenancy through NEST's life skills programme.

NEST provides Ofsted regulated solo-occupancy and shared non ring-fenced accommodation (see section 2.4).

6.2. Lincolnshire County Council Supported Accommodation Provision

Run by Lincolnshire County Council, Supported Accommodation Provision provides accommodation and support to Young People 16-17 years old who are Children in Care. This service is also regulated by Ofsted under The Supported Accommodation Regulations (England) 2023.

The service operates in Grantham and Gainsborough providing accommodation is within shared houses with staff based on-site. The accommodation comprises two semi-detached homes, offering both private and communal living spaces. The young people are all offered support through an independence programme for a period of up to two years or until their 18th birthday, preparing them for their next steps towards independence post-18.

Access to this support is via the Single Gateway described in more detail within section 4.3.1 of this document.

Table 2. LCC Supported Accommodation Provision number units

| District | Total Number of Units |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Gainsborough (West Lindsey DC) | 5 |

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Grantham (South Kesteven DC) | 5 |
|------------------------------|---|

As with NEST, Supported Accommodation Provision will provide young people with varying levels of support according to the needs of the individual. All young people help to create and agree their own support plan, which is reviewed regularly. Support is expected to reduce as the young person's skills, confidence and independence increase, aiming to deliver agreed outcomes in time for the young person's move-on arrangements. Often young people move from Supported Accommodation Provision into the NEST contract.

This service provides shared ring-fenced accommodation (see section 2.4)

7. Housing Provisions for 16- and 17-year-old NOT children in care

If a 16 or 17-year-old requires accommodation and is not a child in care, outside of the family home, they can be referred NEST as it is non-ring fenced accommodation. They can also be referred to Intensive Housing Management services where providers accept referrals for young people 17+ (see section 8.4).

8. Housing Provisions for 18+

8.1. Adult Care and Community Wellbeing (Adult Housing Related Support Service)

Adult Care and Community Wellbeing Housing Related Support Services commenced in Oct 2020. The service model consists of accommodation-based support for homeless adults (18 years +) and a county-wide 'floating' support service for those at risk of homelessness. This also known as the Lincolnshire Housing Related Support Partnership is delivered countywide by Framework, who subcontract to Longhurst Group, The Salvation Army, and Nacro.

Ten weeks before their 18th birthday young people leaving NEST can be referred to LHRSP and will be prioritised.

To be eligible for these services, applicants must meet specific criteria: they must be living in any housing tenure (floating support), be aged 18 years or older, and have a local area connection to the referred area, except in cases involving leaving care status, armed forces personnel, fleeing domestic abuse, or referrals to floating support, where the local area connection requirement does not apply. Additionally, applicants must have recourse to public funds, demonstrate a clear need for housing-related support as evidenced through the initial triage assessment, and be willing to engage with the service. Furthermore, they must have an identified or suspected mental health need that impacts their ability to secure or maintain a

tenancy or mortgage, and/or have an identified or suspected substance misuse issue that affects their ability to secure and maintain a tenancy or mortgage.

The provision of housing related support is time limited to 6 months.

All accommodation and floating support is time limited to a maximum of 6 months.

For accommodation-based housing related support the individual must have a local area connection (unless have leaving care status).

Accommodation based housing related support offers a 2-month resettlement period of support for Young People leaving LHRSP. If it is assessed that further support is needed a referral can be made to floating support for a further period of support.

Countywide floating support is available across all housing tenures within Lincolnshire to enable people with a range of support needs to maintain and sustain their accommodation and independence and/or gain access to independent accommodation. This support is available for up to 6 months.

To access this service a young person needs to present at the District Council where they have a local connection if not a CIC. The District Council will undertake an initial triage assessment to ensure they meet the necessary eligibility criteria and submit this to the CAP team. Agencies with a close connection to the young person will contribute to the Triage assessment. The CAP team will disseminate the referrals to the service located in the young person's chosen area.

Care leavers have priority in accessing this service.

Accommodation within this service is a mixture of self-contained, shared accommodation and hostel environments.

Table 3. LHRSP

| Accommodation Units | Contracted amount of hours of Floating Support | Location(s) |
|----------------------------|---|--------------------|
| 128 | 995.3 | Countywide |

Table 4. Accommodation

| District | Number of Units | Provider |
|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Boston | 24 | Framework |
| Lincoln | 48 | Framework |
| South Holland | 20 | Framework |
| East Lindsey | 28 | Salvation Army |
| North Kesteven | 19 | Longhurst |

| | | |
|----------------|----|-----------|
| South Kesteven | 25 | Nacro |
| West Lindsey | 16 | Longhurst |

8.2. District Councils

Social housing is provided by a range of providers in Lincolnshire. To access social housing, households need to join the Housing Register; it is important to note that it is usual for applications to be prioritized by a confirmed local connection to each individual's district area.

Lincolnshire care leavers will automatically have a local connection with all Districts within Lincolnshire meaning they are eligible to go on any of the individual housing registers. Some housing registers require the applicant to be 18 years of age or over and many housing providers will not offer a tenancy to a minor without a guarantor. District Councils may have a policy framework that enables them to exercise discretion on a case-by-case basis with regard to 16/17-year-olds and/or care leavers who are on the housing register in relation to their relative priority status but must comply with housing legislation and code of guidance. Further details can be found within each Districts Housing Allocation Scheme accessible on their website.

Care Leavers who qualify to join the housing register should not be awarded a lower banding than applicants who meet a reasonable preference category as per section 166a of the Housing Act 1996 unless other criteria applies. Each Council has its own Housing Allocation Scheme which determines who qualifies to join the housing register and the level of priority awarded to the application. Each policy still differs meaning Care Leavers over 21 may not be awarded the same level of priority/banding across Lincolnshire.

Personal Housing Plans developed by will be directly linked to a care leaver's Pathway Plan.

In circumstances where a care leaver is at risk of being categorised as intentionally homeless, prior to any such decision, District Councils will request and convene a multi-agency meeting involving the care leaver and/or their key worker to seek to overcome the barriers to the successful implementation of their Housing/Pathway Plan chaired by the Corporate Parenting Manager or Leaving Care Team Manager.

A decision of intentionality relating to a Care Leaver following the multi-agency meeting must be escalated to the Director of Housing and Director of Children's Services for approval.

8.3. Private Rented Sector

District Councils can also help facilitate access to suitable affordable accommodation in the private sector through landlord liaison and/or financial assistance. Landlords will usually request a reference / copy of support plans to provide assurance that the tenancy will succeed.

NOTE - If the above accommodation options are deemed not suitable for a young person aged 18+, consideration should be made to making a referral to adult social care, which may open up other accommodation options following assessment.

8.4. Intensive Housing Management Services

Intensive Housing Management (IHM) exist to bridge the gap between contracted support service and a total independent accommodation. IHM providers deliver an enhanced landlord services which includes a range of intensified activities aimed at ensuring tenancy stability and addressing tenant needs effectively. IHMs can also include continuous support features like 24/7 contact for emergency repairs and general inquiries, an increased number of property inspections, and ongoing liaison with other care and support providers involved in the tenant's well-being. These services are designed to address both practical and tenancy support needs, promoting the long-term stability of tenancies, and helping tenants navigate their living arrangements effectively.

The protocols can be found on the internal staff intranet for all providers named within this protocol.

9. Support

9.1. NEST Care Leavers Homeless Prevention Service

NEST Care Leavers Homeless Prevention Service supports care leavers aged 18 to 25 across Lincolnshire to find and maintain suitable housing. CLHP dedicated Transition Team focuses on ensuring earlier accommodation planning for those who have left care, or are leaving care, and need support to sustain their accommodation or to find suitable accommodation.

To ensure swift accommodation planning for those in-need, CLHP act as the single point of contact for all District Councils regarding the homelessness of a care leaver. CLHP will liaise with all the professionals involved in a young person's case to avoid duplication of work across the multi-agency network.

The service is not open to young people already housed in NEST accommodation. Where self-referrals are received care leaver status will be confirmed with Lincolnshire County Council / Leaving Care before services are offered. Anyone can refer to this service, including the young

person. District Councils are encouraged to refer to this service when they are dealing with someone who is at risk of homelessness.

When a care leaver is at risk of homelessness the Leaving Care Worker (LCW) will refer them to CLHPS team. Examples of at risk include:

- A final warning in current accommodation is issued to the YP.
- Notice is served to the YP.
- Notification of release date for YP in prison/Young Offenders Institute (YOI) is known - at minimum 6 weeks before.
- Emergencies – YP's with same day homelessness where this has not been known in advance.

Note - referral made to CLHP with immediate priority.

Allocated Leaving Care worker will provide addresses from the past five years. A Pathway Plan and a risk assessment to support accommodation applications. Leaving Care Service will complete eight weekly statutory visits with all care leavers. Accommodation providers may ask for more frequent visits if there is an identified need that will contribute to sustainment of accommodation.

10. Collaborative Planning

Collaborative planning plays a crucial role in fostering effective partnerships across services, ensuring that individuals and families receive holistic support. This approach involves multiple stakeholders working together to align strategies, share resources, and address complex challenges. Collaborative agreements enhance service delivery, streamline communication, and promote coordinated responses to challenges. By engaging various professionals and services, collaborative planning improves outcomes for individuals by providing them with comprehensive, tailored support.

Specific examples of collaborative agreements, including those addressing housing, family support, and transitions, are outlined in the Appendix 5. Collaborative Planning.

11. Contacts

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCC Children's Services YouthHousing@Lincolnshire.gov.uk Key Contact: Andrew Morris, 07770648087 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nacro NEST@Nacro.org.uk Sarah Caskie-Hefferman, 07791277335 |
|---|---|

- **LCC Adult Care and Community Wellbeing**

theavenue@lincolnshire.gov.uk, 01522553729

- **District Councils**

Boston Housing Options Team

HomelessTeamBBC@boston.gov.uk, 01205314200

East Lindsey Housing Advice Team

Housing.Hub@e-lindsey.gov.uk, 01507613135

City of Lincoln Housing Solutions Team

housingsolutions@lincoln.gov.uk, 01522873777

North Kesteven Housing Options Team

housingoptions@n-kesteven.gov.uk, 01529 414155

South Holland Housing Options Team

housingoptions@sholland.gov.uk, 01775761161

South Kesteven Housing Solutions Team

housingsolutions@southkesteven.gov.uk, 0147640608

West Lindsey Home Choices Team

home.choices@west-lindsey.gov.uk, 01427676676

Appendices

Appendix 1. Background of Advice & Support Departments within Lincolnshire County Council

LCC Children's Services Early Help Team

Lincolnshire's Early Help Offer is designed to address emerging needs for children and families as soon as issues are identified, aiming to prevent problems from escalating. This approach underscores the importance of timely intervention, as research highlights the negative impact of delaying support. The Early Help Offer encompasses both universal and targeted services, addressing needs across childhood and adolescence. It aligns with the Children and Young People's Plan by supporting four key outcomes: ensuring children are healthy and safe, developing to their potential, achieving educational success, and being prepared for adult life.

LCC Restoring Family Relationships Team

Established in December 2020, the Restoring Family Relationships Team is an innovative team dedicated to mitigating family conflict, maintaining family stability, preventing family breakdown and reducing the number of late entrants into the care system. Utilising restorative principles, the RFR Team ensures there is a timely response to family conflict and promotes reconciliation and parent/carer accountability to avoid young people leaving their family home where appropriate.

The RFR Team operates within Future4Me on a County wide basis and focuses on multi-agency working, using a Trauma Informed Approach and Family Finding techniques to support those young people aged 16 and 17, not currently accessing support from any other service, who are at risk of homelessness. The RFR Team also provides support to 14 and 15-year-olds at risk of family relationship breakdown on a preventative basis and offers wrap around support for other practitioners in the Local Authority.

LCC Future4Me

Part of the Early Help service is the Future4Me, established across the Lincolnshire County in February 2019. Future4Me work with the 14–18-year-old cohort of young people at risk of homelessness, criminalisation, exploitation or being accommodated by the Local Authority. Designed in a hub and spoke model, case holding staff are located within the quadrants to promote a community focus and locality relationships with extended support from the central hub. Within this hub, additional posts have been created, including Clinical Psychologist, Assistant Psychologist, the Joint Diversionary Panel Co-Ordinator, Youth

Housing Officer and the Child Exploitation Officer. The hub staff are available to support all young people open to Children's Services, regardless of the team. The hub element of Future4Me also comprises of a Community & Intervention Team together with commissioned specialist services including a Speech & Language Therapist and CAMHS Practitioners. Community & Interventions staff have a focus on positive activities for young people which can be delivered within communities or as bespoke 1:1 intervention. Through consultation and wrapping support around the existing worker, the hub approach will ensure that relationships are not broken off, young people will not be passed between teams and plans will not become a directory of Services. The Future4Me Team was further expanded in December 2020 with the development of the Restoring Family Relationship Team.

LCC Family Assessment and Support Teams

The Social Workers within the Children's Social Work Team are frontline Safeguarding Team within the Family Assessment and Support Teams (FAST). The FAST teamwork within Child in Need, Child Protection, Children in Care and Public Law Outline processes with children, young people, and their families. The Social Workers work in accordance with professional standards as set by the specialist regulator Social Work England. The purpose of the team is to respond to concerns about a child's welfare and provide multi-agency support to reduce risks and enhance children and family wellbeing. Social Workers apply 'Signs of Safety' methodology in assessment and intervention looking at strengths and difficulties when working with children and families to help them to better understand what needs to change, how this could be done and who needs to do what to reduce risk and improve the lives of the children.

There are two Children in Care teams in the county of Lincolnshire, offices are based in Lincoln and Sleaford. The social workers work with children and young people who have been accommodated under S.20, with children and young people where Care Orders have been granted for those children in private fostering arrangements. Children in Care teams also work with unaccompanied children seeking asylum. Continued work with the family and important networks is crucial and integral to their work.

Social Workers in regulated services work within Public Law Outline processes, this can be to discharge a care order when children / young person return home or looking at Special Guardianship Orders. Court work also include applications for secure Welfare Orders and now for Deprivation of Liberty matters. Signs of safety, restorative practice and social pedagogy are important models incorporated in our work. Both teams have a life story worker who work very hard to create life story books for children in our care.

Leaving Care

The leaving care service is a statutory offer which is currently delivered by Barnardo's on behalf of LCC and is overseen by the Corporate Parenting Manager. As from 1st of April 2025 the service will be delivered by Lincolnshire County Council. In Lincolnshire every young person who comes into care and stays in care for more than 13 weeks after their 14th Birthday, is eligible for a Leaving Care Worker from the age of 16 through to the age of 25. The aim of the leaving care services is to support care leavers so that they can live successful and independent lives safe in their own accommodation.

Appendix 2. Rights and Entitlement Guidance Leaflet

Advice, Guidance and Further Support:

You may want to get independent advice from a Youth Advocate to help you fully understand what becoming a Child in Care means.

An advocate is someone who is independent from the council who can help you express your wishes and feelings and make sure you fully understand what is happening.



You can access free advice from the following services:

NYAS: 0800 808 1001 www.nyas.net

NYAS is a UK charity providing information, advice, advocacy and legal representation to children and young people.

CORAM Voice: 0808 800 5792
www.coramvoice.org.uk

Coram Voice will help you if you are in care, leaving care, have or need a social worker.

Coram Voice will get your voice heard, tell you about your rights, give you the support you need through their advocates and work with you to improve the care

Voiceability: 01529 400479 tv@voiceability.org

Voiceability support people to be heard in decisions about their health, care and wellbeing.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is a Social Worker?

Someone whose job it is to support you and make sure you're safe, wherever you're living.

Who is an Independent Reviewing Officer?

Someone whose job it is to chair your meetings and ensure your Child in Care plan works for you.

What is a Leaving Care Worker?

An adult who will support you with any problems and guide you from the age of 16 to 25.

What happens when I turn 18?

This all depends on your individual circumstances and you should speak to the people above about what options are available to you.

Will my finances change if I become a Child in Care?

Please speak to your workers about your individual financial circumstances so they can give you accurate information.



Information on having a Social Care Assessment when you move into Supported Accommodation



Why do I need an Assessment and how will it be completed?

Now that you're living in Supported Accommodation, Children's Services must offer you an assessment to see what support you need. This is usually called a Child and Family Assessment. It is your choice whether you want an assessment to be completed.



Your assessment will be completed by a Social Worker. You will be required to meet with your Social Worker regularly to help them fully understand your needs. They will look at what support you may need and how they can support you to return home. If you cannot return home they will assess what support you may need in the future.

Your Social Worker will also want to talk to other people who support you or who have supported you in the past, this could include your family, network or other professionals.

During your assessment, there may be some things that are difficult for you to talk about. It is really important that you give your Social Worker as much information as possible about the reasons you are not living at home.

What happens when the assessment is finished?

Once your Social Worker has completed your assessment, there are four possible outcomes;

1

Your assessment might conclude that you have all of the support you need in place already so you don't need a Social Worker. Your Social Worker will hold a final meeting to agree an alternative plan with you and the other people who will carry on working with you. This will be a Team Around the Child Plan and meetings will take place every 4 - 6 weeks to review how everyone will support you.

2

Your assessment might decide that you should be considered a Child in Need of support and that a Social Worker needs to carry on supporting you. Child in Need meetings will take place every 4 - 6 weeks to plan how everyone will support you.

3

Your Social Worker might feel that you need more support from Children's Services. They will discuss your assessment with you. If you would like to be considered for Child in Care status, they will present your assessment to a panel of Children's Services Managers who will determine whether you need to become a Child in Care or not. If the panel feel you don't need to become a Child in Care, your Social Worker will discuss with you whether you will receive support as a Child in Need, or through Team Around the Child meetings.

4

If you decide that you do not want to become a Child in Care, your Social Worker will discuss this with you to understand your reasons for this.

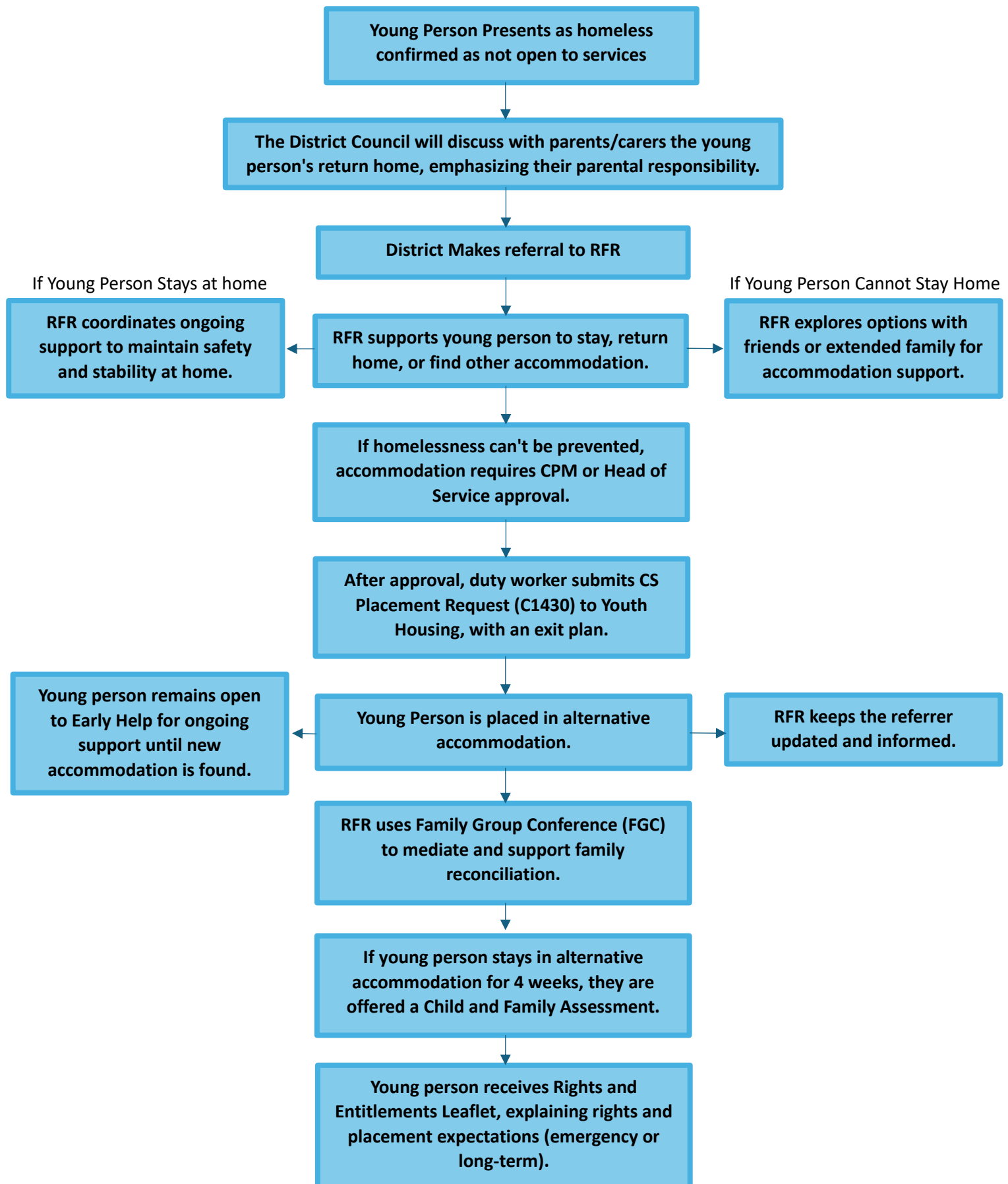
What does it mean to be a Child in Care?

If you are a Child in Care, then;

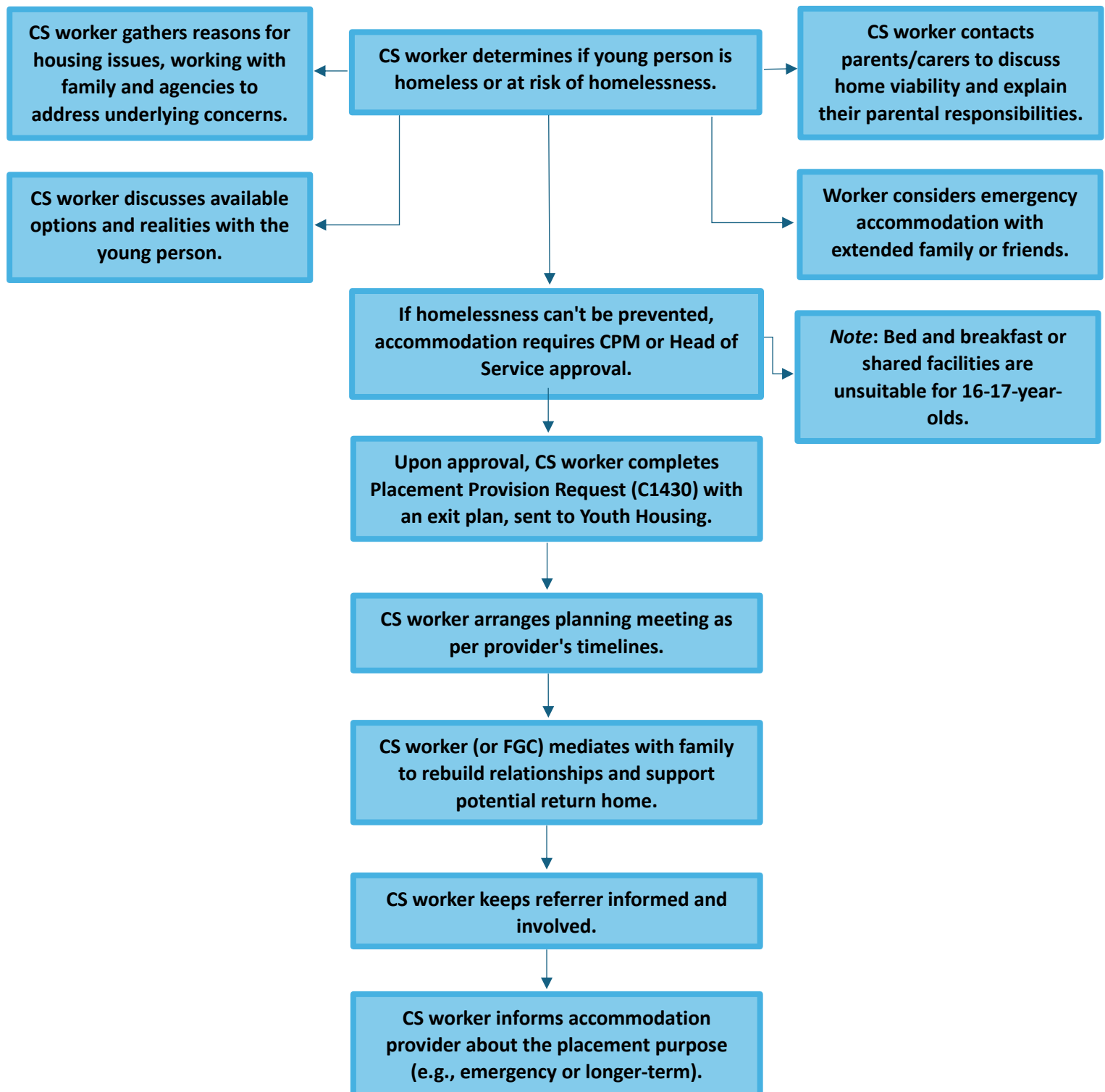
- Children's Services from Lincolnshire County Council will support you.
- You will have a Social Worker who will visit you at least every 6 weeks.
- You will have a Pathway Assessment, and then a Pathway Plan, explaining how Children's Services will support you.
- You will have an Independent Reviewing Officer (an experienced Social Worker) who will chair your Child in Care Review Meetings to make sure that your plan works for you. The first will take place 28 days after you become a Child in Care, then 3 months later and then every 6 months.
- You will have a health check completed when you become a Child in Care. This will be reviewed that every 12 months.
- When you turn 18, you might be entitled to help and advice from the Leaving Care Service. They can help you as you become more independent. You can discuss this with your Social Worker.
- If you return to live with your family before you are 18, you will no longer be a Child in Care.



Appendix 3. Pathway of Assessment for 16/17 Year Old's Youth Homelessness Not Open to Services



Appendix 4. Pathway of Assessment for 16/17 Year old's Youth Homelessness Open to Services



Appendix 5. Collaborative Planning

Youth Housing Operations Group

The Youth Housing Operations Group of all partner agencies and meets every 6 weeks (See Appendix 6 for Terms of Reference) in order to ensure on going communication, joint working and oversight of Young People in our accommodation options who are undergoing assessment and those who are not Looked After by LCC.

Outside of these meetings, NEST Housing Providers should advise LCC Commissioning Team if there are changes to a young person's housing or support needs or if a young person's tenancy is at risk.

The LCC Commissioning Team will maintain a record of all young people who present as homeless to District Councils and Children's Services and provide a performance report.

Family Group Conference (FGC)

The Family Group Conference Services operate in Children's Services. The Family Group Conference (FGC) is a meeting which addresses the concerns of a child's family. This can also include professionals working with the family. The purpose of the plan is to ensure that the child is safe with support from their family network. It is important during this process, that the child's voice is heard to understand how they are feeling.

If a young person accesses alternative accommodation (NEST and Supported Lodgings) then proactive and continued attempts must be made by the FGC to mediate with the young person, and their family to rebuild the relationship in that family and to increase the potential for a young person returning home whilst we continue to support them with housing.

Transition Panel

The Transition Panel meets every six weeks to oversee and enhance the support for Children in Care and Care Leavers, particularly focusing on those who are inadequately housed or at risk of homelessness. This meeting ensures clear operational oversight by tracking the housing status of these young individuals and addressing any issues related to their accommodation. The panel reviews the participation of districts in established protocols and service level agreements to ensure that the multi-agency team operates with comprehensive countywide knowledge.

The panel's purpose extends to sharing information that aims to improve the outcomes and independence of young people, developing safe and appropriate move-on plans for those facing complex challenges, and providing a forum for discussing and resolving issues

related to moving young people into more independent living arrangements. Additionally, the panel coordinates the annual review of the Youth Homelessness Joint Working Protocol.

Joint Working Between NEST and IHM Services

Lincolnshire NEST is engaged in collaborative working efforts with Intensive Housing Management services in Lincolnshire. The efforts are underpinned by advancing collaborative planning through comprehensive joint working protocols designed to enhance awareness and accessibility of their services. These protocols aim to educate the staff of both organizations about the critical functions and benefits of Intensive Housing Management and NEST, fostering a unified approach to supporting young people in transition. By detailing a streamlined transition process, the protocols ensure that staff are well-equipped to navigate the complexities involved, thereby improving the support provided to young individuals during their transition periods. Additionally, the protocols embed best practices to address and overcome common barriers, ensuring that transition experience for young people is as smooth and supportive as possible.

Professional Resolution and Escalation

Effective joint working relies on open and honest relationships between agencies, which includes professional challenge, problem solving and seeking resolution; this is an integral part of effective working. The Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP) Professional Resolution and Escalation Protocol should be followed when individuals or agencies are unable to agree regarding decisions/actions regarding a young person. Professional Resolution and Escalation Protocol can be found [HERE](#).

Appendix 6. Transition Panel Terms of Reference



Lincolnshire Children in Care and Care Leavers Transition Panel

Terms of Reference

Membership:

Paul Fisher – Corporate Parenting Manager
 Sarah Caskie-Hefferman – Area Manager (NEST Registered Service Manager) Nacro
 Jemma Munton – Lincs Housing Partnerships Manager
 Andrea Pringle – Care Leavers Homeless Prevention Coordinator Nacro
 Melissa Griffin – Service Lead Nacro
 Carly Oates – Practice Supervisor Transitional Lead Children in Care
 Helen Coyne–Leaving Care
 Rachel Crofts – Contracts Officer Nacro (Note Taker)

See Appendix B for contact details of all members

Purpose of the meeting:

- 1) To ensure there is clear operational oversight of the number of Children in Care and Care Leavers who are not suitably housed / at risk of homelessness
- 2) To discuss and assess participation of districts in protocols and service level agreements to maximize the knowledge of the multiagency team countywide
- 3) To share information to improve outcomes and the level of independence achieved by young people
- 4) To ensure that safe and appropriate move on plans are put in place for complex and challenging young people
- 5) A forum for colleagues to bring challenges they are facing in moving young people on to more independent accommodation, and to seek support in finding solutions to meet those young people's housing need
- 6) To coordinate an annual review of Lincolnshire's Youth Homelessness Joint Working Protocol
- 7) To coordinate an annual review of Lincolnshire's Protocol for Transition from Children's Services to Adult Housing Related Support and (Semi) Independent Living for people over 18

Responsibilities:

- 1) All group members will complete actions assigned within the agreed timescales
- 2) All group members will update the group in between meetings if actions cannot or have not been completed. This is to minimise the risk that actions are left incomplete

- 3) All members of the group will highlight specific agenda items to be added prior to each meeting

Method of Working;

- The meeting will take place every 8 weeks
- Additional ad hoc meetings may take place as necessary to discuss complex cases
- The Chairing responsibility will be a rotational responsibility between Paul Fisher and Sarah Caskie-Hefferman
- All members have a responsibility to add items to the agenda and will send these items to the minute taker at least 5 days in advance of the meeting
- Nacro, Leaving Care and LCC will share a complete list of Young People they know to be homeless or at risk of homelessness (using appendix A), and will send this list to the minute taker at least 3 days in advance of the meeting
- The Agenda and Appendix A will be collated by the minute taker and circulated at least 2 days ahead of the meeting

Quorum

- Members are expected to prioritise attendance to the meeting and to send a suitable substitute in their absence who can act on their behalf.

Confidentiality

- It is important that board members are able to share concerns or issues in a confidential environment and to work together in a concerted manner.
- Within meetings and email contact, group members will not attribute comments made by members or disclose personal information to anyone without the member's consent. Members are required to identify to the Chair any known conflicts of interest they may have in relation to any aspect of this programme.

Agenda

1. **Welcome and introductions - All**
2. **Number of Children in Care / Care Leavers are not suitably housed / at risk of homelessness – AP/CE/CO**
3. **CLHP Project update - AP**
4. **Case/YP specific discussions – All**
5. **Local issues/challenges/barriers – All**
6. **Any other Business**

Appendix 7. Process for top-up funding for care leavers to meet the costs of rent